

Annual Report
2017-2018



Connect and Thrive



At Community Action we lead with our heads and our hearts. We continuously find ways to improve the services we provide, guided by empathy and respect for those we serve. As I look back on our 53rd year, I am so proud of what we have accomplished. Together our staff, our board, our partners, and our supporters have found meaningful ways to contribute to our mission. Today Community Action is stronger than ever, and we are well positioned to help Washington County address the issues of poverty faced by thousands of families.



Poverty is a burden no family should carry, and we know the prospect of successful outcomes for a family is greatly diminished because of it. We know these struggles don't happen in a vacuum – they impact all of us on a personal and community level.

While struggles don't happen in a vacuum, neither do the solutions. We believe that the most effective solutions start with the family. It's why our efforts target stability and economic security. Poverty has a lessening impact on people, their focus narrowed on what it will take to make it through tomorrow. But with stability and security families can look forward to the future, they can set goals, they can hope.

When this burden is lifted families are empowered to engage and thrive in our community. We look to families for guidance, listening to and understanding their needs, letting their voices inform the important work we do. The services we provide and the strategies we employ are designed to meet these needs.

The success of our community depends on each of us understanding what poverty is – not having enough resources to meet one's needs – and what it is not – a choice. Success requires a community willing to provide opportunity. It requires that same community acknowledging that barriers to these opportunities exist – barriers determined by one's race, gender, or sexual orientation. The shared interest we have in family success, means that we also have a shared interest in eliminating these barriers.

I'm proud to say that with your support Community Action is advancing these goals. Because of you, we are making investments that expand and improve the impact of our programs. This past year your support helped our Energy Conservation team respond more quickly to emergency heat needs, allowed us to add specialized staff to help food stamp recipients connect with employment opportunities, and to implement a new intake system that expedites the connections between clients and the resources they need. While the need in Washington County is great, Community Action is here to meet it. Your partnership and support inspire us at Community Action as we press forward to deliver hope, help and change – one family at a time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Renée Bruce". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Renée" written in a larger, more prominent style than the last name "Bruce".

Renée Bruce
Executive Director

Facing homelessness, Stephanie found the help she needed at Community Action



Photos courtesy of United Way of the Columbia-Willamette

Two years ago, Stephanie, a single parent, found herself in an unimaginable situation. Despite having a full time job, Stephanie couldn't afford rent in Washington County. She and her six year old daughter, Teja, became homeless.



122 homeless children and parents had the chance to get back on their feet by staying at Community Action's Hillsboro Family Shelter.



For six months they had to pack up their belongings and move every day – at times spending the night on a friend’s couch or staying at a hotel. It got to the point where Teja would start crying when they pulled into the parking lot of a hotel. Sometimes Stephanie had to choose between getting to work on time and getting Teja to school that day. As a result Teja had a difficult time focusing and participating in class.

At the urging of a friend, Stephanie reached out to Community Action. Community Action operates one of the three family shelters that exist for all of Washington County. Stephanie recalls the huge sense of relief she felt when they moved into the family shelter. “When I explained to Teja that she could go down to the car, get all of her stuff and bring it all up – that it was just going to stay here until we found an apartment – I saw this little light bulb go off.”

Though Stephanie had a stable work history, good credit, and no prior evictions, she couldn’t find an apartment that she could afford. Nearly half of all Washington County renters are paying more than a third of their income toward housing costs. Stephanie reflects, “It just amazes me that you could work so hard and still not make it.”

But because of your support, families like Stephanie’s have somewhere to turn when the unimaginable happens. With the help of a housing advocate, Stephanie and Teja were able to move out of the shelter and into a two-bedroom apartment where the rent is based on Stephanie’s income. With a new best friend across the street, Teja is settling into her new home and school.

Today, not only does Stephanie have a place to call home with her family, but she is able to give her daughter what she needs to learn, grow and be healthy.

“I honestly have no idea what we would have done if we hadn’t found this program,” said Stephanie. “Everybody should be able to at least have a place to come home to.”



Partnerships help expand our reach and deepen our connections to clients

We know better than most that navigating the services that make up our local safety net can be complicated. It's why we implemented the Community Action Resource Eligibility assessment tool – or CARE – this year. With this central intake system, our staff members serve as multiservice navigators for our clients. We are streamlining the process for identifying program eligibility, removing the need for multiple applications, and ensuring our clients can gain quick access to the resources they need.

In the past, we served many families who approached us for help in addressing one specific need, yet were experiencing an untold number of economic or housing related challenges that could potentially undermine their stability and success. As we surveyed clients, they reported a lack of awareness of available resources and difficulty accessing programs, especially for individuals with disabilities, language barriers or those experiencing health or mental health crisis. The CARE assessment provides our staff with an opportunity to engage clients with a 16-question assessment that can quickly determine eligibility for all of Community Action's programs. Utilized at all our agency entry points – Energy Assistance, Early Connections, Community Connect, Weatherization and Head Start – the impact of utilizing the CARE assessment within Community Action has been tremendous and we've seen a steady increase in the number of clients accessing multiple services.

We work in collaboration with many organizations, both public and private, and have often received invitations from partners to establish a presence at their sites. With the immediate internal success of CARE, the time was right to offer this tool to our partners and from the outset, the benefits were clear. "The collaboration between our two organizations has allowed us to jointly meet clients' needs in a timelier manner" said Rolanda Garcia, Manager of the Oregon Department of Human Services Washington County office. "By being immediately connected to this wrap-around support, clients are expressing a sense of reprieve from the hopelessness they feel when they first come to us."



6,641 families stayed warm and safe in their homes with heat and electricity bill paying assistance from Community Action.



To date our staff is providing CARE assessments in multiple sites across Washington County including the Hawthorn Walk-in Center, the Department of Human Services, the office of Women, Infants & Children, the Family Justice Center of Washington County, and the Beaverton Central Library.

“Many people coming to Hawthorn experience multiple stressors, including housing instability and financial strain. Having Community Action on site allows people the option to connect to various resources that may help address those stressors. This can be an important part of helping them stabilize,” says Marni Kuyl, Director of the Washington County Department of Health and Human Services.

The collaboration with other Washington County service providers has been a force multiplier for CARE. Our partnerships, combined with the generous support from our community, is the engine that drives us and ensures our ability to connect people to the right supports at the right time so that our community can thrive.



381 families facing eviction remained in their homes because of rent assistance provided by Community Action.

Launching a new project, Community Action looks to serve the whole family

September marks the beginning of the school year and a familiar sight in our Head Start program: a child's first day of class. Anxious at first, she soon adjusts to her new routine and looks forward to spending her days doing fun crafts and playing with the other children. She likes snack time, holding the door for her classmates and enjoys a sense of pride when her teachers commend her artistic abilities and recognize how well she brushes her teeth.



What she doesn't realize is that her time spent in Head Start is supporting her social, cognitive and emotional growth and preparing her to be successful in school – and beyond. She isn't aware that regular attendance increases the immediate and long-term benefits of Head Start, but she does know she likes to go to school.

By November, she is unfortunately missing a day or two of Head Start every week. The reasons can vary. Perhaps a close family member falls ill, one of her parents loses a job, or both. Events like these drain her family's modest savings and soon they find themselves behind on bills and rent. An eviction notice is issued, and the family is in crisis. Amidst the chaos and instability, her parents are hard-pressed to transport their daughter to Head Start each day.



937 children gained a solid educational foundation by participating in Community Action's Head Start programs for children from birth to 5 years old.

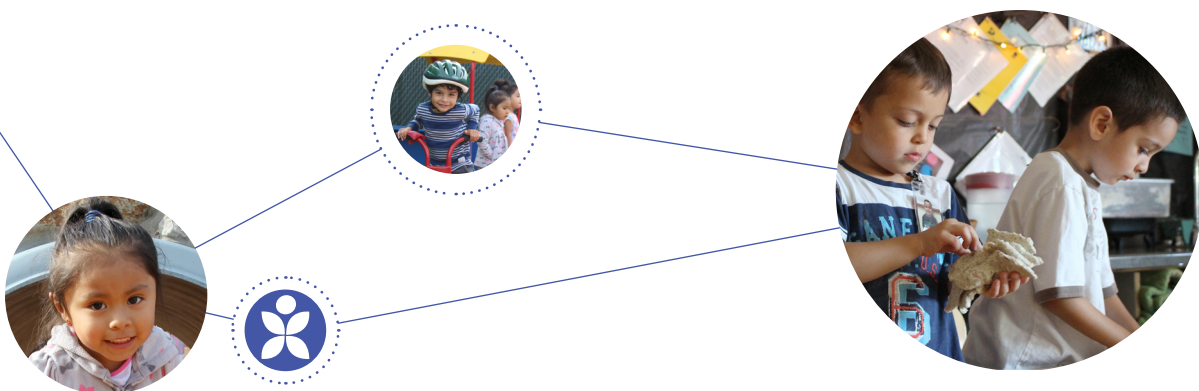
What does the future hold for this child and her family?

Thankfully, we can make significant impacts in the lives and futures of children and parents when we direct our services with the well-being of the whole family in mind. Building upon decades of knowledge and experience in providing services intended to empower and uplift Washington County residents, Community Action is utilizing a Whole Family Approach to address the unique and complex needs of every family member.

Launched in 2018, the Whole Family Approach pilot is focused on providing services to 25 families who have children enrolled in Head Start and who qualify for emergency financial assistance because of economic hardship and/or the loss of stable housing. Empowered by the support of our caring staff, families set goals and work to achieve them, proactively addressing challenges before they become a crisis. A holistic approach to providing resources and opportunities to children and parents “helps both generations make progress together,” says Carrie Leavitt, Program Services Manager with Community Action.

How does this approach change the story for our child and her family? During her enrollment in Head Start, our staff conduct an assessment to determine if her parents are eligible for other supportive services. They learn that they qualify for emergency rental assistance and utilize the service to avoid a traumatic eviction. With immediate housing needs addressed, a member of our Family Development team connects the parents with workforce training programs and a career coach to establish longer term occupation goals. The child’s Head Start attendance is consistent; she grows, learns and acquires skills which will help pave her way to a brighter future.

The whole family received resources during a critical time and now the whole family makes progress to a healthier, more hopeful tomorrow.



21 individuals obtained employment with the help of a career coach.

Donors

Thank you to our donors who are vital partners in our work. Your generosity and belief empowers us to deliver hope, help and change to the thousands of individuals who turn to Community Action each year.

All gifts listed were made between July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018

**Denotes Sustaining Circle Donors*

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105 families graduated from the Rent Well program, gaining the knowledge and expertise to become successful tenants.

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The quality of local child care resources improved as 1,104 providers participated in 12,087 hours of training in early childhood development.

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598 new parents were provided with information about early child development and parenting resources.

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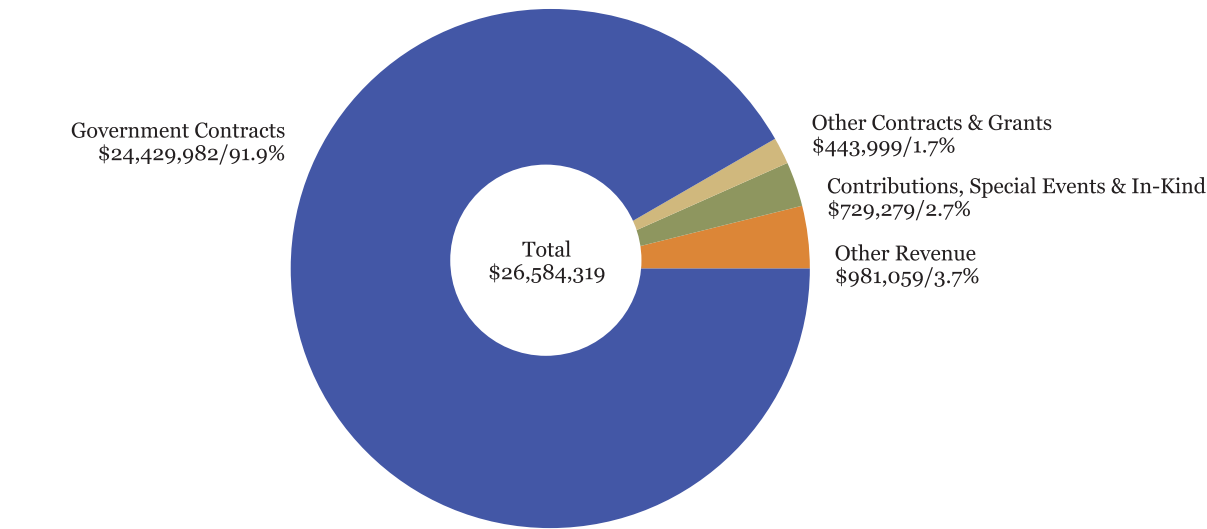
Tania Uluan, Community Representative

Tom Hughes, President, Metro Council

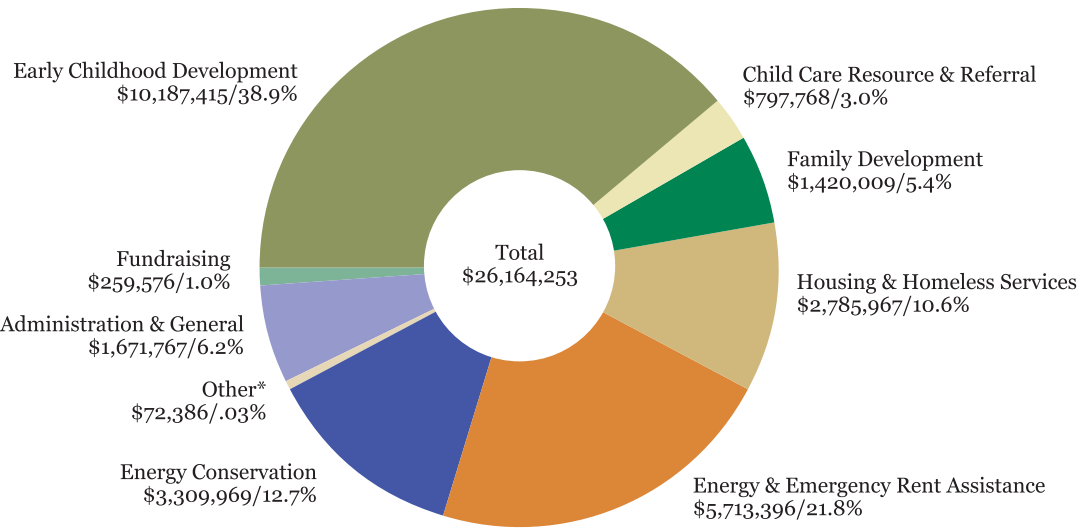
2017-2018 Statement of Activities

(Unaudited)

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