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**VACAP Board of Directors Awards Annette Lewis Highest Honor Mark Grigsby Selfless Leader Award**

**Richmond, VA** - Virginia Community Action Partnership (VACAP) on behalf of the VACAP Board of Directors presented Annette Lewis, CEO for Total Action for Progress (TAP) with the Mark Grigsby Selfless Leader Award during the VACAP 2024 Legislative Conference on January 23, 2024.

This award was established by VACAP in 2013 to honor the memory of Mark Grigsby, long-time Director of the Office of Community Services at the Virginia Department of Social Services who embodied selfless leadership by serving people and communities most in need in Virginia for most of his career. The Grigsby Award is the only award that VACAP presents each year. It is considered a Lifetime Achievement Award, but the words “selfless leadership” in the title have real meaning. Selfless leaders empower their people; they share the credit; they initiate the conversation; and importantly they create the culture.

Mr. Kevin Otey, VACAP Board Chair, Ms. Ann Fisher, VACAP Governance Chair and Commissioner Danny Avula of the Virginia Department of Social Services presented the award to Ms. Lewis in front of VACAP membership and Ms. Lewis’s family. Ms. Lewis’ family in attendance for the surprise presentation included her husband and children.

“Annette’s contributions to TAP and her region are beyond comprehension,” says Mr. Otey. “As the agency was a national leader during Annette’s tenure of finding more and more ways to be innovative in serving. She also constantly built relationships with national and state leaders to raise the voice for so many without a voice. In Virginia, she led VACAP strongly as board chair and will most be remembered by her fellow leaders as someone who always took the extra effort to text, call or email us at the moments we most needed encouragement and mentorship.”

Ms. Lewis announced her retirement for March 1, 2024 after 35 years of service to Total Action for Progress (TAP). She started as a temporary employee and rose through the ranks to be CEO in May of 2015 where she has continued the legacy of being a leader in the Community Action network and making a difference in countless number of low-income Virginians lives.

Commissioner Danny Avula stated, “Anette Lewis represents the best of community action as she has lived out the promise of community action. 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.”

The Mark Grigsby award was presented to Ms. Lewis’ predecessor before she took over as CEO to Mr. Ted Edlich in 2015 following 40 years of service as President of TAP. TAP was a catalyst for founding VACAP’s statewide community action agencies.

“Annette Lewis is a humble servant leader, whose wisdom, compassion, and support for her staff, partners and fellow leaders has inspired so many successful efforts to create pathways out of poverty for thousands across our state and nation. Annette’s vision and ability to transfer hope and urgency to the need for us to find common ground ways to help our neighbors living in poverty to achieve their dreams are an inspiration to our network and so many,” said Erik Johnston, VACAP President and CEO.

The year 2024 marks the 60th year since the Community Action Network was established to help American families and communities overcome obstacles to poverty. Of the over 1,000 agencies across the country, 31 of them are here in Virginia working every day to create opportunities and transform the lives of their neighbors, making communities stronger and helping families thrive.

### **About Virginia Community Action Partnership**

Virginia Community Action Partnership is the statewide membership association for Virginia’s thirty-one non-profit private and public community action agencies. VACAP’s mission is to build capacity and competencies of Virginia’s community action agencies to achieve their mission of creating economic opportunities and facilitating mobility from poverty for the people of Virginia. At VACAP, we are committed to a future in which all of Virginia’s community action agencies are high impact and people and places across Virginia are thriving.