

# Hope, Help, and Change

IN UNCERTAIN TIMES



**Community Action**

*Helping people. Changing lives.*



*Community Action leads the way to eliminate conditions of poverty and creates opportunities for people and communities to thrive.*

*“Community Action is on the front lines of this crisis, providing support that keeps families housed, keeps kids in school, and keeps food on their tables.”*

## Dear supporter,



It has been quite a year. At the beginning of the summer, vaccines were rolling out and we had reason to hope the pandemic would finally come to an end. But within a couple months, we were thrown back into uncertainty. Uncertainty about the safety of our children and their return to school. Uncertainty about the economic recovery. Uncertainty about returning to work and having the child care available to make that possible.

One thing that is certain is that the impact of this pandemic on low-income families in our community is deep and sustained. Their incomes were devastated by the pandemic. Even with an expanding job market these families have a steep and long climb ahead. They need more help and they need help for longer periods of time. Community Action, as always, is on the front lines of this crisis, providing support that keeps families housed, keeps kids in school, and keeps food on their tables. And we could not do it without generous donors like you.

The stories that follow show how your support provided a lifeline to families during this difficult year. Your support gave them the safety and stability they needed to survive and begin to rebuild.

For many families, the recovery will be long and slow. These are the families I think about as we plan for the year ahead. It can feel a bit daunting, but then I think about you. Your generosity this last year was simply amazing. I know that with committed people like you in our corner, we can do what it takes to help families make a full recovery – as long as it takes.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kemp".

Kemp Shuey  
Executive Director



**Struggling to survive without a home, Shaena found lifechanging safety and support at our family shelter.**



*In 2020, Shaena found herself in a situation she never expected. She was homeless and she was expecting a baby. She had spent a year staying in hotels when she could afford it and sleeping in her car when she couldn't. But then she found Community Action's family shelter and it changed her life.*



Until a spell of medical problems prevented her from working, Shaena had a good job as a CNA at an assisted living facility. She qualified for unemployment, but it simply wasn't enough to cover rent and she became homeless. A family member helped her pay for a room at an extended stay hotel in the beginning. Then the pandemic hit and she just couldn't find her way out of her situation. Drug use was rampant at the hotel, and after 15 years of being clean and sober she relapsed. Then she got pregnant.

She felt so ashamed to be in this situation. While her intense shame could have paralyzed her, she refused to let that happen. Instead, she used it as motivation to make some serious changes.

She entered a rehabilitation program specifically designed for pregnant women and she got clean. But she still did not have a job. She used her unemployment income to stay in hotels when she could and slept in her car when money ran out. She was staying sober, but she was scared.

How could she raise her child when she was living in a car? Without a safe home, would she be allowed keep her baby? The stress was intense, but she stayed motivated and stayed sober.

Then she found out about Community Action's family shelter. She made the call and at 34 weeks pregnant, she was welcomed into the shelter with a room of her own and a community of support. Two weeks later baby Ronan arrived, and Shaena was so grateful to have a safe (even if temporary) place to bring her home to.

Staying at the shelter helped Shaena in so many ways. Now that she wasn't scrambling every day to find a safe place to sleep at night, she could focus on parenting and finding stable housing. The structure, safety, and support of the community made it easier to stay clean, and the staff helped her work towards stable housing. With the help of a Community Action housing specialist and temporary rent assistance, Shaena and Ronan were able to move into an apartment. Shaena will have assistance with a portion of her rent for the first year, giving her the time and stability she needs to plan her next step.



Thanks to you, Shaena had a safe place to live and a community of support that helped her maintain her sobriety. After a year and a half of being homeless, she now wakes up every morning in the safety of her own apartment and with the security of knowing exactly where she and her daughter will be sleeping each night.

# The pandemic devastated Jenna's career. But with your help, she has a safe space to rebuild.

*Jenna was working hard to make a new life for herself and young daughter. When the pandemic struck, a job loss and mounting bills left Jenna afraid she would lose everything. Thanks to you, Jenna found the support she needed to get back on her feet.*





When the pandemic hit, Jenna had recently separated from her daughter's father and was in the midst of custody proceedings. She had a good career working events and membership in the private athletic club industry. She was grateful for a career that provided her with secure income as she navigated how to support herself as a single mom.

But that secure income would not survive the pandemic. The athletic club closed and she lost her job. She immediately filed for unemployment, but it wasn't enough to cover her rent, utilities, and groceries. She took action right away, prioritized her expenses, and decided to sell her car. She knew it would be a struggle living without a car, but she needed the money to cover rent and food.

The custody proceedings added to her stress. The legal bills were costly and she worried about what would happen, if she could not pay her rent. Would she be considered unfit? Would she lose custody?

Jenna found relief by calling our Emergency Rent Assistance line and got help paying her rent. She breathed easier knowing she could keep her apartment for a few months, but it wouldn't last long. The crisis lasted much longer than she anticipated, and she struggled for a long-term solution. Like all of us, she had hoped that after a few months, things would go back to normal.

But the athletic club was not able to open fully, her daughter's childcare remained closed, and getting gainful employment without a car was very difficult. She hated how helpless she felt, but she was so grateful that Community Action was there to continue to support her with rent assistance during this most difficult year.

Jenna decided to take advantage of her time at home and enrolled in online education programs to build up her resume. She is now hopeful that as things open back up, she will be poised to jump back into the workforce with her new education and support herself and her daughter.



**"It's a big lesson to learn to ask for help. But being provided such an amazing resource after going through so much anxiety, is totally worth it. I was finally able to breathe."**

**—Jenna**



# Your support kept child care providers open during the pandemic.

Even before the devastating impact of the pandemic, Oregon did not have enough child care providers to meet the need of our workforce. Every county in the state was considered a child care desert. That means one child care slot available for every three children in need of care. In Washington County it was even worse with only one child care slot for every eight children under the age of two.

The pandemic put unbearable stress on this already fragile system – a system that relies on care providers who earn poverty-level wages and are primarily women and disproportionately Black, Indigenous, and people of color.

When the pandemic struck, parents pulled kids out of care as they lost their jobs or worked from home. New COVID safety guidelines meant child care providers had to accept fewer kids and acquire personal protective equipment and sanitation supplies. With fewer kids and added expenses, many child care providers simply could not afford to keep their doors open.

Recognizing that losing current child care providers for the long-term would further undermine any eventual economic recovery, state and county governments stepped in to help. They offered cash assistance grants for child care providers who agreed to meet the new safety guidelines and stay open. However, many child care providers did not know about the grants or had difficulty completing the application due to language barriers.

Our Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) team stepped in to help. We work with child care providers year-round offering support, trainings, and professional development to improve the quality of care for children.

Our dedicated staff called every licensed child care provider in Washington County to offer assistance. They shared information about the grant opportunity, offered to help with the grant application, and provided critical support in implementing the new safety guidelines. Sometimes it was difficult because of language barriers. But our staff found ways to ensure that those furthest from opportunity were able to apply and had what they needed to stay open.



Your support helped over 600 child care providers secure grant funding and stay open during this critical time. Thank you for helping to ensure that as parents are able to return to work, their children will have safe and secure care.



*Azita is so grateful to have been able to keep her child care business afloat. And so are the parents of the children she cares for—especially the parents who work in healthcare and don't have the option of working from home.*

Azita is one of the child care providers who was facing a crisis during the pandemic. After three years of hard work and dedication building her home child care business, she had a steady enrollment and income to help support her family.

But when the pandemic hit, Azita's enrollment suddenly dropped from ten kids to only two. Her income was devastated, and she couldn't see a way out.

Azita found relief when she received a call from Courtney, a member of Community Action's CCR&R team. Courtney let her know about the opportunity for grant assistance and helped her complete the application. As an immigrant from Iran, Azita was fluent in Farsi and French but still struggled with English and this application assistance was a crucial step.

Courtney helped her understand and implement the new safety guidelines and even provided her some necessary equipment like masks and sanitizer. When child care providers became eligible for the vaccine, Courtney helped her navigate the complex online system securing appointments for her and her family. Azita was able to stay open because of this support and is now back to full enrollment.



Thanks to you, Samuel and Betty's aging home will be warm and safe this winter.



*"I keep warm. I'm dry.  
I have a yard where I can actually go outside.  
We're happy here.  
It's not perfect, but it's perfect to us."  
— Betty*



Samuel and Betty's home has provided a lifetime of stability and security. But in the fall of 2020, the couple contracted COVID, and Samuel's battle with the virus lasted months. It was more important than ever to have a safe, warm, and secure home, but years of deferred maintenance was putting that at risk.

For years, the retired couple strived to keep up on the maintenance of their aging mobile home. But living on a fixed income of veteran's benefits and social security left them struggling to pay for medications, food, and other monthly bills. How could they possibly afford to replace the home's rusty water pipes or fix the leaky roof? How could they pay for repairing the failing water heater? If only they could afford to replace the old single paned windows that shook and rattled in the wind.

Samuel and Betty turned to Community Action's Energy Conservation program for help. The program offers free home weatherization repairs and improvements for low-income families. They hoped they could at least get help with new windows so they could keep the place a little warmer.

Samuel and Betty were thrilled that we replaced the old leaky windows, but that was only the beginning. We rebuilt the roof, fully insulated the house, installed a new water heater and replaced all of the rusty piping. The biggest surprise to Samuel and Betty was the new heat pump that was installed, providing the home with its first reliable and efficient heating and cooling source – and greatly reducing the monthly utility bill.

**The past year has been challenging. Being isolated from loved ones was hard and Samuel's recovery from COVID has taken many months. But because of donors like you, Samuel and Betty have been able to rely on their home as a safe haven in uncertain and difficult times.**

*"As far as we see it,  
our trailer is new again."  
—Samuel*



# With your support, Suanny found a new career by turning a crisis into an opportunity.

Suanny was struggling to financially support her family. Looking for a better future for her and her kids, she turned to Community Action, and today, she has a new rewarding career.

In the fall of 2019, Suanny found herself in a big life transition. She was recently divorced, without a job, and unable to afford rent, so she and her kids moved in with her mom. Sharing the small apartment wasn't ideal but she was grateful to have a safe place to live while she worked on getting a better job that could support the family. She had years of experience working in office settings, but it didn't pay enough to support her family.

She enrolled her four-year-old daughter in Community Action's Head Start program. She knew it would be a big help in preparing her daughter for kindergarten, but she didn't realize how much it would change the trajectory of her own professional career.

Suanny was offered the opportunity to join our Whole Family Cohort, a jobs training program designed for parents of Head Start children. Seeing the opportunity to advance her skills and her earning potential, she jumped at it.

The Whole Family Cohort is one example of our holistic approach to helping families increase their income and economic stability. The program runs for nine months and provides training to become certified as a Patient Access

Specialist, an entry level position in the health care administration field. It also provides training on employment-seeking skills such as resume writing and interviewing, as well as on-going coaching. It was an intense program requiring Suanny to be in class four days a week while her daughter was in her Head Start class.

When the pandemic hit Suanny's classes went virtual and so did her children's. That meant they were suddenly all home trying to do school on Zoom in her mom's tiny apartment. Her temporary living situation was now completely inadequate.

But Suanny learned about our rent assistance program through the Cohort and applied. Thanks to donors like you, her rent was covered for six months, the time she needed to complete the Cohort training and land a full-time job. It also gave her kids the safe space they needed to stay engaged in distance learning.

What was once a crisis became an opportunity, and we couldn't be happier to be the lucky employer who hired Suanny. Today, Suanny is a Family Advocate at Community Action, helping families the way that she was helped.





"It's a great feeling to be on the other side —to be able to help families. It's great to be able to give back to the community. It's great to be able to be the hands and the feet of Community Action."  
— Suanny



# Our Impact

**7,179** families stayed warm and safe with utility bill assistance.

**4,234** families avoided homelessness through emergency rent assistance.

**1,363** local child care providers improved their quality of care through professional development trainings and coaching.

**856** new parents were supported through education and other parenting resources.

**683** children from low-income families received a solid educational foundation in Head Start.

**198** families received home-visiting support services helping them maintain a stable home.

**164** homes were weatherized making them warmer, safer, and more efficient.

**118** homeless families got back into stable housing with short-term rent assistance.

**118** homeless children and parents got back on their feet while staying at our Hillsboro Family Shelter.

**91** people received career coaching.



# Our Programs

**HOMELESS SERVICES** - Helping people experiencing homelessness quickly find housing and getting them the supportive services necessary to maintain long-term stability.

**RENTER SUPPORT** - Helping people avoid homelessness through emergency rent payments, longer term rent assistance, and tenant education.

**HEAD START** - Preparing children for kindergarten and beyond with high-quality early childhood education and comprehensive services to children ages birth to five and their families.

**CHILD CARE RESOURCE & REFERRAL** - Providing training and coaching to early childhood care and education providers, ensuring high quality child care experiences to the families they serve.

**HELP ME GROW** - Connecting pregnant women and new parents to networks of support.

**ENERGY CONSERVATION** - Weatherizing homes to make them warmer, safer, healthier, and more efficient.

**UTILITY ASSISTANCE** - Keeping families safe and warm with utility bill assistance.

**FAMILY DEVELOPMENT** - Helping families increase their assets through education, coaching, and advocacy.

**FINANCIAL SERVICES** - Helping people build financial stability and reach their financial goals.

**WORKFORCE TRAINING** - Working with clients to identify career opportunities and support the training that leads to living wage jobs.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2020-2021

### **Chair**

Nancy M. Ford, Director, E.I./Early Childhood Special Education,  
NW Regional ESD

### **Vice-Chair**

Bill Miner, Attorney, Partner-in Charge, Davis Wright Tremaine, LLP

### **Treasurer**

Scott Gardner, Manager, Sr. Principal Accountant, Portland General Electric

### **Secretary**

Tania Uluan, Community Representative

Lacey Beaty, Mayor, City of Beaverton

Steve Callaway, Mayor, City of Hillsboro

Rolanda Garcia, District 16 Manager, Oregon Department of Human Services

Brian Holman, Assistant Vice President of Absence and Short Term Disability,  
The Standard

Heather Kemper, Managing Attorney, Oregon Law Center

Alaa Momani, Head Start Policy Council Representative

Dana Nason, MD, Medical Director, Hillsboro Pediatric Clinic

Sheri Schouten, State Representative, District 21-Beaverton

Kat Sigurdson, Community Representative

Courtney Thomas, Community Representative

Pam Treece, Commissioner, Washington County

Peter Truax, Mayor, City of Forest Grove

Jason Yamamoto, Director of Operations, Swagelok

### **Community Action**

1001 SW Baseline Street, Hillsboro, Oregon 97123-3822

[caowash.org](http://caowash.org)