



HELPING PEOPLE. CHANGING LIVES. BUILDING FAMILIES.



This Publication is Dedicated to
Mr. Jimmie Samuel
January 26, 1949 — July 18, 2013
*"The Heart of a Warrior and the
Compassion of a Saint"*

FIGHTING POVERTY IN MACON-BIBB COUNTY

by KENDALL FIELDS

Macon-Bibb County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc. improves quality of life for residents

Georgia has the third highest poverty rate in the nation, according to the 2010 U.S. Census. A 2009 report in *Forbes Magazine* ranked Macon as the seventh most impoverished city in America.

The Macon-Bibb County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc. aims to break the cycle of poverty through its programs that improve the community as a whole. The agency also works to identify barriers that prevent a family from achieving self-sufficiency and enable low-income individuals to get the skills, knowledge and motivation to lead better lives.

Macon-Bibb County EOC was founded alongside many other community action agencies across the nation after President John F. Kennedy commissioned his economic advisers to find a solution to American poverty. When the Economic Opportunity Act was signed in 1964, the nationwide community action network was born with the goal of encouraging Americans to take care of their fellow countrymen.

In the early 1980s, community action organizations saw big cutbacks and lost over 50 percent of their funding. In 1981, President Ronald Reagan introduced the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), which changed how federal funding is distributed. The CSBG allows community

action agencies the flexibility to apply the grant money they receive to the ever-changing needs of the communities they serve. Now with the sequestration cuts in federal spending, Macon-Bibb County EOC is struggling even more to secure funding. But a lack of funding hasn't stopped the agency from fulfilling its mission of helping those in need.

"What we do is [provide a] safety net [in] this country for people who get left behind, marginalized and defined as obsolete. It is critical we keep at this work and get funding to do it."

Jimmie Samuel
Executive Director, Macon-Bibb County Economic Opportunity Council

Instead, under the guidance of Executive Director Jimmie Samuel, the staff got creative and sought additional funding from the private sector and enhanced the community action programs with strategic partnerships. "With funding cuts and sequestration, partnerships — especially

with private partners — seem to be of utmost importance," Samuel says.

After volunteering and working for 35 years in community action, Samuel says MBCEOC is so important because it provides people with tools to become self-sufficient, contributing members of society — which, in turn, improves the community as a whole. "If you don't move to self-sufficiency then you have a revolving door," Samuel says. "You need to be doing all you can do to help yourself."

Among its many programs, the agency offers child development programs, emergency services, income assistance, energy services, and housing and shelter assistance to Georgia residents in need.

Samuel says community action has been able to survive and prosper in many ways for nearly 50 years. He credits his organization's ability to weather the economic crisis and increased poverty in the community to a dedicated staff and an engaged Board of Directors, with many members having been involved in community action just as long as he. "What we do is [provide a] safety net [in] this country for people who get left behind, marginalized and defined as obsolete," Samuel says. "It is critical we keep at this work and get funding to do it."



JIMMIE SAMUEL January 26, 1949 — July 18, 2013

Shortly before this publication was printed, Jimmie Samuel, Executive Director of Macon-Bibb County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc., passed away from an undisclosed illness. Mr. Samuel contributed greatly to the creation of this publication and it is dedicated to his memory and lasting impact on the Macon-Bibb County EOC.

The following is an excerpt from a poem Mr. Samuel kept in his office.

*I read of a man who stood to speak
At the funeral of a friend.
He referred to the dates on her tombstone
From the beginning to the end.*

*He noted that first came the date of her birth
And spoke of the following date with tears,
But he said what mattered most of all
Was the dash between those years.*

*For it matters not, how much we own,
The cars, the house, the cash,
What matters is how we live and love
And how we spend our dash.*

— "The Dash" by Linda Ellis

A LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

As Chairman of the Bibb County Board of Commissioners, I am pleased to commend the leadership and staff of the Macon-Bibb County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc. (MBCEOC) for its dedication and service to the people of Macon and Bibb County. Since 1965, MBCEOC has changed lives and impacted many families by helping to provide safe and affordable housing, early childhood education and emergency services.

Through these actions, the EOC 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 many years of continued success.

Sincerely,
Samuel F. Hart, Sr., Chairman
Bibb County Board of
Commissioners



A LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

As Board Chair of Macon-Bibb County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc., I am proud of the leadership and staff of MBCEOC for 48 years of important work, making a difference in communities and families in Macon and across Bibb County.

We have saved lives, helped dreams come true and we have been the ultimate reminder that compassion is a renewable resource that fuels our economy. We should be proud of the work we do each and every day.

Continued Success,
Lonnie Miley,
MBCEOC Board Chairman



GETTING A JUMP ON LEARNING

by MICHELLE CARL

Head Start prepares children for school

Melinda Martin is always amazed at what her children learn at Head Start — ABCs, days of the week, how to tie their shoes or get out of a house if it's on fire.

"It's not hard for me to teach them, because they're already learning in school," she says. "So when I teach them something, it's like, 'Mommy, I already know that.'"

Although her eldest son had been in daycare before, she felt he wasn't learning.

"They're not babysitters," Martin says of Head Start. "They're teachers and they're teaching all these kids every single day. ... If people don't know about Head Start they need to know about Head Start."

All three of her children — 7-year-old Christian, 4-year-old Karsen and 3-year-old Maliyah — have been in Head Start. Karsen and Maliyah were first enrolled into Early Head Start (for children from birth to 2 years). Now Karsen is in the regular Head Start program, which is for 3- and 4-year-olds.

"Karsen's main thing is words, he loves it when they send home word lists," Martin says.

Karsen was a premature baby, so Martin was concerned that he was at risk for a learning delay. Last year he was really quiet, but this year, Head Start teachers say he is very outspoken, answers questions and volunteers to help.

Christian has moved on from Head Start and is in the first grade. Martin is proud to say he is an honor roll student.

"I really think that Head Start is the reason why," she said. "They teach them that learning is fun, first of all, and so when they go to public school ... they're just reiterating what they already learned in Head Start, and it puts them ahead."

Although Head Start is giving her children a great start on their education, Martin says the program provides support for parents, too.

When Martin was a single parent, Head Start was able to connect her to a program that helped provide Christmas for her and Christian.

"If people don't know about Head Start they need to know about Head Start."

Melinda Martin
Mother of three

"Just being that single parent and having someone there that would support you ... they could look at me and tell when some things weren't right some days, and when I was down, they were there for me," Martin says.

a special advertising supplement



PHOTO BY MARYANN BATES

Melinda Martin reads to her children, from left, Christian, Maliyah and Karsen. Martin says Head Start and Early Head Start gave her children a great foundation for learning and helped her be a better parent.

Martin knows she can count on Head Start to take care of her children's special needs. Little Maliyah is asthmatic, so Head Start teachers were trained to use a machine to help deliver medicine to Maliyah in case of an asthma attack.

The program also has inspired Martin to be more involved. Martin is a Head Start volunteer parent and is continuing that tradition by volunteering at Christian's public school.

It also warms her heart to know how much teachers really care about the kids. When Christian was hospitalized with stomach problems last year, teachers called to check on his condition, even though he wasn't in the program anymore.

"I hate to see anything happen to this program because if anything happens to this program, these parents are gonna see just how much Head Start really helps us," she says.

WHAT IS HEAD START?

Head Start is a federally funded program that provides comprehensive services to low-income children from birth to age 5. It was created to break the cycle of poverty by meeting the emotional, social, health, nutritional and psychological needs of preschool children.

Early Head Start (for children from birth to 2 years) and Head Start (for ages 3 and 4) help ensure that children are well prepared for the classroom. The program emphasizes learning in language and literacy, cognition and general knowledge, physical development and health, social and emotional development and approaches to learning.

The program also recognizes that families play an important role as their child's first teacher. Parent involvement is encouraged through at-home learning, leadership and community involvement. In addition, Head Start works to connect low-income families to health, nutrition and social services that can improve the well-being of the whole family.

Over a million children are served by Head Start programs every year, including children in every U.S. state and territory and in American Indian and Alaskan Native communities.

A PLACE TO CALL HOME

by MIKE BLOUNT

Women get housing help from Macon-Bibb County EOC

Few can imagine what it's like to lose everything, but that's exactly what happened when Jacole Robertson lost her job. The 23-year-old was enrolled in school and working steadily toward earning her GED when she decided to quit her job at a convenience store and go work for a local hotel instead. Unfortunately, business was slow and she was laid off a few months later. She also wasn't at her new job long enough to claim unemployment. She figured she could just find another job quickly, but the rough economy left her few opportunities without a high school diploma.

Robertson lost her car and most of her possessions just trying to make ends meet. But after confiding in an instructor, Robertson learned about the Macon-Bibb County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc. and decided to give the staff a call. "I didn't have any means of income, and I was confused and didn't know what to do," Robertson says. "I've always taken care of myself, and all of a sudden, I wasn't able to [do that]."

After a conference with her case manager, Carlton Williams, she was able to get a referral through the Macon Housing Authority for Section 8 housing. The program is also assisting her with a utility and security deposit and is even helping furnish her new home. Robertson is enrolled in budgeting and job-training classes and she has transportation to and from school and appointments because of the program.

While Robertson says she looks forward to the day she can be self-sufficient again, she is extremely thankful she was able to get help when she needed it. "When I first started this journey, I wasn't too happy to be asking for help, but I feel like they are giving me my independence back and I never would have been able to cross these bridges without their help," Robertson says.

Meko Lowery, 34, and her two children found themselves in a similar position in 2012 after Lowery lost her job with an insurance company. The single mother had worked for the company for six years, but after a severe car accident,

she had to take several months off of work to recover. Shortly after, she started getting migraine headaches and was diagnosed with anxiety and panic attacks due to the crash, keeping her from returning to work. She was eventually let go.

A few months later and quickly running out of money, Lowery says she was about to get her electricity turned off when she decided to reach out to Macon-Bibb County EOC.

"I feel like they are giving me my independence back and I never would have been able to cross these bridges without their help."

Jacole Robertson

"Everyone sat me down and asked me what my plan was for the month after and I had to be honest and tell them that I didn't know," Lowery says.

Things moved quickly from there, according to her case manager, Williams. She moved into transitional housing with her children and began developing a plan to move forward with finding work and permanent housing. Coincidentally, a job opened up at Macon-Bibb County EOC that Williams thought would be a perfect fit for Lowery. After she interviewed she was offered a position helping other clients in need of assistance. Today, Lowery has a new career, home and outlook on life thanks to MBCEOC.

"If you could see me now, I'm a completely different person," Lowery says. "This is one of the best programs I have ever been a part of and the best part about it is I now get to help other people."

PHOTO BY MARYANN BATES



Jacole Robertson received housing help from Macon-Bibb County EOC after she lost her job.

HOUSING SERVICES

Macon-Bibb County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc. offers housing assistance to individuals and families in need who meet the eligibility requirements. Rental assistance is available to obtain more permanent housing and/or to avoid eviction. Homeless prevention services are available to prevent foreclosure or eviction. Minor housing repairs are available to low-income homeowners to make their homes safer and more livable. Individuals and families can also receive first-time homebuyers assistance, which will aid in obtaining and maintaining home ownership. For more information, please contact the associates at our Community Outreach Center at (478) 750-8689 or our Buck Melton Center at (478) 330-6272.

WORKING TOGETHER

Partnerships in community provide essential services

by MIKE BLOUNT

Through some key partnerships in the community, Macon-Bibb County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc. strives to ensure that individuals and families receive help in multiple areas of need. From dental hygiene to an education, these partners provide essential services that might otherwise go unaddressed altogether.

For instance, dental work is often put off because of financial reasons. But through a partnership with local dentists, homeless and low-income individuals in Macon are now receiving much-needed dental care.

Eric Hall, DDS, works alongside two other dentists to provide dental screenings. Then, once a month, those who need treatment and brought to their office for basic dental work, including tooth extraction, cleaning, fillings and gum treatment. Between the three of them, they are able to see about nine or 10 people on those days.

“There’s always going to be that need there and if no one does anything, it’s going to get worse,” Hall says. “A lot of them can get an infection, which could put them in the emergency room, and it’s often a simple fix if there’s someone there to do it.”

There are also several barriers that adults face when deciding to go back to school. As assistant vice president with adult education at Central Georgia Technical College, Sallie Devero knows that transportation and a lack of financial support are just a few of the challenges students face. But through a partnership with MBCEOC, students are finding a way to overcome these barriers and realize their potential by getting an education.

Since 2000, the EOC has partnered with Central Georgia Technical College in the adult education field. The agency offers a variety of wrap-around services to students through this partnership to ensure their success in the program and in life. Without those services, Devero



PHOTO BY MARYANN BATES

Sallie Devero is the Assistant Vice President of Adult Education at Central Georgia Technical College.

believes more adults would choose not to go back to school at all.

“Retention is one of the biggest challenges we face and for some students, [dropping out] is a shame-based experience and isn’t something to brag about,” says Devero. “It takes people encouraging them to come back to school and help them overcome whatever obstacles they are facing. With the wrap-around services offered by Macon-Bibb, it takes those barriers out of the picture.”

For students who have transportation issues, MBCEOC offers bus passes so they can get back and forth from their home to class. The agency has also been instrumental in providing funding so there are more GED testing sites within the community, giving adults taking the test less distances to travel to do so.

“In Bibb County, particularly, without a GED or high school diploma, it is extremely difficult to find employment,” Devero says. “This partnership is helping people help themselves and find their motivation so that they can move forward.”



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERIC HALL

Eric Hall, DDS, works alongside two other dentists to provide dental screenings to low-income residents in Macon.

COLLABORATIVE SERVICES

Macon-Bibb County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc. partners with several organizations throughout both Macon and Bibb counties to provide essential services to those in need.

One of those collaborative services is the Parent-Aid Program, which is funded by a contract with the Department of Family and Children Services. MBCEOC hires and trains nine welfare clients (removing them from welfare) to work with other recipients in a variety of ways to assist them toward self-sufficiency. Another example is a collaboration with the city of Macon Economic and Community Development and local banking institutions, which allows the agency to provide affordable housing for first-time homebuyers. For more information on the many services offered by MBCEOC, visit www.maconbibbeoc.com/services.aspx.

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“This partnership is helping people help themselves and find their motivation so that they can move forward.”

Sallie Devero
Assistant Vice President for Adult Education at
Central Georgia Technical College

Q&A

with JIMMIE SAMUEL

by MIKE BLOUNT

Since 1986, Jimmie Samuel has served as the Executive Director for the Macon-Bibb County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc. Under his leadership, the MBCEOC has grown from an agency funded by less than \$2 million to a more than \$16 million agency serving low-income families and individuals across Macon and Bibb counties. Despite recent budget cuts, MBCEOC continues to be a valuable safety net for the community.

How did you get started working in community action agencies? What made you want to work in that field?

I was asked to serve on the Board of Directors in 1978. ... In 1985, the agency found itself embroiled in some serious funding issues. These matters got worse and in mid-1986, we had to replace the Executive Director and some key staff. Because

“The critical issue of poverty and poor people must be kept visible to the broader community and nation.”

Jimmie Samuel
Executive Director of
Macon-Bibb County Economic
Opportunity Council

of the nature of the issues, we had a three-month window to make certain things happen. Thus, we had to have someone who knew the agency, key stakeholders and major funding sources. In order to try and turn the agency around, I accepted the interim Executive Director position and the rest is history. I am in my 27th year as Executive Director.

How has MBCEOC been able to tackle problems differently than a national organization would?

One of Macon-Bibb County EOC’s strengths, along with other Community Action Agencies, is our flexibility to address local needs and to take advantage of unique opportunities more quickly.

What are the long-term goals of MBCEOC and how is the agency working toward them?

Macon-Bibb County EOC’s long-term goals include:

- A. Maintaining our existing funding base.
- B. Expand funding streams that will help us achieve our mission.
- C. Document and communicate better our impact to include evidence-based solutions.
- D. To make the elimination of poverty, with all its implications, the goal of the entire community.



Jimmie Samuel started as a board member with Macon-Bibb County EOC before becoming executive director in 1986.

Why is it important that organizations like Macon-Bibb County EOC exist?

The critical issue of poverty and poor people must be kept visible to the broader community and nation. To that end, the networks that we have created and continue to develop must be supported and strengthened at the state, regional and national level.

What obstacles has the agency faced?

Budget cuts continue to be our major obstacle. We have developed a more aggressive process for seeking foundation and other funding support for our mission. Budget cuts have affected us at Macon-Bibb County EOC in several ways. We will lose staff (nine positions), we will lose Head Start children (51 children) and our level of

direct assistance to low-to-moderate income customers has decreased.

What are some of the things MBCEOC is doing to mitigate those problems?

We are making sure we are meeting our goals and outcomes of our existing grants and contracts. We are making a concerted effort with local and regional foundations to assist EOC in this effort.

What are the most pressing needs for the Macon-Bibb County Economic Opportunity Council right now?

The most pressing needs are maintaining adequate resources to assist the growing number of individuals and families who need help and are eligible for our programs.

MAKING AN IMPACT IN BIBB COUNTY

by KENDALL FIELDS

The Macon-Bibb County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc. is not a typical nonprofit. The community action agency works to help hundreds of individuals and families in both counties, and in doing so employs a large portion of the local community. The agency employs more than 250 employees with a \$5 million-plus payroll, says Macon-Bibb County EOC Executive Director Jimmie Samuel. According to Samuel, the agency has a multi-million dollar impact on the economy with the number of jobs it creates and the programs it provides by supporting many local vendors for needed services.

When Samuel first became the executive director 27 years ago, MBCEOC was struggling to fund its programs and continue providing needed services to impoverished families. Samuel, who had already served on the organization's board for seven years, worked with private partners and state and local government to maximize the agency's impact and efficiency. "We improved communication with funding sources by reaching out and being humble under

those circumstances," Samuel says. "We got help we needed."

Today, Samuel says the agency is focusing on maintaining its relationships with state and local government, but is also finding it increasingly important to work with collaborative private partners. He explains it is part of the agency's mission to create partnerships to get more of the community involved in ending poverty. "Participation is the key to making our community better," Samuel says.

Some partnerships are forged with organizations donating time and volunteers or knowledge to the community action agency, rather than funds. For example, the Macon Police Department, Georgia Power and SCANA Energy lend their expertise to Macon-Bibb County EOC to help facilitate an effective and efficient process for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

The reward of the partnerships, according to Samuel, is seeing internally, in his organization, and externally, in the community as a whole, how many lives are improving. MBCEOC finds motivation in seeing the impact an active and engaged community can make for less-fortunate residents.

Samuel hopes to get more people and partners to help Macon-Bibb County EOC in its efforts to improve lives and end poverty. "The more people we can get vested or investing, the more we can accomplish," he says. "Let's get together and see what we can do."



BY THE NUMBERS

17,417

the number of services provided to low-income families in Bibb County

52,296

the total number of hours volunteered by 63 members of the Foster Grandparent Program

10,544

the number of families Macon-Bibb EOC served

81,095

the number of transportation trips provided to low-income individuals through Regional and Senior Transportation

5,494

the number of families who received an energy benefit of \$350 or \$310 through the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program

Note: The numbers represented in this chart are based on statistics from the 2011 fiscal year for Macon-Bibb County EOC.

"The more people we can get vested or investing, the more we can accomplish."

Jimmie Samuel
Executive Director, Macon-Bibb County Economic Opportunity Council

END POVERTY IN MACON-BIBB



Help Macon-Bibb County Economic Opportunity Council improve lives in your community!

Through its various programs and services Macon-Bibb County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc. aims to end poverty in the community. With its funding on the line, MBCEOC needs your help more than ever to continue its work identifying barriers that prevent low-income individuals from obtaining self-sufficiency. Entrench yourself in community action by supporting Macon-Bibb County EOC and its services by volunteering, donating or encouraging your employer to become a partner.

For more information about services, donations, volunteer opportunities and partnerships, contact Macon-Bibb County EOC at 478-738-3240 or go online to www.maconbibbeoc.com.

SERVICES

COLLABORATIVE WITH DFCS

Parent-Aide Services
Employment Services
Transportation Services

HOUSING SERVICES

Community Services
Block Grant (CSBG)
Housing Urban
Development (HUD)
Department of
Community Affairs (DCA)
Bibb County
City of Macon ECDD

HOMELESS SERVICES

Housing Urban
Development (HUD)

VOLUNTEER SERVICES

Head Start/Early Head
Start Programs
Foster Grandparent
Program

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Community Services
Block Grant (CSBG)
Housing Urban
Development (HUD)

TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Middle Georgia Regional
Commission
Senior Transportation
After-school
Transportation

ENERGY ASSISTANCE SERVICES

Low-Income Home
Energy Assistance
Program (LIHEAP)
Community Services
Block Grant (CSBG)
Department of
Community Affairs (DCA)
Bibb County

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

Head Start/Early Head
Start Programs
Community Services
Block Grant (CSBG)

LOCATIONS

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

653 Second Street, Suite 200
Macon, Georgia 31201
Phone: 478-738-3240
Fax: 478-738-3258

OUTREACH CENTERS

Buck Melton Community Center - Outreach

150 Sessions Drive
Macon, Georgia 31201
Phone: 478-330-6272 or
478-330-6273
Fax: 478-330-6276

Community Outreach Center 1877 Houston Avenue

Macon, Georgia 31201
Phone: 478-750-8689
Fax: 478-745-3095

DFCS

456 Oglethorpe Street
Macon, Georgia 31204
Phone: 478-751-6051
Fax: 478-751-6578

Special Projects/ Transportation

249 Monroe Street
Macon, Georgia 31211
Phone: 478-738-3254
Fax: 478-738-3252

Warehouse

2743 Montpelier Avenue
Macon, Georgia 31201
Phone: 478-738-3254

HEAD START CENTERS

Head Start

Administration Office
1680-B Broadway
Macon, Georgia 31201
Phone 478-750-9119
Fax: 478-750-9117

Bellevue Center

4090 Napier Avenue
Macon, Georgia 31204
Phone: 478-471-1486
Fax: 478-471-0588

Bloomfield

5263 Bloomfield Road
Macon, Georgia 31206
Phone: 478-788-8054
Fax: 478-788-3639

Buck Melton Community Center - Head Start

150 Sessions Drive
Macon, Georgia 31201
Phone: 478-751-2311
Fax: 478-751-2314

Davis Homes

905 Main Street
Macon, Georgia 31211
Phone: 478-745-0960
Fax: 478-745-9877

Hall Center

2312 Shurling Drive
Macon, Georgia 31211
Phone: 478-738-3245
Fax: 478-738-3259

Monroe County Center

525 Highway 83 South
Forsyth, Georgia 31029
Phone: 478-994-5174
Fax: 478-994-1849

Northwoods Academy

709 Pierce Avenue
Macon, Georgia 31210
Phone: 478-779-3200

Pendleton Homes

3401 Houston Avenue
Macon, Georgia 31206
Phone: 478-788-7891
Fax: 478-788-5479

EARLY HEAD START CENTERS

Hester Bivins Center

985 Plant Street
Macon, Georgia 31201
Phone: 478-755-9441
Fax: 478-755-9461

Anthony Homes

1833 Wren Avenue
Macon, Georgia 31204
Phone: 478-254-7417
Fax: 478-254-7453

Davis Homes

268 Leaf Drive
Macon, Georgia 31211
Phone: 478-254-6953
Fax: 478-238-4828
146 Leaf Street
Macon, Georgia 31211
Phone: 478-257-6859
Fax: 478-257-6854

Bloomfield Way

2637 Bloomfield Way
Macon, Georgia 31206
Phone: 478-254-8444
Fax: 478-254-8024
2633 Bloomfield Way
Macon, Georgia 31206
Phone: 478-254-6233
Fax: 478-254-6404

**"Participation is the key to making
our community better. ... Let's get
together and see what we can do."**

Jimmie Samuel

Executive Director of Macon-Bibb County EOC from 1986-2013

