2016-2017 Annual Report

Mission

The Mission of Blue Water Community Action is to advocate for and provide individuals with limited income an opportunity to become socially and economically self-sufficient in the community.

A Message from the Director

On the move again! Ten years ago, when we moved into our current office on the second floor of Knowlton's Ice Museum, I vowed I'd never move again. I should have known better than that. Here we are making preparations to move One Last Time! As we get closer to our closing date, the excitement is increasing. After over 50 years of our main office and Port Huron area classrooms moving in and out of buildings all over the area, we will finally have a home to call our own!!!!

What is now the Port Huron Baker College complex will soon be our new home. With well over 90,000 square feet, we will have room to share. Baker College will remain in the complex for at least a year after we take ownership and St. Clair County Community Mental Health moved into a portion of the west building last summer with their ABA program. Even with sharing the building with others, we will have plenty of space to provide current services and have room for expansion.

There will be many benefits to having a single location for our stakeholders to access programs and services that will maximize their ability to move towards social and economic self-sufficiency. The classrooms will be appropriate for the children and there will be space for gross motor activities and a fenced-in playground. “Intentional” two-generation programing can be developed to help mom and/or dad learn how to be the best parents they can be and work on moving out of poverty. Down the road, not too far, we’ll build our very own kitchen to better provide for the nutritional needs of the children.

We hope that you share our excitement and join us as we physically move, One Last Time, so that we can keep the individuals and families in St. Clair County experiencing poverty, moving toward self-sufficiency well into the future.

Thank you for your continued support,

Melinda K Johnson
...Kindergarten Readiness

Each year Head Start teachers work with children and their families to ensure the greatest preparation for kindergarten. Besides classroom activities, families are provided educational homework activities that are tied to our school readiness goals. Teachers and families work together to create strategies and goals to individualize for the child’s transition into kindergarten. For the program year 2016-2017 our educational preschool program had the following results.

- 98.5% of four-year-old children were kindergarten ready in the area of perceptual, motor, and physical development.
- 98.2% of four-year-old children were kindergarten ready in the area of social and emotional development.
- 98.5% of four-year-old children were kindergarten ready in the area of approaches to learning, specifically creative arts.
- 98.3% of four-year-olds were kindergarten ready in the area of language and literacy.
- 98.4% of four-year-olds were kindergarten ready in the area of cognition, specifically mathematics development.

...Healthy Minds and Bodies

Many children in our program have been demonstrating an inability to regulate emotions with an increase in negative behaviors, low self-esteem, and a general lack of compassion, empathy, and respect for self and others. There has also been an increase in children diagnosed with ADHD and ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder).

Our goal is to create calm environments where children learn to identify their emotions and self-regulate. This ultimately reduces the number of behavior incidents and leads to an increase in classroom safety and instructional time.

Many classrooms are utilizing yoga and mindfulness on a daily basis. Yoga and mindfulness focuses on the whole child so they learn how to identify, understand, and express emotions in a healthy way. Yoga teaches children about their bodies and how to take care of them. They learn how to recognize how they feel, what they need to feel better, and how to ask for what they need.

Teachers who are routinely using yoga and mindfulness in their classroom report a decrease in behavior incidents, and an increase in classroom safety and focused instructional time. Their classroom exhibits a sense of community with an overall feeling of classroom satisfaction.

...Prepare Children to go Back to School

Every year families forego other necessities to purchase school supplies for the beginning of the school year. For many this can be a heavy burden. The Backpack Giveaway helps alleviate some of the burden by providing a backpack to Elementary and Middle School Children with the basic supplies to begin their year. Each backpack is filled with paper, pencils, folders, pencil pouch, toothbrush, toothpaste, and other items necessary for their grade level. In addition, preschoolers receive a backpack with a reading book, activity book, crayons, toothbrush, and toothpaste. By providing these basic items families can focus on other expenses. Distributions are held in August in three communities: Port Huron, East China, and Capac. All of this is provided through the generous sponsors/donors that provide the funds and donations of supplies. In August of 2017, 1,363 backpacks were given away with an additional 170 backpacks given out during the year for emergency situations.
...Keeping our Community Warm

Brenda came to BWCA in need of help with weatherizing her home. Her home was cold during the winter and her utility bills were high. During the Energy Audit it was found that her furnace and refrigerator were inefficient and her insulation was insufficient in the belly of her mobile home. The weatherization program was able to replace her furnace with a high energy efficient furnace and provide a new more energy efficient refrigerator. Other work included: insulation, stopping air leakages, installing a bath ventilation fan, CO detector, and smoke detector to ensure that the home is more energy efficient to reduce energy costs. By tracking her DTE and SEMCO Energy bills for the 12 months prior to weatherizing the home and 12 months after it was determined that the SEMCO energy bill was decreased by 25% and the DTE energy bill was decreased by 63%. Brenda was very happy to obtain weatherization for her home.

Along with Brenda, forty-two homes received services as part of the Weatherization program.

...Engaging Families

369 children from 340 families received Head Start services in one of 11 classrooms located throughout the county. 163 pregnant women, infants and toddlers from 134 families received Early Head Start services at home or in a classroom at Anchor Bay. 44% of Early Head Start and 38% Head Start children were enrolled more than one year. Both programs were at 100% of funded enrollment throughout the program year. 80% of families served were below 100% of the federal poverty line, 13% we between 100% and 130% of the poverty line, and 7% were over income.

...Improving Children’s Health

Head Start and Early Head Start programs help ensure families complete exams that will lead to healthier children and lead to better learning capabilities. Children and families are educated on healthy habits and lifestyles, and the program completes various health related assessments.

Head Start
- 93% of Head Start children received a complete physical exam
- 2% needed and received medical treatment
- 98% of children received a dental exam
- 85% received preventative dental treatment
- 5% needed dental treatment, with 50% of those receiving it

Early Head Start
- 67% of children had up-to-date well-child check-ups
- 74% of oral health check-ups were completed according to the EPSDT guidelines.

Nutritious meals were served at all center-based Early Head Start and Head Start classrooms. Meals include breakfast, lunch, and/or snack depending on the time of service. For the program year, 53,532 meals and 33,046 snacks were served.
...Relieving Hunger

While it is true that hunger and poverty often go hand in hand, poverty is not the ultimate determinant of food insecurity. People living above the poverty line are often at risk of hunger as well. Unemployment, household assets, the lack of transportation, and even demographics can make it difficult to access the nutritious food people need to thrive.

Food insecure households are not necessarily food insecure all the time. Many households need to make decisions on a month by month basis between important basic needs such as housing and medical bills, or purchasing nutritionally adequate foods. This is especially true of seniors who live on a fixed income.

That is where BWCA’s food programs come to the rescue. Like superheroes (without the cape) our volunteers, over 500 of them every year, swoop right in to provide supplemental food to low income senior citizens and families in St. Clair County. They pack, they deliver, they load and unload trucks, handle paperwork, and give smiles that brighten days all to help stock shelves in pantries and cupboards throughout the area.

In 2017, BWCA’s volunteers helped to distribute 392,926 pounds of food packed into 13,580 boxes! To accomplish that feat these superheroes donated over 3,000 hours of their time many of whom come back month after month, year after year, in their commitment to help reduce hunger. Now THAT is a beautiful thing!

...Home Ownership

"It’s the most beautiful house I have been in" Amber Lopez stated when talking about the 4-bedroom, 3-bathroom home she and her husband purchased in February of 2017. Prior to their purchase, the Lopez family had received assistance through Section 8 housing. Amber explained how she was ready to go back to work and get off state aid, when family circumstances brought two more children into their lives. In 2016, Amber attended a Getting Ahead class offered to Head Start Families; while in the class Amber set a goal for her family to purchase a home. The Lopez family then went through the Homebuyer Education course and followed up with pre-purchase individual counseling. This family of five, now live in a 2,535-square foot home in Fort Gratiot, Michigan, which they purchased through a USDA loan, offering a 3.25% fixed interest rate and a subsidy that covers all but 1% of the interest charged on the home. Additional perks include lower water bills, better schools and a yard for her children to play in that is backed by protected land and a deer sanctuary. The Lopez’s are one out of the 35 individuals and families to purchase a home after going through the Homeownership Program in the 2016/2017 fiscal year.

The Asset Development Department hosted a total of 10 in-person Homebuyer Education classes, which had a total of 88 participants. An additional 36 participants were reached through the new addition of on-line Homebuyer Education. Twenty-five clients followed up with individual pre-purchase counseling after attending a Homebuyer Education class.

The Asset Development Department also provided thirty-five families with Foreclosure Prevention Services which assists with mortgage or property tax foreclosure. Over 150 youths, ages 14-18, received 8 hours of financial education through Youth Financial Education, sponsored by the United Way, Rotary Club of Port Huron, and Blue Water Home Loans during the 2017 program year!

...A New Home for Blue Water Community Action

Great changes are coming to Blue Water Community Action as we continue the process for acquiring our new home, what is now the Baker College complex. What an asset it will be to our community to have our Community Services programs and our greater Port Huron area Children’s Services programs in one location. We will soon be able to maximize client access to our programs and services and be able to offer a two generation approach. Some remodeling will need to be completed before the move can take place, but we hope to be all settled in for the 2018/2019 program year.

The agency has begun a capital campaign in order to help with the purchase and renovation of the building. Donations are being accepted with opportunities available to name the center, classrooms and playgrounds based on contributions. One-time gifts and alternative opportunities for support are available. To learn more about how you can help, contact Melinda Johnson at (810)982-8541.
### Children's Services Financials for 2016/2017

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<th>HS Budget</th>
<th>HS Expenditures</th>
<th>EHS Budget</th>
<th>EHS Expenditures</th>
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#### BWCA 2016-2017 Financials

- **Contribution:** $763,815
- **Local:** $101,995
- **State:** $748,733
- **Revenue:** $6,315,535

#### Expenditures by Category

- **Federal:** $4,492,643
- **State:** $748,733
- **Local:** $101,995
- **Contribution:** $73,429
- **Other:** $46,961

- **Children’s Services:** $4,649,673
- **Nutrition & Health:** $299,299
- **Other:** $219,299
- **Home Weatherization:** $470,131
- **Client Assistance:** $560,811
- **Housing:** $68,744
- **Administrative Expenses:** $501,403
- **Direct Program Service:** $4,979,056

#### Children's Services Financial Audit

BWCA’s financial audit was prepared by Stewart Beausaerts and Whipple for the year ended September 30, 2017. BWCA was found to have no material weaknesses, questioned costs, or significant deficiencies in the financial review, and is qualified as a low-risk audit.

#### Triennial Federal Review

April 2015-100% compliance after one non-compliance corrected while on site.
Community Partnership Awards

Thomas D. Melms “Beacon of Light” Award

Presented by the Blue Water Community Action Board of Directors to recognize an individual or community organization that has made a significant contribution toward improving the quality of life for low-income people.

Congratulations to... Juanita Gittings

Outstanding Employee of the Year Award

Nominated by their peers in recognition of outstanding leadership, continued commitment and quality services to low-income families and children.

Congratulations to... Amy Bark

Volunteer of the Year Award

To recognize a volunteer who has made a significant contribution toward improving the quality of life for low-income people.

Congratulations to... Shari Stoneburgh

Foster Grandparent Award

To recognize a foster grandparent who demonstrates outstanding commitment and volunteer service to the Head Start program.

Congratulations to... Robert Cowper