COMMUNITY ACTION PROMISE

Community Action changes people’s lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.


**VIRGINIA COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT DATA (FY 2017)**

In Virginia, community action agencies provided services to almost **95,000** low-income individuals. Those served included: over **30,000** children, over **19,000** seniors, over **10,000** people with disabilities, and over **21,000** people who lacked health insurance.

Over **$10 million** in federal community service block grant (CSBG) funds were allocated to community action agencies in support of low-income individuals in Virginia. The Virginia community action network’s non-CSBG funds totaled over **$134 million**.

For each **$1** of CSBG funds, the Virginia community action network leveraged **$13.58** from federal, state, local and private sources, including the value of volunteer hours.

Services and strategies provided by the Virginia community action network resulted in over **186,000** performance outcomes for participants and communities with low incomes. These outcomes include:

- **69,000 Child and Family Development outcomes**
  Infants, children, youth, parents and other adults participated in developmental or enrichment programs facilitated by the Virginia network and achieved program goals.

- **34,000 Emergency Assistance**
  Individuals and families with low incomes received emergency assistance from the Virginia network.

- **22,000 Employment**
  Participants with low incomes obtained supports which reduced or eliminated barriers to initial or continuous employment, acquired a job, increased their incomes, or achieved living wage employment and benefits.

- **19,000 Family Stability**
  Participants with low incomes obtained supports which reduced or eliminated barriers to family stability.

- **19,000 Independent Living for Vulnerable Populations with Low Incomes**
  Vulnerable individuals with low incomes received services and secured or maintained an independent living situation as a result.

- **12,000 Economic Asset Enhancement and Utilization**
  Households with low incomes increased their financial assets and/or financial skills.

- **11,000 Community Empowerment**
  Community members and people with low incomes mobilized to engage in activities that support and promote their own well-being and that of their community through maximum feasible participation.

- **500 Community Opportunities and Resources**
  Community opportunities or resources were improved or expanded for people with low incomes as a result of community action projects or initiatives, or partnerships with other private and public agencies.
VIRGINIA 2018 POVERTY STATISTICS

POVERTY RATE

Gender and Age

OVERALL: 10.6%
(percentage of people who had incomes below the poverty line [$24,860 for a family of four] in 2017).

CHILDREN: 13.7%

WORKING-AGE WOMEN: 11.6%

WORKING-AGE MEN: 8.9%

Race and Ethnicity

AFRICAN AMERICAN: 17.9%

ASIAN AMERICAN: 7.1%

LATINO: 13.7%

NATIVE AMERICAN: 9%

WHITE: 8.5%

CREATING GOOD JOBS

INCOME INEQUALITY RATIO: 15.6
(Ratio of the share of income going to the top 20 percent of households and the share of income going to the bottom 20 percent of households in 2017)

UNEMPLOYMENT: 3.8%
(Percentage of all workers who were unemployed in 2017)

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION: 86.7%
(Percentage of public high school students who graduated on time in the 2015-2016 school year)

DISCONNECTED YOUTH: 11%
(Percentage of youth ages 18 to 24 without high school degrees who were not in school or working in 2016)
HIGHER EDUCATION ATTAINMENT: 50.4%
(Percentage of young adults ages 25 to 34 who had an associate’s degree or higher from 2017)

GENDER WAGE GAP: 79.2 cents
(Women’s median earnings for every dollar of men’s median earnings among full-time, year-round workers in 2017)

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

CHILDREN LIVING APART FROM PARENTS: 3 children
(Number of children who lived in foster care for every 1,000 children under age 18 in 2016)

TEEN BIRTH RATE: 15.5 births
(Number of births per 1,000 women ages 15 to 19 in 2016)

PROTECTING FAMILY ECONOMIC SECURITY

HUNGER AND FOOD INSECURITY: 10.1%
(Percentage of households who were food insecure on average from 2015 to 2017, meaning that at some point during the year, they experienced difficulty providing enough food due to a lack of money or resources)

AFFORDABLE HOUSING: 54 units
(Number of apartments or other units that were affordable for every 100 renter households with very low incomes in 2016. Very low-income households are those with incomes at or below one-half of median income in the metropolitan or other area where they live)

ASSETS AND SAVINGS: 5.4%
(Percentage of households that used high-cost, high-risk forms of credit to make ends meet in 2015. These include payday loans, automobile title loans, refund anticipation loans, rent-to-own and pawning)

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE: 15.4%
(Percentage of unemployed workers who were helped by unemployment insurance in 2017)

HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE: 21.4%
(Percentage of people under age 65 and below 138 percent of the poverty line who did not have health insurance at any time in 2017)
Virginia CASH Campaign

Earned Income Tax Credit Initiative (EITC)

The VACAP EITC Initiative works with community groups and coalitions throughout Virginia by providing grants to support quality free tax preparation services and help keep low and moderate income taxpayers compliant with their tax obligations. Volunteers also provide financial education and coaching to those who would like to develop positive savings habits to reach financial stability.

During the January-April 2018 tax filing season:

- $185,725 in EITC grant funds were distributed to coalitions serving taxpayers across the Commonwealth (Central Virginia, Tidewater, Northern Virginia, Piedmont and Western Virginia)

- Over 33,500 federal and state tax returns filed (electronic, paper and self-assisted) with clients obtaining almost $35 million in federal and state tax refunds

- Almost $12 million in Earned Income Tax Credit refunds

- Average federal tax refund of $1,214 for clients with an average income of about $21,500

- Over $6.7 million saved by taxpayers not using a paid preparer with clients able to keep 100% of their refunds

- Community outreach efforts include almost 5 million taxpayers across Virginia through:
  - Public Service Announcements
  - Newspaper articles and Op-Ed pieces
  - Billboards advertising free tax preparation
  - Press releases
  - Free tax preparation flyers
  - Social media postings
  - Live TV and radio
  - Financial education and asset building opportunities

- Over 1,200 volunteers gave over 50,000 hours to the VITA program (training and volunteering as preparers and educators). The VITA program depends on their commitment and dedication as they give back to their communities. Independent Sector values volunteer time in Virginia at $26.75 per hour. Our volunteer value is well over $1.6 million in giving back to their communities.
People, Inc. of Virginia’s Jan Coleman, VITA Volunteer Coordinator, presenting Volunteer Shirt to Dalton Frye. The shirt says “Changing the World always takes Volunteers”

WASHINGTON/RUSSELL COUNTY VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION DINNER AT LADY BUG CAFE IN ABINGDON, VA (PEOPLE INC. OF VIRGINIA) PICTURED LEFT TO RIGHT: SURESH IYER, VOLUNTEER; JAN COLEMAN, VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR; ANNA BONDY, VOLUNTEER; SUSAN HENDERSON, VOLUNTEER; GAIL LAMBERT, VITA ANALYST; EDIS HADZIAHMETOVIC, VOLUNTEER; COURTNEY POISTER LANDERS, VOLUNTEER; DIXIANNA HOLIDAY, VOLUNTEER; DEREK LYALL, VOLUNTEER; BARBARA SIKORA, VITA COORDINATOR; CAROL STINES, VOLUNTEER; AND LINDA PETTY, VOLUNTEER

AGENCY HIGHLIGHTS

ALEXANDRIA OFFICE OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

Helping People, Changing Lives

Ms. C. was in her mid-sixties when she arrived at the Alexandria Office of Community Services (OCS) in need of rental assistance. She had received assistance with her rent in the past. Her only income was a small pension, which did not cover her rent. Although she had worked in helping professions previously and loved the work, multiple medical issues prevented her from working at this time. She believed that she was not eligible for Social Security, but one of the OCS Case Managers helped her apply. She was approved for Social Security retirement benefits and her income doubled. She still could not afford rent in a market rate unit in Northern Virginia. She moved from her apartment and stayed with friends for a few months prior to receiving assistance with a security deposit to move to a newly-renovated unit in a tax credit property for seniors. Her new rent is now manageable on her modest income. Although she is still not able to work, she continues to help others by volunteering at her church.
APPALACHIAN COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY

AppCAA Launches Financial Opportunity Center

In partnership with Rural LISC, the Federation of Appalachian Enterprises, Virginia Housing Development Authority and BB&T Bank, AppCAA has started a new Financial Opportunity Center (FOC). FOCs are service centers that help low-to-moderate income families pay their bills in the short-term, better manage their money, and earn more money in the long-term. AppCAA has created this program to meet the needs of the people and their challenges in far Southwest Virginia.

The main idea of the FOC is to provide multiple services with a long-term commitment to helping clients reach their goals. Through the FOC, clients work and build trust with a counselor who understands their goals and challenges. The counselor provides ongoing support and encouragement to the client. AppCAA’s FOC is focused on helping clients meet their goals such as increasing their savings, building their credit score, or buying a home.

The FOC approach provides Employment Supports, Financial Capability Building, and Income Supports. Employment Supports include helping people overcome barriers to finding and keeping jobs that are stable and provide good wages. These include helping clients develop skills and education, assistance in finding and applying for jobs, and overcome barriers to getting jobs including tools and transportation.

Financial Capability Building programs provide one-on-one coaching and classes. The topics offered by AppCAA include financial education for everyone in the household, basic budgeting, building and repairing credit, and tools for building savings. AppCAA provides a range of housing counseling services including first-time homebuyer education, rental housing counseling, foreclosure prevention assistance, and post-purchase counseling.

Income Supports include helping clients to find ways to increase income, lower their bills and/or pay existing bills. AppCAA provides many income supports including Weatherization, utility assistance, free Volunteer Income Tax Assistance, and hygiene supplies. AppCAA is developing a data system to help clients learn additional benefits and programs they may qualify for including SNAP, WIC, Medicaid, and TANF.

The basic goal of AppCAA’s FOC is to help people succeed. AppCAA thrives on getting to know clients and seeing the personal accomplishments that they achieve. Their goals could be to develop a savings account, take a vacation, purchase a home, or buy Christmas presents for their children.
Arlington Employment Center Computer Training Program

Arlington’s Computer Training Program provides computer skills training to low-income residents throughout the County. The training includes Basic, Advanced and A+ computer hardware certification training. The Basic and Advanced curriculum includes instruction in Microsoft Windows, Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint and the Internet. The program has a high graduation rate, with over eighty percent for the just-completed program year.

One program participant, Donna S, a longtime resident of Arlington, was unemployed for several years. After financial hardship and frustration with a temporary employment agency, she began her relationship with the Computer Training Program by enrolling in the Basic Computer classes. She later successfully completed the Advanced Computer Training Program. The program helped her to build her skills and computer knowledge and enhance her career to fit in the modern world. After completing the classes, she applied for a job at Washington Gas. With her strong computer knowledge, she became one of the section managers at the company. She now earns a salary of more than $50,000 a year, and is very happy with her success and shares her story with other students to inspire them.

Legal Services

Just Neighbors has been serving the immigrant community of Northern Virginia for over twenty years, fostering mutual understanding between immigrants and the larger community in which they live. Just Neighbors is one of the outstanding non-profit organizations which receives community services block grant funding from Arlington County.

One example of the organization’s success is the case of Marisol. Marisol, a teacher, came to the United States from Guatemala in the 1990’s, fleeing crime and violence in her village and hoping for a better life. Marisol now has an eleven-year-old son Max, whom she says is her “entire world”. Max is a US citizen and the reason why Marisol was referred to Just Neighbors. A few years ago, Marisol was referred to a family services social worker to help her find resources to help Max, who has Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). When the social worker met Marisol’s husband and son, she noticed that Max had bruises on his body and saw signs that Marisol was being abused as well.

When Marisol and the social worker finally got a chance to be alone, Marisol confirmed that she and Max were being abused by her husband. The social worker gave Marisol the phone number for Just Neighbors, and she found a way to call and ask for help.

Just Neighbors took on Marisol’s case, helping her go through the U-Visa application process. Marisol needed several documents as evidence for her case, including proof of her restraining order against her husband. Even though it was difficult for her, she kept pushing through and found all the evidence she needed for her case. She believed that her son needed to live here, the country where he was born, the only country he had ever known, and the only country where she could access the medical and educational resources he needed to thrive.

After her U-Visa application was approved, Just Neighbors also helped her receive her green card, and she has subsequently become a United States citizen. After experiencing so much trauma, Marisol has finally gotten the documentation she needed to help build a new life for herself and her son, through legal services provided by Just Neighbors.
Reflecting on the summer, Boys and Girls Club of the Northern Neck Operations Director Jonathan Putt said, “I was really proud of our summer staff who accomplished all this while keeping over 130 kids per day fed, safe, and supervised, and for offering our kids an awesome summer experience.” Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) support from Bay Aging goes a long way to aid the Boys and Girls Club of the Northern Neck to impact the futures of our youth.

For every age group, the eight-week period was packed with activities and learning experiences—both within the Club and around the community. For six to nine-year-olds, there was the Brain Gain Lower Elementary Program designed to prevent summer learning loss in math and reading skills. For eight-year-old Heaven Carter, Brain Gain was a highlight “because we learned the same things as in school but with more fun items.” Field trips each week were planned for learning and enjoyment—Maymont Park in Richmond, Hampton Air and Space Museum, Richmond Flying Squirrels baseball game, and a visit to George Washington’s birthplace. “This was the first time I came in the summer,” said Allyssia Anderson, age six. “I had fun, and the staff was very nice to me. I really liked the trip to Maymont Park because I got to see how animals and water species live in the environment.”

For nine to twelve-year-olds, there were weekly sessions in a Boys and Girls Club of America national program called DIY STEM—an activity-based program to help them make connections between scientific principles and real-world applications. Field trips included Mariner’s Museum in Newport News, Stan’s Skateland in Montross, rock climbing at Peak Experience, and a Riverfront Canal Cruise in Richmond.

Club members also participated in “Oyster Club”, where they learned about Bay conservation and the importance of oysters to the local ecosystem and how to set oyster traps. Oyster Club met at many locations throughout the summer. Camp Kekoka, located on Fleets Bay in White Stone, was one of the most popular.

Six to twelve-year-olds all enjoyed workout sessions in the Club gym offered by Carousel and Abilities Abound Physical Therapy staffs and at the YMCA, both in the pool and spinning classes. Each day, the children rotated through the Club game rooms, learning center, computer lab and art room. Teen field trips included Bethpage Water Park in Urbanna, Science Museum of Virginia in Richmond, Westmoreland State Park, the Paragon Theater in Newport News, and three college visits. Teens also volunteered at the Irvington Crab Festival, served dinner for parents participating in the Club’s Strengthening Families Program, and prepared food for a Faith-Based Luncheon.

The partnership between Bay Aging and the Boys and Girls Club has had a positive effect on the lives of 256 children ranging in age from six to twelve years.
COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP OF STAUNTON, AUGUSTA AND WAYNESBORO (CAPSAW)

CAPSAW partners with programs focused on increasing opportunity and the capacity of our region to attain improved social and economic security. The stories below represent the work of two of the programs funded by CAPSAW this year.

**BLUE RIDGE COURT SERVICES**

Tommy began working with Blue Ridge Court Services in May. He had a fifth-grade education and was just released from a five-year penitentiary sentence. Tommy needed clothing that fit, food, job training and housing. Re-entry staff provided him with vouchers for clothing from The Valley Mission Thrift Store and food from the Verona Food Bank. He updated his resume and was provided with a list of employers with openings for ex-offenders. Tommy was eligible for multiple grants through Blue Ridge Community College’s Commercial Driver’s License Program. He is currently working to complete that program while maintaining his job driving off-road vehicles for a local construction company and is earning $15 an hour.

**BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB OF WAYNESBORO, STAUNTON AND AUGUSTA COUNTY**

“My son had a hard time getting his reading and writing figured out from early on. He made slow progress and then had a real setback in third grade and was referred for special help at school. Because I work late, I had a hard time doing the reviews they were sending home for him. Staff at the Boys and Girls Club and their reading program volunteers help him each day by going over his homework and practicing with him and signing his homework logs. At night when we get home, he reads his books to me before bed and I know he feels proud of what he learned at the Club.”

Parent of a student participating in literacy and homework program of Boys and Girls Club of Waynesboro, Staunton and Augusta County.
HAMPTON ROADS COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM

Virginia CARES Person of the Year: Mr. Henry Estes

Staff at HRCAP Virginia CARES program met Mr. Henry Estes in December of 2017. He was coming home after being incarcerated for sixteen years with the Virginia Department of Corrections. He went to prison at the age of twenty-one after getting caught up with whom and what he thought was cool. He is currently thirty-seven years old. Mr. Estes was one of the fortunate ones—he had a home to come to and a support system and he knew what direction to follow to get his life back on track.

When he first called us to set up an appointment, he informed staff that he lived in Chesapeake with his mother. We were a little concerned that he would not be able to get to our Newport News office to complete intake or participate in volunteer work or group sessions. Mr. Estes informed us that he was in need of employment and that it did not matter where we were located—he did not have a problem coming to us. When Mr. Estes walked into the office, he was dressed as if he were coming to an interview. We completed his intake and started working on helping him get employment. Mr. Estes came over to the office on a regular basis, and followed every suggestion that was given to him and every job lead. He did not question any potential employment opportunities, no matter how low the salary.

Mr. Estes was placed for employment at Damco, a warehouse located in Chesapeake. He was so excited about getting that job that he didn’t care about how much work was required or how hard the work was. The job turned out to be a bit overwhelming for him, but he informed staff that he would not quit until he found another position. About one month later, he called to inform us that he had found a better job. Mr. Estes is now employed with MASTEC/Direct TV, where he installs satellite TV. He received full benefits and a good salary.

Mr. Estes was always available to assist at our office or someone who needed help moving. When asked about how he knew about Virginia CARES, he said, “They have stuff posted up all over the dorms about the program, and everybody knows who you are.”

Mr. Estes does not have any children and is single. He spends most of his time after work in the gym, and he keeps the staff well informed about his life and activities. His mother is his strongest supporter. She is so proud of him and happy to have him home after being gone for so many years. He said that he was one of two children, and his sister passed away while he was incarcerated. This brought him closer to his mother, and made him more determined to do the right thing with his life. He does not want to leave his mother alone. He said, “Regardless of what I went through, I never gave up. I will not let anything stop me.”
HAMPTON ROADS COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM

Housing and Financial Literacy Success Stories

One client this year was a single resident of Newport News, who recently survived a stroke and has not regained full range of motion. This prevents him from returning to work. He was referred to HRCAP by his mortgage company to speak with a Housing Counselor for assistance in applying for a loan modification. After intake was completed, the client requested an in-home appointment because he was not able to drive to our office.

Although he was current on his mortgage and had not missed a payment in twenty-one years, it was increasingly difficult for him to keep all of his financial obligations current due to his reduced income. He had been receiving long-term disability from his employer, which recently converted to Social Security. An overpayment occurred, resulting in another debt. Based on his current income, he was left with only $20 after all monthly bills were paid. He anticipates that his hardship will be temporary and resolved within six to twelve months, but he cannot be sure whether there will be lasting physical effects from the stroke.

The client received one-on-one foreclosure prevention counseling to help understand which options were available to assist in retaining his home. Housing Counselors assisted him in drafting a budget and reviewing his credit report to help prioritize other consumer debt payments. Counselors assisted him in completing an application for mortgage assistance and identifying the required documents needed. His application was submitted to Loss Mitigation on his behalf.

After two months of responding to questions regarding income clarification from the loan servicer, he was offered and accepted a loan modification. This reduced his interest rate and lowered his monthly payment by more than $270. He can maintain this payment in the event he is unable to return to work. He can now sleep comfortably at night because his financial peace of mind has been restored.

Another client was a grandmother of two living in Newport News, who came to the HRCAP Housing Services Division seeking bankruptcy counseling and foreclosure prevention services. She fell behind on her bills and mortgage payments after her hours were unexpectedly cut back at work. She was also struggling with a physical disability that affected her ability to perform the kind of work she was trained to do.

She had many tough decisions to make, and she found it more difficult to financially support her grandchildren, maintain her household responsibilities and keep her job. Through comprehensive housing counseling at HRCAP, she was walked through the process of filing for bankruptcy and referred to an attorney. She accomplished the first goal in her plan of action by finding an affordable attorney to assist her in filing for bankruptcy.

Her second goal was to successfully submit a loan modification application to her mortgage company to see if she was eligible for any foreclosure prevention options. This process took some time to gather documentation, review her spending plan, and keep her encouraged. The HRCAP housing counselor followed up weekly with the client and the mortgage company weekly and submitting additional documentation as needed.

Her first application was denied due to timing issues with obtaining specific verifications. She was finally approved for a loan modification after several months of work and communication with the HRCAP housing office. Her mortgage payment has been lowered by about 50 percent, so that she may pay her bills, work on outstanding debts, and live without the fear of foreclosure. She is now working on her third goal to undergo surgery that will help her get back on her feet and become less dependent on her walker and wheelchair.
AGENCY HIGHLIGHTS

PEOPLE INCORPORATED OF VIRGINIA

Durham Family-Whole Family Approach

For nearly seven years, the Durham family has successfully improved their lives through People Incorporated’s Whole Family Approach to delivering effective, integrated services. Elizabeth Durham’s family has a history of collaborating with People Incorporated to expand their resources and opportunities. The Durham family was introduced to People Incorporated in 2012 when they received pre-purchase counseling through the Homeownership program. They attended the Homeownership Education Program in the summer of 2013 and became homeowners in November of 2013.

The Durham family once again sought services through People Incorporated in 2016, receiving Weatherization Services. Ten energy-saving measures delivered through the program ensured that the home operates efficiently and safely year-round.

One year later, the Durham family returned to People Incorporated to enroll their youngest daughter, Oliviya, in Early Head Start Home-Based Services. Elizabeth tells staff that their Early Head Start home visitor has helped Oliviya prepare for social interaction in school. In alignment with People Incorporated’s Whole Family Approach to providing integrated services, Oliviya’s home visitor informed the Durhams about other services available through People Incorporated.

Through the setting of family goals, Elizabeth, who is a stay-at-home mom, expressed interest in gaining job skills in an effort to increase the family’s income. In early 2018, she was referred to, and enrolled in, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Employment Services Training program, which is available through the organization’s Workforce Development Division.

Through the Employment Services Training program, Elizabeth received budget and credit counseling, and learned job skills that will prepare her for the workplace. “I’m a stay-at-home mom and I’ve been going to college,” Elizabeth states. The family was also able to refinance their existing vehicle at zero percent interest through the transportation assistance service included in the Employment Services Training program. The new loan, offered through People Incorporated’s Consumer Lending Division, saves the family over $100 a month. “Refinancing our car has given us more financial flexibility, and has given me the chance to start building credit in my name!”
PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY COMMUNITY ACTION

A Successful Summer Feeding Program

Pittsylvania County Community Action (PCCA) operated another successful Summer Feeding Program in 2018. The Summer Feeding Program ensures that low-income children continue to receive nutritious meals when schools are not in session, so that no child goes hungry during the summer.

PCCA operated sixty-three sites in the cities of Danville and Martinsville and in Pittsylvania County. The meal sites were held at day care centers, churches, STEM camps, basketball camps, recreation centers, public housing developments, summer schools and teen centers. Meals served included breakfasts, snacks, lunch and supper. A total of 3,131 children were enrolled in the Summer Feeding Program and were served 68,146 meals. PCCA partnered with The Salvation Army, Martinsville Public Schools and Pittsylvania County Schools to prepare daily meals. The program started the day after school closed and ended the day before the 2018-2019 school year began.

The Summer Feeding Program is sponsored by the Department of Education. “No Kid Hungry” estimates that more than thirteen million children live in homes that lack the ability to provide nutritious meals regularly. When school is not in session, the problem escalates.

Plans are underway to continue to operate this important program in 2019.

Nevertheless, She Persisted

Like most women, Angela Barnes babysat a lot of children when she was young, and along the way, she discovered that she had a knack for caring for them. But it wasn’t until a life-altering accident changed her family dynamic that she found herself in the field of childcare, realizing soon afterward that early childhood education was the career path she wanted to pursue.

Not long after her husband suffered an accident and some health issues several years ago, Angela and her young family relocated to Virginia from Pennsylvania, and suddenly she found herself in a new role—assisting in the family’s financial stability. Her husband had sustained injuries that rendered him disabled, so he retired from his job and stayed home to care for their children while Angela got a job at a local daycare center.

Eventually, Angela and her family would be introduced to the local Head Start program. At first, she became involved with the center as a parent, sending her young daughter to the center, and then getting a job as a teaching assistant and bus monitor at the center. When she was a teaching assistant, she felt a desire to return to school to earn the credentials needed to become a Head Start lead teacher. She enrolled at Danville Community College and enjoyed the flexibility the course schedule offered so that she could continue to work full-time while in school and still take care of her family.

Perseverance is a word that comes up often throughout Angela’s story, but it does little to describe her strength of will and drive. She and her family had already survived a life-changing situation, but her fortitude and resilience would be tested again when she learned that her husband was terminally ill. Going to school and working full-time while balancing family duties was challenging enough. In addition, Angela was spending time in and out of the hospital caring for her sick husband. For most people, this would be reason enough to quit, or put the rest of her life on hold—after all, there is only so much one person can take on at a time. But for Angela, a self-described spiritual person, she persevered.
“It was difficult, but I had people around to help me and continued to pray for guidance. I truly believe that God had my back and put people in place to help me,” she says about this trying time in her life. While it would be reasonable for anyone to take a pause in their education and career at this time, Angela was aware of the impressionable eyes watching her. It was a teachable moment, and she knew her children would carry the lesson learned with them for the rest of their lives. “I want my children to be proud of my accomplishments, and I want to be a positive role model,” she said.

She certainly is a positive role model. First, she went back to school at the same time that she found herself as the major support system for her family after her husband’s accident and illness became more challenging. Then she went on to complete her bachelor’s degree at Averett while her husband was ill. Angela was determined to show her children and herself that anything is possible through hard work, determination and much prayer. Angela’s husband passed away in 2008. While he may not have seen her complete her bachelor’s degree and earn her Master’s degree, and then become Head Start Director, he would swell with pride at her accomplishments. Reflecting on her experience, she recalls her time at Danville Community College that “opened the doors even more for me. There were a lot of people at DCC that really guided me along the way.”

Angela celebrated her twentieth anniversary with Pittsylvania County Community Action Head Start in September 2018.

**PROJECT DISCOVERY**

**2018-A Very Successful Year**

Project Discovery has had a very successful year in 2018. A student from one of our partner agencies, Arlington Housing Coalition (AHC), shared her story. Lydia Abraham, a 2018 high school graduate, is one of many children who has grown up in AHC’s education programs. She joined the Afterschool Program when she was six, participated in Summer Camp and Teen Program, and recently completed the College and Career Readiness Program.

A dedicated student, Lydia was accepted into eight colleges. She chose Virginia Tech because she plans to study mechanical engineering. She credits AHC staff and tutors Tim Bellaire and Christine Mader for helping her succeed.

“I can’t imagine my life without the memories and positive impact AHC has provided me,” says Lydia. “One of my role models was Ms. Christine. She was my tutor since sixth grade and always encouraged me to reach for my dreams, no matter how big.”

Along with this success, Project Discovery has also partnered with Virginia CARES and Richard Bland College to offer education and job readiness training to citizens returning from incarceration. This pilot program has already graduated its first cohort of participants and we are preparing for a second session.

Project Discovery has continued its work with Athletes for Education (A4E). In the past twelve months, A4E’s pilot program has worked with twelve student athletes. Three have enrolled in college and are receiving athletic scholarships. One is employed, and is planning to enroll at Virginia Western Community College in January 2019. The six seniors have Grade Point Averages (GPAs) between 2.0 and 3.9. Two of them have scholarship offers from Division I schools, three have scholarship offers from Division II schools, and one will go to school on an academic scholarship. The other two students requiring ongoing intervention and support are sophomores who are working to improve their GPAs to remain eligible to play sports.
Housing Counseling and Financial Wellness—A Pathway to Success

Our Financial Literacy Program assists individuals in developing financial empowerment and self-sufficiency. Financial literacy workshops help clients repair bad credit, increase personal savings, reduce debt, and establish a path to financial stability. Quin Rivers’ community-based programs serve individuals with a variety of financial goals. We understand that it may take some time to achieve financial stability, which may require substantial counseling tailored to a person’s unique situation.

Through one-on-one counseling and workshops, counselors teach individuals to increase understanding of financial concepts and improve financial well-being; develop real-life financial skills that empower clients to become financially responsible wealth-builders, homeowners, investors and productive members of the workforce; and use the Needs Versus Wants method to identify and avoid predatory lending and financial scams to build a positive credit score and establish and maintain financial well-being.

Our Housing Counseling Program assists clients in achieving stable housing. Individuals are offered in-person, one-on-one counseling, and telephone counseling. An approved initiative by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Quin Rivers’ Housing Counseling Workshops educate first-time homebuyers on the homeownership process, build stability, and eliminate debt to promote long-term financial freedom.

In addition, Quin Rivers offers Pre-Purchase Counseling with homeownership education and individual counseling aimed at assisting clients to fulfill their dream of homeownership. We offer Foreclosure Prevention with assistance from certified financial counselors for clients in danger of foreclosure to find the best remedy to cure the default. Counselors work extensively with homeowners and lenders to assess the current financial situation to develop an action plan and budget to avoid foreclosure. Quin Rivers assists with modification submission only. Our counselors are not lenders or financial advisors and no monetary funds are available.

ROOFTOP OF VIRGINIA CAP, INC.

Court-Ordered Co-Parenting Classes

Rooftop of Virginia is now an approved provider for the Supreme Court of Virginia Mandated Parent Education program. Virginia Code Sections 16.1-278.15 and 20-103, as amended, state that parties to any petition where a child whose custody, visitation or support is contested, shall show proof that they have attended, within the twelve months prior to their court appearance, or that they shall attend within forty-five days after their court appearance, an educational program conducted by a qualified person or organization approved by the Court.

Rooftop is approved to provide seminars in the City of Galax and the counties of Carroll and Grayson. The seminars are conducted for at least three but no more than thirty clients and meetings are at least four hours long. Clients are allowed to attend a seminar at any location that they choose.

Rooftop uses the curriculum: Co-Parenting: Two Parents, Two Homes which was developed by the Fairfax County Public Schools. The curriculum was developed to help parents focus on the responsibilities of parenting from separate households and to keep children out of the middle of parental conflict. The curriculum covers different models of parenting from separate homes and common co-parenting challenges. It helps parents to be aware of the effects of divorce on their children, what children need (and don’t need), parenting styles, communication, managing anger, conflict prevention and resolution, financial needs of children, new relationships, and stress management.

The overall emphasis of the seminar is to focus on the needs of the children. Self-esteem and resiliency are strongly related to the relationship between the child and the child’s parents. Parents are the key to how their child will endure the divorce process. Most parents do not want to hurt their child intentionally. With the education provided through this curriculum, it is expected that better outcomes for Virginia’s children of divorce will be achieved.
SOUTHEAST RURAL COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE PROJECT, INC.

SERCAP Continues to Assist Hobson’s Lower Village in the City of Suffolk

Located between the Nansemond River and Chuckamuck Creek near the confluence of the Nansemond and James Rivers, the small community of Hobson in the City of Suffolk consists of the Upper and Lower Villages. The water system serving the Upper Village has been stable for years and has operated without incident. The Lower Village has been plagued with challenges including capacity, compliance and financial management. In order to address these issues, the residents of the Lower Village formed the Hobson Community Well Association (HCWA) to take control of the situation and form their own water system.

SERCAP has worked with the Hobson Community in the past, and began working again to address these issues and fully restore water service to its residents. SERCAP conducted several meetings with the HCWA to discuss the process of forming a non-profit association, and the financial and managerial requirements for system ownership and operation. It quickly became evident that the monthly cost to each resident for system ownership and operation would far exceed the monthly cost of water from the City of Suffolk. SERCAP was able to commit $125,000 in grant funds through the Facilities Development Grant Program to subsidize availability fees, connection fees, and waterline installation to each household. This would enable the low-income residents of the Lower Village to connect to City Water. This was not only the most cost-effective solution, but it would provide residents with reliable drinking water that meets all state and federal standards. Once complete, the project will transform the community by providing reliable, clean safe drinking water that will improve the environmental health of the residents and the community.

Connecting the residents of the Lower Village to City Water will provide a reliable source of clean, safe drinking water, remove the potential for waterborne illnesses due to drinking contaminated water from an unsafe source, improve the overall health of the community through easy access to water for cleaning and sanitation purposes, and remove the stress caused by years of living with an unstable water system. The residents will improve their economic self-sufficiency through the provision of grant funds to cover the initial connection costs, connecting to a reliable water source with affordable monthly rates, remove the financial burden of an expensive private system, and increase each resident’s property value. Ultimately, connecting the residents to City Water will provide them with water security and peace of mind.

SERCAP’s Regional Program Assists Communities with Annual Water Quality Reports

Each year, Community Water Systems in Virginia are required to complete and distribute a Water Quality Report or Consumer Confidence Report which provides utility customers with information about their drinking water. The federally-mandated reports contain information including the source of the utility’s water and the type of treatment it receives (if any), the results of all required chemical analysis including lead and copper results and an explanation of the analysis including probable sources and potential health effects (if any), violations of state or federal waterworks regulations and what has been done to address them (if any), and the contact information for the system owner or operator.

In 2017, SERCAP assisted twenty-five community systems with these reports. In 2018, SERCAP assisted nearly fifty small water systems in Virginia by preparing their Water Quality Reports. Most of these small water systems do not have the capacity to prepare the reports, and must rely on engineering firms or technical assistance providers to prepare the reports, potentially placing a financial burden on the system. SERCAP provides assistance at no cost to the water system, enabling these utilities to comply with state and federal regulations and distribute the reports to utility customers by July 1, as required by law.

In the long term, the positive impact of SERCAP providing this technical assistance service to small water systems is to maintain the quality of life and maintain the environmental health and economic self-sufficiency for the communities and their residents. This decreases the risk of waterborne illnesses and minimizes the financial burden that may occur when water costs are unaffordable.
STEP, INC.

Bridge Over Troubled Waters

For fifteen days, Deborah and Mickey Payne called everyone they could think of looking for help. The day before the two-week stretch began, the remnants of Hurricane Michael roared through Franklin County, and they watched helplessly as it swept away their only way to and from their home.

The Paynes live off the beaten track in a mobile home atop a hill. Below, Barr Creek runs through the property and they cross it every day coming and going to and from home. They have owned and loved this picturesque setting for about fifteen years. On Thursday October 11, 2018, that bubbling, gurgling creek turned into a frothing, snarling, rushing river that took out the bridge, leaving them stranded at the top of the hill.

Both Deborah and Mickey are retired, over sixty years old, and disabled. The prospect of being stuck wasn’t pretty, but the fear of isolation in case of medical emergency was worse. “We waited a few days [before reaching out for help] and then found out that FEMA does not do roads,” Deborah said. Nor do most of the other local government service and non-profit organizations, they soon discovered. They even called cement companies to see if they could have any extra cement left over from other jobs. Everything was a dead end.

Without the financial resources to pay for the bridge to be rebuilt, things were looking pretty bleak. But Mickey had a brainstorm and arranged through his auto insurance for a roll-back tow truck to lower its bed over the washed-out bridge, reaching just far enough so that he could drive his pick-up truck onto the bed to be hauled to the other side. “But how are we going to get to the other side to the truck?”, Deborah asked. “We’ll walk across this board,” he said as he laid a 2x6 board across the gash. That got them out of the house, but imagine carrying bags of groceries or other necessities as you balance on a 2x6 over a gully filled with riprap, mud and washed-out trees. Things were feeling pretty desperate. Mickey swore that if help didn’t come soon, he’d start cutting down the remaining standing trees to fill in the gorge until they could get out.

Finally, someone referred the Paynes to United Way, which reached out to STEP, Inc. to see if the Housing and Weatherization Department might be of some assistance. In the meantime, an estimate of almost $4,000 was secured for cleaning out the wash and rebuilding the bridge. This cost was so low because of the generosity of the local excavating company, Blade Pro. Ordinarily, such a job would result in a much higher price tag.

“One of the things we pride ourselves on is the ability to locate and bring together resources to provide help as a collaborative group, when offering that help is beyond the scope of a single organization,” said STEP Executive Director Marc Crouse. Through his efforts and those of United Way’s Pam Chitwood, Redwood United Methodist Church, Faith Network, Helping Hands, Southern Area Agency on Aging, Disability Rights and Resource Center, and the Salvation Army, all committed to pitch in to cover the cost, along with STEP, United Way and Blade Pro. What was once a rough road is now a smooth ride, according to Deborah. In fact, the bridge has held up beautifully during recent heavy rains, she said.
“Good Morning, Energy Share,” a friendly voice picking up the telephone intones. “How may I help you?” Her voice is unmistakable. Anyone who ever met Ernestine “Tina” Harris can identify it. There is an exuberance of life in it, an air of longevity, and experience in the crackles of every inflection.

Seventy-two-year-old Harris, part of the Senior Community Services Employment Program (Title V) administered in the region by STEPS Inc., has lived a storied life. She grew up in Farmville during difficult times, fought discrimination as a youth leader in the NAACP, was raised by her grandmother, sprinkled in some college courses, got married and raised four children. She has worked hard all her life, learned lessons that come with success and failure, is a woman of faith, and a giving person who has a hard time saying “no” to those in need. Harris is like many of her generation—she is still committed to work.

The Title V program, which has existed since the administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson, gives seniors 55 and older facing employment barriers a chance to train in governmental agencies and non-profit organizations. The goal is to sharpen their skills, learn something new, and help them find a job.

For Harris, this means training at STEPS three days a week, helping the Dominion Energy Share Case Manager Michele Childress answer the phone, record electrical service information, assist in the processing of paperwork, helping those about to have their lights shut off get important help in a moment of crisis. Harris is enhancing her computer skills, adapting to technology, and supporting the agency every day she comes to the site. She is still serving her community and improving lives in need of a steady and helping hand.

“Love meeting people,” she says. “Love giving out information and trying to help in whatever way I possibly can.” She has spent a lifetime quietly—and sometimes not so quietly—making a difference through peaceful change. As a seventeen-year-old, she was part of a group of non-violent demonstrators seeking equality in job opportunities, nondiscriminatory business treatment and the reopening of the Prince Edward County public schools that were shuttered rather than integrated. She was among a group of protestors arrested for disturbing a public worship service when the group attempted to attend services at the all-white Farmville Baptist Church. Fifty years after her arrest, she was invited to be a special guest speaker at the same church.

Sometimes things change for the good. Harris’ story is featured in All Eyes on Prince Edward County, a publication that records the personal stories of Prince Edward County people impacted by the closing of the county’s public schools from 1959 to 1964.

Huddled in a cubicle in the STEPS’ administrative complex, Harris helps Childress coordinate payments online as the summer season winds down. People on fixed incomes sometimes have a hard time making choices between eating and paying the light bill. Energy Share doesn’t pay the whole amount for those facing a cutoff of their light bill, but it aims to help folks once per season to get over the financial hump. “Ernestine is a very dedicated worker,” Childress said. “She loves to learn new things, cares about people, and has a sense of humor. She’s always there to help when asked.” The training experience with Childress builds on Harris’ years of working as a secretary with a community action agency in the early 1970s and her thirty-one years working for Aramark on Longwood University’s campus.

“I’ve learned a lot,” Harris says of her time in the Title V program. “I’ve been able to adjust to all types of situations.” She adds, “Just to be able to have a job to come to three days a week, to get out of the house and be around other people, other than people that you see every day…perks you up…and it gives you something to look forward to.”

And it also gives her a chance to keep helping her community.
Many homeless Veterans face a myriad of challenges that they need help to overcome. Such was the case for Matthew Gay. He came to STOP Inc. after he was discharged from the Veterans Affairs Medical Center’s (VAMC) drug and alcohol program located in Hampton, Virginia. “I got out of the VA and was homeless,” Gay said. “Someone gave me the number to Mission United, then Mission United referred me to STOP Inc.”

When Mr. Gay began working with both STOP’s Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) and Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP), a host of problems were uncovered. He had been in treatment at the VAMC’s drug and alcohol program for his alcohol addiction, which was a result of his wife’s tragic death. After his wife died, Gay lost his home, his driver’s license was suspended and his car was confiscated, all due to his bouts with alcohol. He sought treatment at the VAMC and when he was released, he found himself homeless, jobless, and without resources.

Gladys Baker, Housing Navigator with STOP’s Homeless Intervention and Support (HIS) department and Olisha Sawyer with STOP’s HVRP program got to work on Mr. Gay’s case immediately. “When I started working with him, it was right before the holidays. Then a snowstorm hit the area,” Sawyer stated. “Although STOP offices were closed for the holidays, I still worked with him to offer him encouragement and to let him know that he wasn’t alone. I kept thinking, we’re celebrating with our families, and he’s homeless. I knew I had to work on his behalf.” In late January 2018, with Ms. Baker’s help, Mr. Gay obtained permanent housing. In April 2018, he was hired as a Warehouse Associate at the Navy Exchange through the efforts of Ms. Sawyer. With the support and case management provided by Amy Gill with STOP’s SSVF program and Ms. Sawyer, he has been able to meet all of his expenses since that time. “He is the epitome of success,” STOP’s Vice President of HIS concluded. “He is now where he needs to be.”

When asked why he thought programs like HVRP and SSVF are important for Veterans, Mr. Gay observed, “These types of programs give Vets a good starting point to get on track. They build your confidence. It’s unbelievable that they are able to house you before you get a job! The workshops help you with the skills you need to get a job. These programs are needed because looking for a job is rough when you haven’t been in the workforce for a while. These programs are very resourceful with connecting Vets to benefits.”

“Who are those people in the purple shirts?”, someone yelled as the youth from STOP Inc.’s SEAT (Science, Engineering, Agriculture and Technology) Summer Enrichment Camp strolled across Virginia State University’s campus. No one had any clue that it was Dr. Makola M. Abdullah, President of Virginia State, the home of the mighty Trojans, asking the question. When the youth from STOP’s summer camp were making the trip from Virginia Beach to Petersburg, they had no idea what to expect when they got there. Many of the youth participating in the field trip had never visited a college before and never thought about attending college themselves. The trip changed that thought for many of those in attendance and they got far more than they expected.

Not only did the youth have the opportunity to tour the campus and learn about the college experience, but they heard directly from VSU’s President. “I am so excited to see so many young scientists, engineers, agriculturists and technologists at one time,” he told them. “Continue on your path and remember VSU as you begin your journey into post-secondary education.” Joining Dr. Abdullah’s visit with STOP’s youth was Atif Qarni, Virginia’s Secretary of Education. He later tweeted, “VSU is doing great work in STEM [science, technology, engineering and mathematics] and providing access to many underrepresented students.”
Fifteen-year-old Nijhad Johnson, a camper from Norfolk, was in awe of Dr. Abdullah and how down to earth he was. “I couldn’t believe that the actual President of the University wanted to take a picture with us, he made me feel comfortable so I asked if I could stand beside him for the picture.” The Camp’s Director, Ms. Michelle Bryant, touted the importance of camp experiences like this for youth from low-income households. “I have been overwhelmed by the overall success of this camp. Having the opportunity to share with VSU’s President and the Secretary of Education the purpose of the camp and what we must accomplish for these young people helped me further realize that we have to keep going.”

Ms. Alexis Roberts, a fourteen-year-old Virginia Beach resident participating in the camp summed up her feelings about the trip. “I enjoyed the tour on campus. My favorite part was meeting the President. I felt important and part of something.” Ms. Roberts’ mother contacted the Camp Director and said, “Thank you for yesterday. My baby girl had a great time and can’t stop talking about it.”

The 2018 STOP SEAT Summer Enrichment Camp was made possible through sponsorships and partnerships with Priority Toyota Charity Bowl and the assistance of Mr. James Church, General Manager of Priority Acura and Mr. Dennis Ellmer, President and CEO of Priority Automotive, The City of Virginia Beach Regional Participation Grant, The Men of Faith of Virginia Beach, Mr. Julius Norman of Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority, Virginia Beach Public Schools, and Renaissance Counseling Services. “Without community partners like these, this experience may not have been possible”, said STOP’s President and CEO Ms. Regina P. Lawrence. “STOP is so grateful that our youth had this opportunity and we are honored that VSU welcomed them with open arms and allowed them to have this experience.”

TOTAL ACTION FOR PROGRESS (TAP)

Ronald Hogan, Client of the Year, TAP Domestic Violence Services

Ronald Hogan has spent nearly his entire life living in abuse. As a child, he was kidnapped by his mother and held for weeks at a time in a closet with his siblings. As an adult, he lived with an abusive spouse for forty-six years, enduring countless acts of mental, verbal and financial abuse.

Many people ask why victims choose to stay with their abusers. For Ronald, it was simple—despite attending Roanoke City Schools as a child and working at General Electric for thirty-five years, Ronald couldn’t read. He endured abuse because he was dependent upon his partner, who controlled all of their finances, and without being able to read he couldn’t look for resources to help.
One day, help arrived. The police intervened in a situation with his abusive partner and, after a court referral to TAP Domestic Violence Services (DVS), Ronald was connected with a caring case manager. He was provided with accommodation services for completing paperwork, as well as legal advocacy in the courts while addressing legal matters with his abusive spouse.

In addition, Ronald was referred to the Blue Ridge Literacy Center, where registration fees were paid by TAP DVS and he was matched with a tutor to help him learn to read. In just a few short months, he went from reading on a kindergarten level to now reading at a sixth-grade level. A few months ago, he began reading aloud in his Bible study group and reading his first Scriptures, one of his greatest desires in life.

Ronald is one of the few courageous men who step up to say, “I am a survivor and I choose happiness and safety.” Through counseling provided by TAP DVS, he is now healing from decades of abuse and trauma. He can read, is self-sufficient, and at the age of sixty-five is finally living a happy and comfortable life free of violence. Congratulations to Ronald Hogan, client of the year!

TOTAL ACTION FOR PROGRESS (TAP)
NEW RIVER COMMUNITY ACTION

**SwiftStart—A Two-Generation Approach**

TAP and New River Community Action have been partnering for the last two years on an innovative two-generation approach for helping families rise out of poverty through education and gainful employment. The SwiftStart program meets families where they are and creates a partnership with parents to support them through training and certification programs that lead to middle-income careers in healthcare, information technology and manufacturing. Not only does SwiftStart help families find and pay for child care to support training, but it also supports tuition and supportive services, often in partnership with a range of other workforce system partners.

In August 2018, a cohort of thirteen New River Valley SwiftStart participants enrolled in a Certified Clinical Medical Assistants (CCMA) program offered by Virginia Tech Continuing and Professional Education. Many of these parents were dual enrolled in other programs offered by New River Community Action, including Head Start and CHIP. Several were also dual enrolled with Virginia Career Works in the New River/Mount Rogers Region. In October, these students completed their coursework and sat for the CCMA credentialing exam from the National Healthcareer Association. All thirteen of them passed the exam and obtained their credentials. Several have already started employment with local doctors’ offices.

In the Roanoke region, Mizellore Lexima is a TAP Head Start parent who was referred to TAP’s SwiftStart program by her family development specialist. Having already gone through TAP’s Certified Nursing Aide (CNA) training program and in her second year of Registered Nurse (RN) training, SwiftStart helped with education costs for supplies and exam fees. In addition to providing financial assistance, SwiftStart acted as a support system for Mizellore’s career goals—her career mentor was there to provide encouragement at every step of the way.

Mizellore graduated from the Registered Nurse program at Virginia Western Community College in May and quickly secured employment with LewisGale Medical Center. She was the student speaker at TAP’s This Valley Works graduation this June. During her graduation speech, she expressed that TAP’s CNA program prepared her for the rigorous coursework and clinicals in the RN program, and that SwiftStart helped her make it over the finish line and into employment in her chosen field.
TRI-COUNTY COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY

_Beatrice, The Anti-Bullying Bee_

Beatrice, the Anti-Bullying Bee, dresses up as a bee. She has a poster, a bouquet of balloons and a basket that contains the brochures of the program, the bees and a duplicate bee that the children can hold.

Tri-County Community Action Agency’s Anti-Bullying Campaign features Beatrice, the Anti-Bullying Bee. Beatrice goes to elementary schools in our region to talk with the children about bullying. They learn what to do if they are being bullied and how to find help.

She introduces herself as Beatrice (Cheryl Brogdon) and then she introduces her partner (Kim Carson). She tells the children why she is there. Kim and Cheryl perform a skit and follow up with conversations with the children. They discuss what bullying is and what children can say and do if they are being bullied. Kim then shows the children the Bees that are made to give to each teacher. The Bees are their friends. If they are being bullied, they can go get a bee and bring the bee to their teacher and that teacher can help them feel safe.

Beatrice makes the anti-bullying bees for the teachers. Beatrice encourages teachers to have an area in their classroom to place the bees where the children can pick one up and bring it to them. When that child brings them the bee, it tells the teacher that the child is being bullied and that they want to feel safe.

Tri-County Community Action Agency has been providing services and programs for the counties of Halifax, Mecklenburg and Charlotte for over fifty-two years. These programs cover a multitude of community needs including Weatherization and housing services, Energy Share, Head Start, Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault.

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