



Poverty is Real

KCEOC Community
Action Partnership



Ending Poverty in Eastern Kentucky

by Kendall Fields

In Eastern Kentucky, the poverty rate is nearly 35 percent higher than the national rate and the unemployment rate is 40 percent higher than the state rate. Sixteen counties in the region are among the top poorest counties in the United States. There is no doubt poverty is real in this area and residents are struggling to survive.

For over 48 years, KCEOC Community Action Partnership has been working to find the root causes of that poverty and eliminate them, so as to provide a better quality of life for community residents.

KCEOC was founded along with a string of other community action agencies across the United States after President John F. Kennedy commissioned his economic advisers to find a solution to American poverty in 1963. After Kennedy was assassinated, President Lyndon Johnson continued this effort and developed The Great Society in 1964. This plan was designed to

improve the lives of all Americans, regardless of their background or circumstances.

When the Economic Opportunity Act was signed later that year, the nationwide community action

network was born with the goal of engaging Americans and encouraging them to take care of their fellow countrymen.

KCEOC President/CEO Paul Dole came to the organization in 1974 right out of college, without a clear idea of what Community Action really was. Dole worked for six years in various positions in the program until he became the executive director. Overseeing all aspects of the nonprofit for nearly four decades, Dole says Community Action is a powerful thing. "Community Action is what drives you. It makes you feel good because you are doing something to improve all of society."

From 1980 to 1981, the organization saw big cut backs and lost over 50 percent of its funding. But Dole says this didn't stop his staff and board from fulfilling their mission of helping those in need. Instead, he says, they got creative and sought additional funding

from the private sector, moving from Community Action programs to strategic partnerships. In 1981, President Ronald Reagan signed the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act which changed how federal funding is distributed and created the Community Service Block Grant (CSBG). The CSBG allows Community Action Partnerships the flexibility to apply the grant money they receive to the ever-changing needs of the communities they serve.

Dole says Eastern Kentucky has always been behind other regions in terms of its economy. The area, he explains, relied heavily on coal mining and production. Dwindling coal usage devastated the already fragile economy, but KCEOC is working to reverse the effects of that devastation. And Dole says he is already seeing a slow improvement.

KCEOC works to better lives by creating opportunities for everyone to thrive and by implementing programs with the help of private sponsors, government agencies and individual volunteers to foster a vibrant and successful community. Among its many programs, the organization offers child development

programs, emergency services, income assistance and housing and shelter assistance to Eastern Kentucky residents in need. Dole says one of the most important programs for the Kentucky community is the economic development program, in which KCEOC staff work with community partners to create opportunities for jobs — building new offices and developing a strong workforce with appropriate skills sets.

"The best way to get people out of poverty," Dole says explaining KCEOC's board's stance, "is to get people a good job." By encouraging community members to be self-sufficient, Dole explains, KCEOC is creating a long-lasting solution to ending poverty.

A Letter From The Governor



Greetings:

As Governor of the Commonwealth, I am pleased to commend the leadership and staff of the KCEOC Community Action Partnership for its dedication and service to the people of southeastern Kentucky. Since 1964, KCEOC has changed lives and impacted many communities by helping to provide safe and affordable housing, early childhood education and emergency services.

Through these actions, KCEOC has demonstrated its dedication to recognizing human potential, improving communities and creating opportunities for human change. The organization's commitment to collaboration with all levels of government and private sources is a model for any nonprofit with a similar goal.

For these many accomplishments, I applaud you and wish you continued success.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven L. Beshear".

Steven L. Beshear



Creating Successful Homeowners

Dream of home ownership realized through KCEOC program

by Amanda Caraway

Alice Jordan had given up on the dream of owning a home. She spent years paying a small fortune to live in a rundown apartment with only one bedroom and paper thin walls. Jordan had fallen and broken her hip, making it impossible to afford better housing.

“It was the worst time of my life,” reflects Jordan.

That all changed when she received housing assistance from KCEOC Community Action Partnership. Jordan had been receiving assistance from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development when a HUD employee suggested she apply for a home through KCEOC. Jordan remembers saying, “Honey, I am too old for that.” Undaunted, the HUD worker helped Jordan submit an application and start the process.

“They called me in no time,” remembers Jordan. “And that nice Mr. Mills came out and worked with me for a whole nine months. He was a real nice gentleman and he told me about the benefits of owning a home.”

Jordan’s application to KCEOC’s Housing Development Program was approved and Jason Mills was the housing counselor assigned to her case. The Housing Development Program

provides homeownership opportunities to low-income households. KCEOC constructs homes and uses various resources to make them affordable. Housing counselors educate and prepare individuals like Alice Jordan to be successful homeowners.

“I rented for most of my adult life and now I have a nice home in a good neighborhood where everything is taken care of to my liking.”

Alice Jordan

KCEOC helped Jordan get a \$40,000 forgivable deferred loan through Kentucky Housing Corporation and access traditional financial resources to purchase the home; as a result, she has low housing payments she can afford. Jordan was not required to make a down payment and KCEOC took care of the taxes for the first year. The only thing Jordan was required to pay was insurance.

Jordan also received a warranty for the first year with a guarantee that KCEOC would take care of any necessary repairs. She only called KCEOC once to repair her gutters, but Jordan says the

organization responded quickly and efficiently and her home is in good repair. Her neighbors are also well cared for. Jordan saw KCEOC put up a privacy fence to keep four-wheelers from tearing up a neighbor’s yard.

“I rented for most of my adult life and now I have a nice home in a good neighborhood where everything is taken care of to my liking,” says Jordan.

A proud homeowner, Jordan has planted a tree, rose bushes and a small grape arbor, and she has flower gardens on both porches. Her three-bedroom home has a large master bedroom and bathroom and large doorways throughout the home that will allow her to move easily from room to room if she ever finds herself in a wheelchair.

“I take real good care of this place,” muses Jordan. In fact, her homeowner’s insurance went down this year because of the equity.

Jordan has warmth in her voice when she talks about KCEOC, calling it a wonderful program filled with wonderful people. She says everyone is as nice as they can be and anyone looking to own a home would benefit greatly from the program.

Keeping Families At Home

KCEOC is a HUD approved counseling agency and has several programs to assist low-income households, as well as the homeless. The Southeast Kentucky Housing and Homeless Alliance (SKHHA) provides case management, education and transportation to the homeless, in collaboration with four partners covering an eight-county area.

Both the Homeowner Rehabilitation program and the Weatherization program help low-income recipients care for their homes and reduce utility costs. With the Housing Development Program, KCEOC constructs homes and combines resources to make low-income homes available. Additionally, KCEOC has two Housing Counselors on staff to educate and prepare

homeowners. The Unemployment Bridge Program is also available to assist with foreclosure prevention. For rental clients, KCEOC has 177 rental units, 72 percent of which are reserved for low-income elderly and other special populations. The Tenant Based Rental Assistance program also provides aid with security and utility deposits.

Giving A Head Start

KCEOC changes life for mom and children

by Mike Blount

It's hard for Samantha Dean to fathom, even now, how her and her families' lives would be different without the positive influence of KCEOC's Child Development Program. The mother of three reflects back on her experiences as a Head Start/Early Head Start parent and the impact the program had on her life. Dean was so inspired by the Child Development Program that she volunteered her time in the classroom, as well as, on Policy Council, giving her a sense of 'ownership' in the programs in which KCEOC operates. She and her husband were so encouraged by the work done by KCEOC, that they decided to participate in the March on Poverty, supporting community action in Washington, D.C.

"But with KCEOC, I didn't feel like it was a problem. I felt like it was an opportunity to enhance what I was doing to make it better."

Samantha Dean

All of her children, Plez, Kiki, and Janice, have been involved in the Head Start and Early Head Start Programs. Dean's love of Head Start began with one teacher. This teacher explained to Dean that her daughter, Kiki, was showing signs of slowed speech development. Because of this, Dean committed herself to working with Kiki, the teacher, and the speech therapist in order to get Kiki developmentally back on track.

"Every child is different and it's hard to identify sometimes — especially when it's your own child. But with KCEOC, I didn't feel like it was a problem. I felt like it was an opportunity to enhance what I was doing to make it better."

Today, Kiki's speech is terrific, according to Dean. Through an agency referral, Kiki was able to get the help she needed after being paired with a speech therapist, who worked closely with both Kiki and Samantha.

Dean was attending college and taking care of her children throughout their time in Head Start. Through the continuing support of KCEOC Staff, Dean gained her Bachelor's Degree and began work on her Master's Degree, which she has now completed.

"My husband's mother worked for Head Start for 13 years, so I knew some of the programs they had," Dean says. "But when we first got our children involved with them, we didn't know all the programs they offered." Dean's mother-in-law continues to work as a Family Child Advocate for the KCEOC Child Development Program and she encouraged Dean to apply for a teaching position. Dean was a natural fit for this position, with her love of children and understanding of parents reaching their full potential. Dean, who is now a Head Start teacher, says she works hard to teach the children in her classroom through many different and exciting activities — just like the teachers did with her children while they were enrolled in Head Start.

Dean is a prime example of a parent that got involved and stayed involved in her children's education. Because of her commitment to helping children and families, Dean is now passing on the love of learning that she began years ago in a KCEOC Child Development Classroom to the children in those same classes today.



Child Development

KCEOC's Child Development Program serves pregnant women and children, 0 to 5 years of age who come from families and communities facing enormous economic and social challenges.

Head Start provides children with a broad range of services that will give them their best possible chance at success in school. In addition to educational services, Head Start provides dental, nutritional, health/mental health, social services and much, much more.

Head Start ensures that all vulnerable children and their families have what they need to succeed in life.



Riding To Succeed

Jockey gallops toward bright future thanks to KCEOC

by Corrie Pelc

When Adam Bowman graduated from high school a few years ago, he didn't know what he wanted to do.

He wanted to attend college, but he did not have the financial means to do so. He considered a job in construction, but when that didn't work out, he felt like he had nowhere to turn.

However, things started to look up when someone suggested he turn to the KCEOC Community Action Partnership for help. "I had never heard of them before," Bowman recalls.

Through KCEOC's Job Training Program, Bowman was finally able to figure out a career path.

"Somebody put a little bug in my ear and said 'Hey, why don't you try to become a jockey?,'" he explains. "I'm a smaller guy and a fairly athletic person. There was a jockey school in Lexington, which wasn't too far from where I was living then, so I figured I would give it a shot. I tried it and I just fell in love with the horses."

Bowman went and interviewed at the North American Racing Academy, part of the Bluegrass Community and Technical College, and he was accepted.

Now that Bowman knew he wanted to attend the Academy, he had to figure out a way to afford it. Luckily, the Job Training Program was able to

help him there as well. "They helped me through scholarships, they helped me with grants and finding out about loans," he says. "Without them helping me, I would never have gone to school and to be able to pay for all my expenses."

Bowman graduated from the North American Racing Academy less than two years ago and has been successfully working as a jockey since receiving his jockey license last summer. He currently lives and works in Philadelphia.

Bowman says without KCEOC's Job Training Program, he wouldn't be doing what he loves to do today. "I wouldn't have been able to have the

means to go to school and accomplish what I accomplished," he explains. "It's a program that helps you find yourself, what you want to do in life, and how to be successful at it."

Bowman highly recommends those that

find themselves in a similar situation give KCEOC's Job Training Program a shot. "You can't beat it — they help you out to find out what you want to do and find the means to go to school," he says. "It's helping families, young people, and just anybody in general who needs help with schooling to help them succeed in life, become a good person, and have a means."

"It's helping families, young people, and just anybody in general who needs help with schooling to help them succeed in life, become a good person, and have a means."

Adam Bowman

KCEOC's Job Training Program Offers A Bright Future

For those needing help with both choosing and pursuing a career path, the Job Training Program at KCEOC Community Action Partnership can help.

According to KCEOC President Paul Dole, the program works with all ages to figure out the next step on their career path — whether that's pursuing higher education or learning a trade — through advisers that offer guidance to Job Clubs where people can share information. Financial assistance may be offered. "Sometimes we pay for their training directly, but if they're going off to college, we assist them in getting their paperwork filled out and what they need to get that assistance," Dole says.

Although the program is for all ages, Dole says they particularly look to work with youth in area high schools to help them determine their next step after graduation. "[We try] to give them courage to look at what their future is," he says.

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Building Opportunities To Grow The Economy

KCEOC revamps a factory to create new jobs

by Kendall Fields

When an old machine shop was closing and in disrepair, KCEOC President/CEO Paul Dole saw it as an opportunity to reinvigorate the local economy.

Dole and his team revamped the factory that was built in the 1970s in hopes that they could create a place for new jobs. The team, which was comprised of almost 30 crew members, including KCEOC staff and private contractors, worked for six months to renovate the factory. They repaired the metal siding that was falling off and replaced the old, crumbling roof.

At the end, KCEOC and its team created a 15,000 square-foot space that was ready for a company to move in to. Dole says a company moved in to this “modern factory” and stayed for three years, but was unable to sustain a business. He is quick to add that this is another opportunity to further invest in the property. In fact, KCEOC is working with the local government to secure a \$750,000 grant to renovate the property and create a space for multiple businesses.

“Without investing in people, they are destined to become a drain on society,” Dole says, explaining that if those people who need help don’t get it, then they will end up starving. KCEOC, according to Dole, works to create opportunities for these individuals to be self-sufficient, so they can prosper without having to rely on long-term government aid.

“We are trying to create opportunities for change and the way we do that is making places for people to have those opportunities.”

Paul Dole
KCEOC President/CEO

“It’s not just for one family or one person — it’s for all of us,” Dole says. “If they succeed — our society succeeds.”

Dole stresses KCEOC’s work especially in the economic development sector is so important because it sets people up for success, instead

of giving them a temporary solution to make it through one rough patch. Dole is a firm believer in looking at the bigger picture — he explains how KCEOC’s programs don’t always make sense for fulfilling the immediate need of combating poverty. “People don’t always understand and ask, ‘How does rebuilding a machine shop stop poverty?’” Dole says. The veteran director goes on to explain how KCEOC works on other programs to not create “poverty programs,” but to create programs that will stimulate the economy and the community.

“We are trying to create opportunities for change,” Dole says. “And the way we do that is making places for people to have those opportunities.”

Dole’s goal for the modern factory is creating a space where a number of employees will be hired — and not just at minimum wage. He says that this goal fits in to his overall goal for KCEOC’s economic development projects and the organization’s mission of bettering Eastern Kentucky.

“This is what it takes to get things to happen,” Dole says. “This is what it takes to make opportunity possible for everyone.”

Rebuilding A Family's Life

KCEOC helps one of its own employees in the wake of disaster

by Kendall Fields

Debbie Brown was terrified as she held her two daughters' hands and walked up to the homeless shelter she had volunteered at so many times before — this day, she was not a volunteer. Now, Brown had to tell her daughters they were not only homeless, but all of their things — their clothes, their toys — were gone. Eight-year-old Alessandra and 6-year-old Abigail stood outside of the homeless shelter, crying and saying "My toys are all dead," recalls Brown.

A normal Friday where Brown was just thinking about the fun she was going to have with her children over the weekend was shaken when she got the news that the house the family lived in for 10 years was on fire.

"It's unbelievable how much [KCEOC] helped me. I've been blessed beyond comparison."

Debbie Brown

Brown has worked at KCEOC's Head Start for 21 years helping others, but on this day, it was she who needed help. "I just stood there in shock and the whole time [my coworkers] were getting clothes, applying for housing, getting food for me and my daughters," she says, recalling the moments after she found out about the fire. "They were saving me while my house was literally burning down."

KCEOC staff pulled together to get Brown the things she needed not only to survive, but to feel some comforts of the home that she lost. "They surprised me and threw a shower for me where they gave me pots and pans — all sorts of things I didn't even think about needing."

Brown and her children stayed at the homeless shelter for six weeks. They made a few friends and worked with KCEOC to find a more permanent home. Trying to maintain a normal life for her daughters, Brown took Alessandra and Abigail to the Stivers Aquatic and Wellness Center every Tuesday and

Thursday evening for swimming lessons. She says the girls got into a routine and it was a great outlet for them to just take their mind off things and "swim like little fish." The single mom adds, "I just wanted to give my daughters a sense of normalcy because I wasn't sure when things were going to get better."

In September, Brown and her children moved into an apartment. As the family slowly rebuilds its life, Brown's outlook is positive — she says she would tell anyone she is blessed because she and her daughters have their health, a place to stay and a group of people who love and support them. She hopes to one day be able to pay it forward and help someone else as much as she has been helped by her peers at KCEOC.

"We are like a family, these girls are my family — they are there for me," Brown says. "It's unbelievable how much they've helped me. I've been blessed beyond comparison."

Brown never learned the cause of the fire, but for now, she and her children are enjoying their apartment and looking forward. Brown hopes to build a house where her children can play and the family can have pets. But for Abigail and Alessandra, the impending Christmas holiday and their winter birthdays bring a chance to replace some of the toys they lost in the fire. "Alessandra wants dinosaurs and she can't decide whether she wants them for Christmas or her birthday," Brown says, laughing. "Abigail says she wants a real pony ... but I think she is willing to settle for a toy pony."



Programs To Keep Kentucky Healthy

In an effort to provide not only social and economic opportunities for success to Eastern Kentucky residents, KCEOC offers health and wellness programs to further improve lives.

KCEOC's Summer Feeding Program started in 1993. The program aims to ensure children don't miss lunch during the summer when they aren't in school. KCEOC provides a nutritious lunch and snack for children during the summer months at various sites in the county.

The KCEOC Aquatics Club (KAC) is a health and empowerment program for the youth of Southeastern Kentucky. The program, which is a registered U.S. Swim Team and a member of Kentucky Swimming, is open to all ages and swimming abilities.

For more information about KCEOC's health and wellness programs, visit povertyisreal.org, call (606) 546-3152 or toll free 1-800-80-3152.

Finding Strength

KCEOC's Emergency Support Center is a safe haven for one woman and her family

by Corrie Pelc

About five years ago, Cara Garcia arrived at KCEOC Community Action Partnership's Women's Emergency Support Center stripped of a fundamental human need — security.

Garcia was stabbed and shot in the knee in a domestic violence attack. Now, she and her 9-year-old twins were on the run from her attacker.

Garcia's flight brought her to Kentucky, where a friend suggested she see if KCEOC could help her out. "She took me up there, I got back on my feet, and it was awesome," Garcia recalls of her experience at the Support Center.

Garcia and her children stayed at the shelter for 90 days while she recuperated from her injuries and healed from a surgery she had upon arriving.

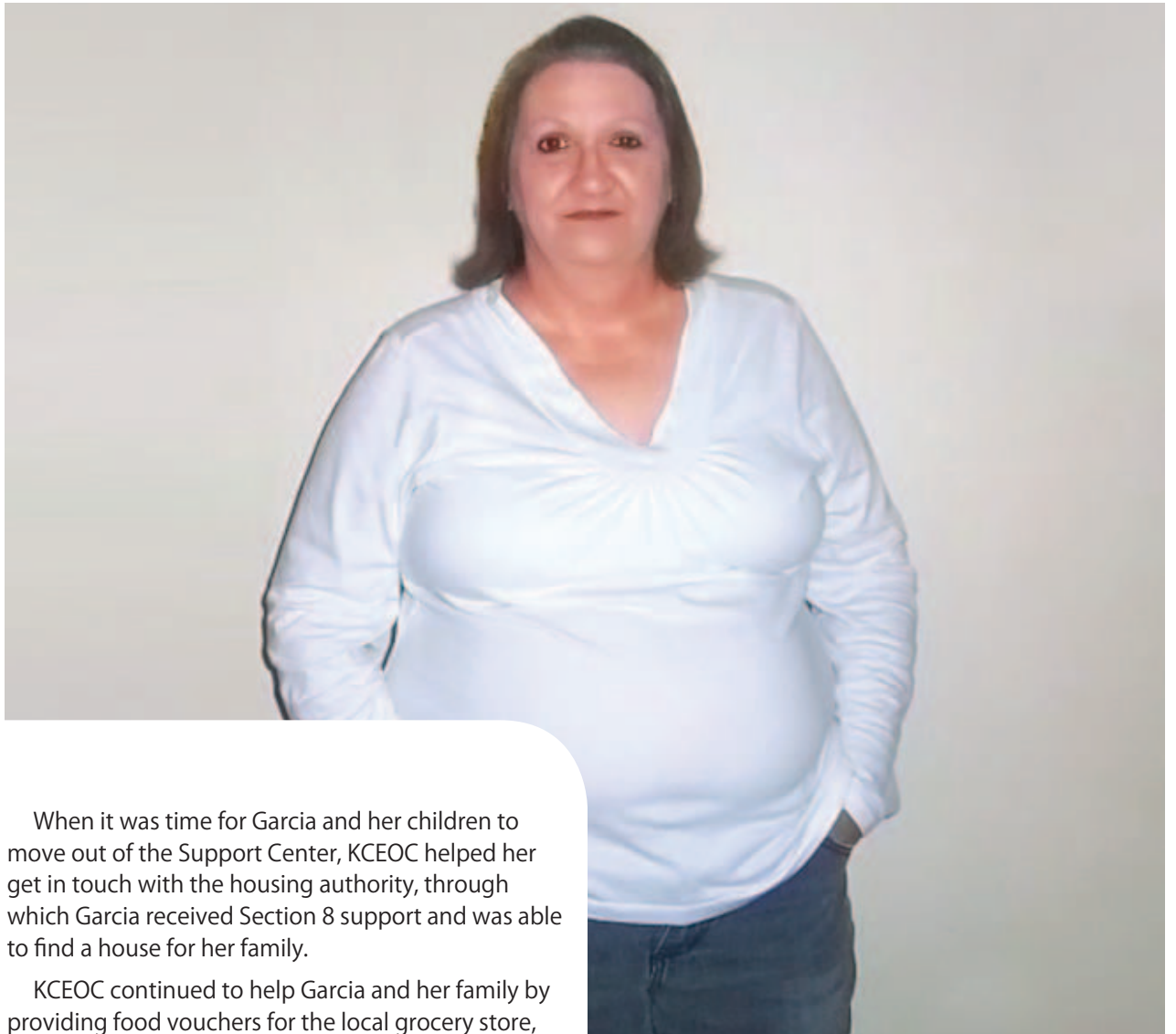
During her stay, Center staff helped Garcia enroll her kids in a nearby school and gave her access to counseling help with legal issues, finding housing, enrolling in Medicaid and ensuring her children were taken care of.

KCEOC staff helped Garcia regain independence by showing her she could be self-sufficient. "Some places will take you by the hand and lead you, but they didn't."

At the Support Center there were certain rules and guidelines Garcia had to follow. While the kids were at school, instead of going back to bed, she needed to do things for her family, such as pay bills or do the laundry. She still follows these rules today and says they've helped her stay independent.

"These people are helping you get back up on your feet and you've got to do what you've got to do to show these people that, 'Yes, I can do this,'" Garcia says.

The Support Center — which had a guard on duty — helped Garcia feel safe for the first time. "It gave me a sense of security to where I could calm down enough to get my head back together."



When it was time for Garcia and her children to move out of the Support Center, KCEOC helped her get in touch with the housing authority, through which Garcia received Section 8 support and was able to find a house for her family.

KCEOC continued to help Garcia and her family by providing food vouchers for the local grocery store, clothing and assistance to pay her bills.

"They made me feel good about myself, and they made me a stronger person, so now I can do things I normally wouldn't."

Cara Garcia

Cara has since moved away from the area for a fresh start. Today, Garcia is thankful for KCEOC's help and credits the organization for her new opportunities. She is quick to point out she is no longer dependent on any person or any government aid. "Today, I'm awesome because [KCEOC] taught me how to be independent and by myself," she says. Garcia is working hard for a local high school and relishing the fact she can pay her bills with the money she earns. She's even started to look into saving up her money in hopes of buying a house. Garcia is proud of how far she's come and relieved to be able to provide a better life for her children.

Garcia says she would not be where she is today without KCEOC. The Support Center and its staff taught her she is as strong as she wants to be. "They made me feel good about myself, and they made me a stronger person, so now I can do things I normally wouldn't," she says.

KCEOC Women's Emergency Support Center

KCEOC Community Action Partnership's Women's Emergency Support Center is a support center for the homeless with the goal of providing a safe place for women and children to stay while they are in search of housing and/or employment, and other mainstream services.

The 17-bed shelter offers housing for women with children and single women who have been displaced due to eviction, natural disaster, denial of assistance by family members and other crisis circumstances. The shelter provides services such as case management, transportation, life skills workshops, clothing and food.

Additionally, the Support Center works to help clients develop self-sufficiency by providing education, work experience and skill development, and foster partnerships in shelter assistance and supportive services. The center also works to promote awareness and educate the community about homeless issues and how they can help.



Growing Up Great

PNC partners with KCEOC to improve children’s lives

by Beatrice M. Hogg

PNC is a centuries-old financial institution and is the largest bank, measured by deposits, in Kentucky. According to Yajaira Aich, Vice President and Director of Client and Community Relations in the Lexington Market, the bank, with 10 branches in southeast Kentucky, has been supporting nonprofit organizations like KCEOC Community Action Partnership for over 40 years.

Located in 19 states and the District of Columbia, PNC forms partnerships with community-based nonprofit organizations through the PNC Foundation. By forming these partnerships within its markets, PNC hopes to enhance educational opportunities for children and promote the growth of targeted communities through economic development initiatives.

PNC Grow Up Great is a \$350 million, multi-year initiative that began in 2004 to help prepare children from birth to age 5 for success in school and life. PNC Grow Up Great and PNC Crezca con Éxito were founded by the PNC Financial Services Group, Inc., as a comprehensive, bilingual program to provide leadership, advocacy, funding, volunteers and educational resources to help families, educators and community partners provide innovative

opportunities to enhance learning and development in a child’s early years.

One of its partners is the National Head Start Association, a private, national association that supports Head Start programs. With its focus on underserved children, PNC Grow Up Great was a great match with KCEOC, which is the managing partner of local Head Start programs.

“The devoted staff is willing to go above and beyond the call of duty to ensure that the southeast Kentucky residents have access to social services and necessary supplies to live each day to the fullest.”

Yajaira Aich
Lexington Market Vice President and
Director of Client & Community Relations

PNC’s local employees are committed to making a difference in their community. Of the approximately 75 employees in southeast Kentucky, around 80 percent have contributed to the employee giving drives. Over 1,000 items, including books, coats, hats,

mittens and school supplies have been donated to KCEOC classrooms by PNC employees. Grow Up Great asked its partner nonprofits to indicate what items they would like for employees to collect. The KCEOC wish list mentioned musical instruments and math and science materials. Soon, KCEOC students will be enjoying new musical instruments, just in time for the holidays.

Vice President Aich says, “KCEOC is a very reputable and critical organization for southeast Kentucky. The devoted staff is willing to go above and beyond the call of duty to ensure that the southeast Kentucky residents have access to social services and necessary supplies to live each day to the fullest. Their Head Start teachers are fantastic and helping to ensure early success for the children in their classrooms.”

PNC believes that a healthier and more educated community benefits all citizens of Kentucky. KCEOC Community Action Partnership is “dedicated to recognizing human potential, improving communities and creating opportunities for change.” Together, PNC and KCEOC are working to make a difference in the lives of residents of Eastern Kentucky, an area rich in potential and compassion.

How to Donate to KCEOC

- Help KCEOC make a difference in so many lives. KCEOC accepts cash and check donations.
 - DONATE TODAY!**
Please send donations to:
P.O. Box 490
Barbourville, KY 40906
ATTN: Donations
- For more information, call KCEOC at (606) 546-3152 or toll free at 1-800-880-3152.
- KCEOC is always looking for new funding sources to help them assist more area residents.
- By using GoodSearch.com as a search engine and online shopping mall, a donation is made to KCEOC whenever purchases are made with partner merchants.
- iGive.com lists over 700 merchants that will donate a portion of purchases to KCEOC.
- Immediate Needs provides emergency items to families or individuals.
- By listing KCEOC as the charity of choice on GoodShop.com, any purchases made through the site will be credited to the agency and up to 30 percent of the purchase will be donated back to KCEOC.



Giving Children The Opportunity To Succeed

Organization volunteers to help KCEOC enrich the lives of area youth

by Eric Murtaugh

Rita Wood, General Federation of Women’s Clubs District Governor and Barbourville Junior Woman’s Study Club former president works tirelessly to change the soaring poverty rate in Eastern Kentucky. Wood and fellow members of the Barbourville Junior Woman’s Study Club regularly partner with the KCEOC Community Action Partnership to help reduce the effects of poverty in Eastern Kentucky.

“We collaborate with many community agencies, but one of our favorite is KCEOC,” Wood says.

The Barbourville Junior Woman’s Study Club was organized in 1926 to “serve the community in any way possible.”

And while both organizations work to benefit numerous sectors of Eastern Kentucky communities, they focus much of their attention and energy on children.

“We try to give children every opportunity we can to succeed,” Wood says. “Otherwise, children are trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty. Getting kids started at an early age in a positive environment is important, not only to the kids, but to everyone in the community.”

In fact, one of the club’s largest and most anticipated annual events is the purchase and distribution of toboggans and gloves to children enrolled in KCEOC.

“We tell the kids we bought the toboggans and mittens just for them, and they get very excited,” Wood says. “You would think we gave them the best present ever. We care about children and want them to have a happy, healthy life.” The club has distributed nearly 400 toboggans to KCEOC children for eight consecutive years. They typically buyout their local supply of toboggans each year, Wood says.

The Barbourville Junior Woman’s Study Club also supports KCEOC every year with a \$500 donation to their annual fundraiser, The Ken-Ducky Derby. As a resource coordinator for a local elementary school, Wood experiences the effect KCEOC has on children firsthand. “I can tell the difference between a [child] who went through [KCEOC’s Child Development Program] and a [child] who didn’t,” Wood says. “It’s amazing what KCEOC does for kids.”

“KCEOC needs volunteers. You don’t have to have money to help.”

Rita Wood
General Federation of Women’s Clubs
District Governor & Barbourville Junior
Woman’s Study Club former president

Wood encourages all types of organizations and businesses to get involved with KCEOC, especially those who service the community or children.

“KCEOC needs volunteers. You don’t have to have money to help,” Wood says.

Wood believes KCEOC is a pillar of the community. KCEOC offers so much to so many people, from tax preparation, to home improvement opportunities, to Head Start programs for children, she says. “KCEOC and the Junior Woman’s Study Club make such a good partnership, and it’s one we hope to continue.”

How To Get Involved

KCEOC needs more funding and more volunteers. With government funding down, small businesses and individual donors can help make a significant difference. A donation of any size to KCEOC ensures that the agency can continue providing important services to the community. KCEOC offers a variety of giving options, whether you prefer to purchase everyday household items for families in need or directly sponsor a family. Volunteers are also welcome. Rita Wood volunteers with KCEOC as a member of the Barbourville Junior Woman’s Study Club.

“The KCEOC women’s shelter was a little worn out, so we went into the guest’s room, and totally remodeled them. We even purchased new furniture for the rooms,” Wood says.

Visit povertyisreal.org to learn how your small business can make an impact today.



Answering The Call

A Kentucky woman finds inspiration in helping people

by Mike Blount

Kathleen Payne first became aware of KCEOC's work in the community through an advertisement in the local newspaper. A retired registered nurse, mother of four, grandmother and great-grandmother, Payne says she became interested in what KCEOC was doing through the small clipping and wanted to help. After a few telephone conversations with Public Resources Coordinator Brendia Moses about the organization's services, Payne offered her expertise as a tax preparer.

"I wanted to help people who could not afford to get their taxes filed by a tax preparer," Payne says. "Our pay scale [in this area] is very low and people can't pay a preparer \$65 to get \$100 back."

For low-income residents in her area, Payne says things can be very difficult — especially during an economic depression. And to many other residents, KCEOC

is a safety net that provides relief regardless of the situation. Payne recalls a veteran, who came to her to get his taxes prepared through KCEOC's VITA program.

"He had not received a return because of a school loan and all of his tax returns were going to pay off his loans," Payne says. "To think no one has helped him in the past hurts me — especially for the service he has provided for our great country. Helping people like

him is what drives me. I look forward to seeing him every year so I can say, 'Thank you for your service.'"

During her time with KCEOC, Payne says she witnessed the organization stepping up in so many vital areas of the community. She saw their work with the homeless shelter, helping teach children from a newborn all the way to kindergarten and then to daycare and school, and even situations where they helped a single mother pay rent and support her children. But what she is really proud of is how quickly KCEOC came to help after the tornado in West Liberty.

Payne says, "There is no job title when it comes to disasters. Everyone puts on their boots and hard hats

"There is no job title when it comes to disasters. Everyone puts on their boots and hard hats and joins in helping wherever the help is needed."

Kathleen Payne
KCEOC volunteer

and joins in helping wherever the help is needed. I hear things like, 'I don't know what we would do without you' and ... 'I can't believe you do this for nothing!'"

But to Payne, the greatest reward is the ability to give back. She encourages others to look into KCEOC and become involved; and she continues to volunteer her time as a tax preparer.

"[If you decide to get involved] I would say you have made a good choice and that you won't be sorry. When you talk to someone that is in need, you will go home knowing that you have made it better for that particular someone."

Support KCEOC

KCEOC Community Action Partnership relies on volunteers and donations to keep its programs going and improve the community. KCEOC offers a variety of giving options for individuals and small donors. KCEOC accepts donation items and money. KCEOC is a 501(c)3 and most donations are tax deductible and go toward general fund activities or specific KCEOC programs. To find out more about how to donate or get involved as a small donor, please call (606) 546-3152 or toll free at 1-800-880-3152.

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KCEOC is always looking for volunteers to help further its mission of ending poverty in Eastern Kentucky. For more information on ways you can get involved, please call (606) 546-3152 or toll free at 1-800-880-3152 or visit povertyisreal.org.

KCEOC needs your donations to improve the lives of Southeastern Kentucky residents.

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Contact Us:

P.O. Box 490
Barbourville, KY 40906

5448 US 25E, Suite A
Gray, KY 40734

Phone — (606) 546-3152
Toll-Free — 1-800-880-3152
Fax — (606) 546-5057

