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Fall 2009 Newsletter

In This Issue

- Welcome New Faces!
- Community Highlight:
Gila County
Weatherization
- SNAP in the news
- EITC Task Force
Updates
- People's Information
Guide
- Paint-A-Thon
- ACAA is Now Hiring!

Letter from the Director

I write this as we await news from the Governor's office about another special legislative session to address the budget deficit facing this state. While the depressed economy and job market have created an unprecedented demand for services, we cannot lose sight of the number of families facing hardship and seeking assistance, many for the first time ever.

I am not going to belabor our current economic climate or possible solutions at this time. I am however, going to ask you to do several things as we move forward together to resolve these issues and provide support and ideas to our elected and appointed leadership.

As you work with families around the state, please ask them if they are willing to share their stories with ACAA, with members of the media and with their elected officials so that we may more effectively advocate on their behalf. Ask them if they will join us as we work to meet with leaders in each county to raise awareness about the issues families are facing and the impact on the entire community in which we live and work. Stories and contact information for families willing to speak out about what they are facing can be emailed to info@azcaa.org.

Please take care of yourself. Now more than ever, as the stress of our jobs and our personal lives combine, it is time to take a moment to think, to create and to renew our own spirits so that we may continue to serve our communities, friends, and families in new and innovative ways.

ACAA recently hosted a community forum with Dr. Margaret

Wheatley focused on how we can create a healthy Arizona community in which all members may thrive, and in which we may provide the support and assistance needed when some among us are vulnerable. Meg presented 12 principles to guide our work, which I share here for your consideration and use.

When natural disasters happen, neighbors and strangers rush in, and we are often surprised by who shows up. We've all seen this happen throughout this current economic crisis. As we move forward as community, consider the following:

1. People support what they create (nothing about us without us is for us)
2. People act most responsibly when they care - are we working on issues we care about?
3. Conversation is how we learn about one another - how often do we use conversation rather than a more technical problem solving process?
4. To change the conversation, change who is in the conversation
5. Expect leadership to emerge ANYWHERE
6. Focus on what's possible
7. The wisdom we need is already here, solutions and leaders are inside us, we need to look inside our community
8. Everything's a failure in the middle, change occurs in cycles and can be messy
9. Learning is the only way to become smarter about what we do. How often do we take time to learn? Can we view our work as experiments that teach us how to succeed?
10. Meaningful work is a powerful human motivator, every day it's a choice to continue, perseverance is a discipline. We need to reground ourselves every day.

11. Humans can handle anything as long as we're together - are we paying attention to our relationships -- are we supporting one another?

12. Generosity, forgiveness and love are the most important elements in community. If someone would observe our community, would they see these qualities in us?

ACAA will be continuing to host conversations that lead to action and new and innovative approaches to serving our communities, and we invite you to participate in any way possible. We are striving for a future that holds more possibility. Please read on about other activities and programs in which we are engaged, and please let us know what we can do better, what else we can be doing and how we may better support and work for you.

Cynthia Zwick

Executive Director

Welcome New ACAA Staff Member Miquelle Scheier!

As the newest member of ACAA, I am thrilled to be a part of this team. I recently retired from Coconino County Community Services where I directed the operations of the Community Resource Division which included Emergency Services, Community Outreach and Youth Development. For the last 10 years I have also managed the Coconino Rural Environment Corps (CREC), modeled after the Civilian Conservation Corps, and recently CREC established, through stimulus funding, an Energy Conservation Corps to create an apprenticeship-style training and on-the-job skill development in retrofit services to underemployed and dislocated workers throughout the City of Flagstaff and Coconino County. I have spent the last 25 years of my career working with low-income individuals and families, the homeless and vulnerable populations. It was with great enthusiasm that I

accepted the position of Weatherization Outreach Program Manager. I look forward to continuing to serve Arizona families in a meaningful way.

As the Weatherization Outreach Program Coordinator I will be responsible for the outreach efforts related to the Arizona Weatherization Assistance Program. I will help our state to articulate and put a face on our weatherization program. We want people to know how effectively and efficiently we are spending these weatherization stimulus dollars throughout the state and what a difference this money is making for our low income families, for those entering the workforce as newly trained energy efficiency workers, and for the numbers of businesses this money helps to support.

I will be visiting weatherization assistance programs throughout the state and working with the Community Action Agencies to identify and highlight stories from each region. I look forward to working with you. If you have stories or comments about our weatherization programs please contact me at mscheier@azcaa.org.

Weatherization Works!

With stimulus dollars on everyone's mind we find ourselves in a new and important era - an era of opportunity and challenge. States are receiving intense scrutiny, interest and attention from all quarters on their weatherization programs. Nowhere is this more true than in Arizona as we gear up to spend the additional \$57 million we have received in weatherization stimulus funding.

In my new capacity as Weatherization Outreach Manager I recently had the opportunity to observe Gila County's weatherization program in action. I could not help but be struck by the impact the program has not only on the low-income individuals and qualified families, providing them with efficient heating and cooling systems, solar hot water heaters, a new roof, insulation and numerous small measures that made such a

difference, but on the community as well . It has created new jobs by providing Gila County energy crews opportunities for new businesses. The weatherization program is having an impact on neighborhoods and communities in Gila County.

The before and after views of homes was astonishing. Many of the individuals I met lived for years in energy inefficient, often unsafe and hazardous homes and this program offers them an opportunity to reduce their heavy energy costs and provides them a clean and safe environment in which to live. From the man whose home was built in the 1930's and lacked adequate insulation, to the grandmother who had to put out buckets in her living room every time it rained to catch the water that poured from the ceiling, to the couple that lost their job and their home and had to relocate to a mobile home that was badly in need of a revamped cooling system - this program has changed lives and offered hope to many.

Before:

After:

And the changes are not just for the families whose homes were weatherized; a Gila County resident took this opportunity to start a new business that provides the energy audits for the houses the Gila County weatherization program weatherizes, creating new jobs for Gila County residents.

Weatherization Works! Through Community Action Weatherization Assistance Programs like the one in Gila County, and throughout the rest of the state, we are seeing increased local employment, improved housing quality, better health and safety for residents and a reduced cost on energy bills.

- Miquelle Scheier

Welcome Renee Ouellet, ACAA Intern!

Hello, my name is Renee Ouellet and I am an MSW- PAC student

at Arizona State University. My interests are in community organizing and the history of social movements, as well as animal-human connections and animal advocacy. I hold degrees in both social work (BSW) and chemical dependency counseling, and have previously worked as a substance abuse counselor at Arizona State Prison Phoenix West. I am a Southern California native, and have lived in Arizona for approximately nine years now with plans to head to the Pacific Northwest when I finish school.

SNAP Enrollment in Arizona At a Record High

The number of households enrolled in SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as Food Stamps) increased by 41.51% between September 2008 and September 2009. With 941,995 individuals receiving benefits, Arizona is at a record enrollment level. The average household is receiving \$311.00 per month, according to DES reports. These dollars help supplement household food budgets and also stimulate Arizona's local economy. The increase in caseload represents a \$55,432,400 increase in benefit dollars coming into Arizona. For every \$5 in new SNAP benefits, \$9.20 in community spending is generated, meaning that the increase between September 2008 and September 2009 brought **\$101,995,616** of spending into Arizona's economy.

Wondering if you or someone you know might qualify? Prescreening is easy, free, and confidential on www.arizonaselfhelp.org. ACAA also offers free training to help your staff and volunteers understand SNAP eligibility and discover creative ways to increase access of those you serve. Please contact Katie Kahle at kkahle@azcaa.org if you are interested!

Below are some articles about SNAP in Arizona and across the United States. Please click on the links to access the full articles.

Half of U.S. kids eventually must use food stamps

by Lindsay Tanner - Nov. 3, 2009 12:00 AM

Associated Press

CHICAGO - Nearly half of all children in the United States and 90 percent of Black youngsters will be on [food stamps](#) at some point during childhood, and fallout from the current recession could push those numbers even higher, researchers say.

The estimate comes from an analysis of 30 years of national data, and it bolsters other recent evidence on the pervasiveness of youngsters at economic risk. It suggests that almost everyone knows a family that has received food stamps or will in the future, said lead author Mark Rank, a sociologist at Washington University in St. Louis.

"Your neighbor may be using some of these programs, but it's not the kind of thing people want to talk about," Rank said.

The analysis was released Monday in the November issue of *Archives of [Pediatrics](#) and Adolescent Medicine*. The authors say it's a medical issue pediatricians need to be aware of because children on food stamps are at risk for malnutrition and other ills linked with poverty.

"This is a real danger sign that we as a society need to do a lot more to protect children," Rank said.

Read the rest of this story [here](#)

Restocking their lives

Recession lifelines stretched thin: Area food banks are struggling to shore up family budgets as the recession batters the working poor.

By LARRY HENDRICKS

Assistant City Editor
Sunday, November 01, 2009

Rich Metzner and partner Barbara Alexander have been going to the Northern Arizona Food Bank for the last six months. He works at Pilkington Glass. She works at Avis.

"We had plenty of money before the economy went down," Metzner said. They've had to cut back their budget up to 28 percent, Metzner added.

Alexander said the two have not had wage increases in years, yet the cost of living continues to rise to the point that they don't have enough money to afford food through a month. The emergency food box they came to get will help stretch their budget a bit farther.

"We're doing better than most, but there's only so much money in the budget," Metzner said.

Metzner and Alexander are part of a growing number of new faces showing up at the city's two food banks say the food banks' directors. And that growing need is being met with dwindling donations just as the holiday season -- when need rises even more -- approaches.

"I haven't seen anything like these numbers," said Kerry Ketchum, executive director of the Northern Arizona Food Bank. "We're like a bank. We offer withdrawals, and right now, our withdrawals are greater than our deposits."

For instance, emergency food handed out this past June doubled from the same month the previous year, Ketchum said. People wanting emergency food box help must meet certain income requirements.

Read the rest of this story [here](#)

October 28, 2009, 4:13 pm

Costco Will Accept Food Stamps Nationwide

By [Jennifer 8. Lee](#)

Costco said it would accept food stamps nationally, in an expansion of a New York City program [that was announced in May](#) after [local politicians placed pressure](#) on the company. Food stamp enrollment has soared nationwide, and in New York it has [surged to 1.6 million](#).

Company executives hope to have food stamp acceptance in place in half the company's 407 warehouse-style stores by Thanksgiving...

Read the rest of this story [here](#)

As jobless multiply, so do people getting food stamps

As Arizona's unemployment insurance trust fund is [running out of money](#), the state's [food stamp](#) caseload continues to swell to staggering levels.

According to the September [report](#) of the Arizona Department of Economic Security, there were 942,000 people receiving aid from the federally funded [food stamp program](#), which is now known as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Average aid in September amounted to \$4.40 per day.

At its recent growth rate, the state figures to pass 1 million recipients by the holidays.

Maricopa County passed the 500,000 mark in September. By early next year, there could be as many [food-stamp](#) recipients in the county as there were in the entire state at the outset of the recession.

The numbers shouldn't come as a surprise. Since the recession officially began in December 2007, Arizona has lost a greater share

of its [workforce](#), 10 percent, than any other state in the country. That's nearly 268,000 people.

There is at least some reason for hope.

The growth in food stamp enrollment has now fallen three straight months for the state and four straight for the county.

--*Ronald J. Hansen*

Thursday, October 22, 2009 at 06:13 PM

Apply online for SNAP and AHCCCS

The Department of Economic Security has launched its online application, Health-e-Arizona, for enrollment for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), medical coverage and cash assistance. You can use Health-e-Arizona even if you have applied before or are already receiving benefits.

Visit [Health-e-Arizona](#) to get started.

EITC Task Force Updates

The EITC Task Force, formerly under the Governor's Office, has moved and is taking on some new roles. In an effort to keep the work done by the Task Force community-based and representative of statewide needs and interests, ACAA has volunteered to take the lead. The Task Force is also looking into ways to expand its focus to include financial literacy and related pieces.

Richard Peterson, facilitator with the City of Phoenix, introduced the results from the strategic planning survey, as well as a list of focus initiatives taken from survey results. The survey was filled out by 22 people and provided a window into the ideas and concerns of group members. Based on survey results, it was

determined that the mission statement should now reflect the issues the group has chosen to focus on in order of importance. The mission statement will now read: To support the economic empowerment of Arizonans in need through Collaboration, Education and Advocacy. Also of importance, the English version of the VITA brochure has been finalized however; the Spanish brochures continue to be a work in progress. Digital copies of the brochure will be sent out in the meantime until the final product is complete. There will be 201,000 copies printed and they will be out by December 3rd for the first batch and December 17th for the additional batch. In addition to the brochures there will be posters which will come in both letter size as well as 11x17. Orders for materials are currently being taken. If you are interested in receiving materials, please email Renee at rouellet@azcaa.org.

People's Information Guide 2010 Edition Coming Soon!

The People's Information Guide: Where to go for help is undergoing a revision! Our 2007 - 2009 Edition was wildly popular, with 300,000 English and 100,000 Spanish printed and distributed across the state. Our 2010 Edition will be available soon, so stay tuned for updates.

In the meantime, we still have some copies of the 2007 - 2009 Edition available. If you need a copy, please email ACAA at info@azcaa.org and be sure to include your contact information. Once the printed version is gone, you can still access it on our website at www.azcaa.org.

Interested in helping ACAA with our 2010 revision? Have some time to donate to verifying information and proofreading? Please send us an email at info@azcaa.org and let us know how you'd like to help!

Bashas' Shop & Give Program

Looking for an easy way to support ACAA? Bashas' shoppers can

help us raise money through the Shop & Give Program, which donates 1% of purchases made by Thank You Card holders to the non-profit of their choice, and if you are a card holder you can designate ACAA to receive your donation!

Registering to donate to ACAA is simple! All you need to do is give Bashas' our Organization ID # **24432** either in the store next time you use the card, or online through this link: <http://www.bashashopandgive.com/cardno.php>. If you choose to do it online, please have your Thank You Card with you as they will ask for your Card Number, located on the back of the card.

It's important to register every year or your donation won't be linked to ACAA. The Program runs September through April, and now is the perfect time to make sure your card is linked to ACAA!

We appreciate you taking the time to designate ACAA to receive 1% back on all your purchases at Bashas' stores! Please feel free to contact us at info@azcaa.org with questions.

Valley of the Sun Paint-a-thon

I participated in the Valley of the Sun Paint-A-Thon on October 24th with a fantastic group of volunteers, family, and friends. We painted the Mesa home of Mr. and Mrs. C who were two of the nicest people you could hope to meet, and even enlisted the help of their son Jimmy and two young grandchildren. We worked, laughed, enjoyed music, food, and good company, but most importantly our group was given the opportunity to revitalize the home of a family in need and make a few new friends.

The paint-a-thon was a fantastic experience for painters and homeowners alike, and I look forward to participating

in the project again next year.

- Renee Ouellet

ACAA IS NOW HIRING!

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT POSITION

Arizona Community Action Association (ACAA) unites communities to end poverty through community based initiatives and solutions. The Arizona Community Action Association is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit agency created in 1967 to address poverty across Arizona. Through a collaboration of nearly 300 organizations and individuals, ACAA develops and implements strategies to address and ultimately eliminate poverty.

ACAA currently has an opening for a part time Administrative Assistant position. This position is responsible for providing administrative and clerical support to the Executive Director, Board, committees, and staff.

General responsibilities include: answering phones, greeting visitors and responding to general informational emails; opening and distributing mail daily; maintaining organization files; and assisting where needed on organizational projects.

General skills needed include: ability to communicate effectively both verbally and in writing; knowledge of Microsoft office programs, including Word, Excel, and Power Point; and an ability to work independently, ensuring deadlines are met and timelines adhered to.

If you are interested in this position, please send your resume and cover letter to info@azcaa.org, or fax to 602.604.0644. The salary for this position is \$15,000 plus paid benefits. To learn more about ACAA, please visit our website at www.azcaa.org.

ENERGY PROGRAM MANAGER POSITION

Arizona Community Action Association (ACAA) unites communities to end poverty through community based initiatives and solutions. The Arizona Community Action Association is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit agency created in 1967 to address poverty across Arizona. Through a collaboration of nearly 300 organizations and individuals, ACAA develops and implements strategies to address and ultimately eliminate poverty.

ACAA currently has an opening for an Energy Program Manager. Responsibilities include overall responsibility for the management of all Home Energy Assistance contracts, including: the preparation of grant proposals, program reports, budgets and fiscal reports in a timely manner; compliance with the terms of all contracts and grants; conduct program surveys and analyze and interpret data based on the information collected; serve as liaison to local groups and organizations, Community Action Agencies, state agencies, contractors and other partners; create, coordinate and disseminate information related to the contracts being administered; prepare statistical information, project reports and visual aids needed for presentations; and responsible for the coordination and facilitation of training programs statewide and in-house when appropriate.

Skills and abilities sought include: Knowledge of and experience with project management, including research, writing, grant preparation and budget preparation; ability to plan and organize work, meetings and projects; ability to present ideas effectively, both orally and in writing; ability to analyze, interpret and report research findings; ability to travel within and outside Arizona; ability to work independently, make decisions and exercise resourcefulness and judgment in all decisions and activity; possess a Bachelor's degree; a minimum of 3-5 years relevant professional experience; and excellent communication skills, both written and verbal.

If you are interested in this position, please send your resume and

cover letter to info@azcaa.org, or fax to 602.604.0644. The salary for this position is \$36,000 plus paid benefits. For more information about ACAA, please visit our website at www.azcaa.org.

PROGRAM MANAGER FOR STRATEGIC CAPACITY BUILDING AND COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY POSITION

Arizona Community Action Association (ACAA) unites communities to end poverty through community based initiatives and solutions. The Arizona Community Action Association is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit agency created in 1967 to address poverty across Arizona. Through a collaboration of nearly 300 organizations and individuals, ACAA develops and implements strategies to address and ultimately eliminate poverty.

ACAA currently has an opening for a Program Manager. Responsibilities include working with community action agencies to: improve capacity; utilize information technology to better integrate service delivery and reporting; improve program performance; conduct statewide strategic planning and coordination activities; market, communicate and conduct outreach activities to ensure communities are fully informed of services provided by CAA's throughout the State; provide support to CAA's and other community organizations to sustain the impact of the Recovery Act funding.

Skills and abilities sought include: Knowledge of and experience with community action issues; familiarity with the human service delivery system; ability to guide and supervise the work of outside strategic planning consultants; facilitate training related to board governance and fiscal responsibility; collect, analyze and report state and national ROMA outcome data; ability to plan and organize work, meetings and projects; ability to present ideas effectively, both orally and in writing; ability to analyze, interpret and report research findings; ability to travel within and outside Arizona; ability to work independently, make decisions and

exercise resourcefulness and judgment in all decisions and activity; possess a Bachelor's degree; a minimum of 3-5 years relevant professional experience; and excellent communication skills, both written and verbal.

If you are interested in this position, please send your resume and cover letter to info@azcaa.org, or fax to 602.604.0644. The salary for this position is \$45,000 plus paid benefits. For more information about ACAA, please visit our website at www.azcaa.org.

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