



A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE Director







Visit our homepage at **WCAC.net** for more information about our programs and services.



COMMUNITY. The COVID pandemic disproportionately impacted the communities we serve and further resulted in job loss and economic hardship for vulnerable families. While the promise of a vaccine brings a sense of hope, WCAC remains committed to helping all those in need throughout our community for as long as it takes to collectively recover from this devastating pandemic.

The pandemic exposed the deepening inequities in our society. If this past year has taught us anything, it is that we must strengthen our resolve to end poverty and systemic racism and work to promote healing from the trauma and anguish inflicted on families. Change is necessary to shrink the widening wealth and opportunity gaps. It is not enough to provide a life jacket to keep our neighbors afloat. To make lasting impact, we must work in partnership with families and across organizations to build a boat together and buoy those who are most impacted by the waves of crisis.

As we look back on the year, we thank our staff and celebrate the devotion and commitment they demonstrated during this challenging time. This year unveiled the everyday Community Action heroes and heroines at WCAC, our incredible staff. Throughout the year, team members from every corner of our agency

for one another and for our community. They showed tremendous resilience as we managed the constant changes in our COVID environment and continued our work in partnership with the children and families, clients, and youth who sought our services and support in this crisis. For this, we thank each and every member of our team.

Amidst the challenges of 2020, we made

demonstrated great care and compassion

Amidst the challenges of 2020, we made progress and renewed our commitment to our core values of partnering with dignity, encouraging and elevating all voices and perspectives in our work, and advancing equitable access to our services and programs for everyone we reach. We embrace our shared responsibility to work toward a better society as we fulfill our mission to help people move to economic self-sufficiency through programs, partnerships, and advocacy. We invite our peers and partners to work with us in the coming year to break the cycle of poverty and work toward resilient families and a thriving community with opportunities for all.

Marybeth Campbell

Marybeth Campbell
Executive Director

Noreen Johnson Smith Board Chair







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Program Outcomes

WORCESTER COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL

CHILDREN & FAMILIES

- 93 children aged birth to 3 years of age received Early Head Start programming – focusing on early developmental milestones, parenting support, and education as well as community referrals.
- Early Head Start Home Educators conducted 901 in-person home visits for infants and toddlers, prior to statewide shutdown in March. Visits then turned virtual with 1,100 total visits being conducted – 820 via ZOOM and 280 FaceTime visits – to keep vulnerable families engaged during the public health pandemic.
- Early Head Start continues to serve as a strong feeder for the Head Start program with many families remaining enrolled from a child's birth to age 5.
- Head Start served 230 preschoolers from 203 families during the 2019-20 school year, 106 enrolled in full-day, 97 in a part-day program, allowing 120 parents to hold employments with another 94 either in job training or school.
- 92 preschoolers 'graduated' from WCAC's Head Start program.
 Virtual graduation celebrations took place in lieu of traditional inperson festivities.
- Healthy Families of Southern Worcester County (HFSWC) provided a total of 1,627 home visits to families promoting positive parenting choices and the prevention of child abuse and neglect to 84 first-time parents. 366 were conducted in-person prior to the statewide shutdown, with 1,261 virtual home visits conducted.
- 104 first-time parents participated in HFSWC parenting classes resulting in improved skills related to the adult role of parents/ caregivers.
- 25 HFSWC participants enrolled in a recognized credential, certificate, or degree program, with 6 having completed the achievement of educational or vocational skills within the past year.
- 17 HFSWC participants were able to utilize COVID relief funds through WCAC for emergency food and housing needs.



FIRST-TIME
PARENTS
participated in
Healthy Families
parenting classes

104





PROGRAM Outcomes



ENERGY ASSISTANCE

- Despite the COVID19 shutdown, WCAC's
 Low Income Home Energy Assistance
 Program (LIHEAP) delivered over \$10 million
 in heating benefits via 71 vendors to our
 communities.
- Sixty percent of fuel assistance clients served were renters, 40% homeowners.
- 35% of clients heat with a delivered fuel such as oil, kerosene or propane.
- 56% of clients served fell at 200% of Federal Poverty Level (earning just \$24,980 as an individual or \$51,500 as a family of four)

- with nearly a quarter of those served, **22%**, at **100% of the FPL** (earning just \$12,490 as an individual or \$25,750 as a family of four).
- 44% of those households receiving fuel assistance were elderly; 14% were households with children under the age of six; 42% of households were either selfemployed or otherwise earning wages.
- Energy efficiency programs provided full weatherization including insulation, and heating system repairs/replacement services until it was deemed no longer safe to go into client homes. The heating system emergency
- repair and replacement program continued to ensure that eligible households had **safe and secure heat**.
- The Appliance Management Program provided households with efficient lightbulbs and appliances, such as refrigerators, freezers, washing machines, air conditioners and humidifiers while promoting moneysaving energy education before being shut down by the state in March. It was the first program to come back online with virtual appointments being conducted over the internet or over the phone.

WORCESTER COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL

EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT

- 275 youth were employed through the 2020 YouthWorks Summer Jobs Program which ran virtually for six weeks. Despite not being able to work on-site, youth received robust skills training and completed two community service projects involving COVID19 Impact and Election 2020.
- 423 youth received financial capability skills training with 25 youth successfully opening a new bank account through BankOn.
- 29 individuals enrolled in WCAC's HiSET and Career Pathways programs, with 8 having fully completed and obtained their high school equivalency certificate. With testing centers closing in March, staff continued to work with students on test readiness and assisting with addressing technology and logistical barriers with students in order to resume testing in the fall.
- 42 individuals enrolled in Job Readiness Training through two anti-violence prevention programs, with 18 successfully securing employment placements prior to COVID pandemic. Now new subsidized work experiences were offered after 3/15/20.
- An additional 32 participants enrolled in Job Readiness Training through JobOne, with ten having gained employment. The COVID19 pandemic created many challenges to securing employment.
- Through a continued partnership with Quinsigamond Community College, 50+ adults completed healthcare related training.



275 YOUTH were placed in
EMPLOYMENT through the 2020
YouthWorks Summer Jobs Program which
ran virtually for six weeks





PROGRAM Outcomes

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

- 2,452 fuel deliveries and utility payments were made to households facing no-heat emergencies, funded through generous private donations to WCAC's Emergency Fuel fund and in partnership with local fuel vendors.
- A state moratoria on utility service terminations due to non-payment of bills is leading to significant bill arrearages. In addition to making actual payments to bills, LIHEAP staff educate clients on bill repayment and financial management strategies.



2,452 EMERGENCY

fuel deliveries and utility payments were made

ASSET DEVELOPMENT / FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT

- 32 volunteers donated 630 hours to prepare income tax returns at no cost for 544 low-income households through WCAC's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program, including 113 individuals served at a secondary site expanded in Southbridge.
- The two WCAC sites generated \$1,353,815 in returns, among the more than \$3.9 million generated city wide through the Worcester Tax Free Service Coalition.
- The average client return was \$2,390; with 335 filing single; 66 married filing joint; 17 married filing separate, 145 head of household; and 1 qualifying widower.
- Despite the on-site tax preparation season being cut short by the COVID19 pandemic, the Coalition generated its highest total EITC distributed to taxpayers; highest number and percentage of direct deposit returns as well as highest average income of taxpayers indicating the Coalition's success in reaching a greater range and diversity of incomes.

The two WCAC sites generated \$1,353,815 in tax returns

32 VOLUNTEERS donated
630 HOURS to prepare income tax
returns at no cost for
544 LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS

The **AVERAGE** client return was **\$2,390**



Together

WORCESTER COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL

AS THE TRIPLE CRISES OF PUBLIC HEALTH, ECONOMIC INSECURITY, AND RACIAL DISPARITY RAVAGED OUR COMMUNITY and knocked many

OUR COMMUNITY and knocked many individuals and households into more strained and precarious situations, WCAC accelerated our work with the help of many partners. Critical funders such as the Worcester Together Fund, Massachusetts COVID Relief Fund, and several of our local, corporate funders and sponsors such as MAPFRE, DCU and Hannaford Foods made key investments that enabled WCAC and many other organizations to mobilize our response to the pandemic and more quickly respond to the needs of our community.

As a result, we were able to deploy emergency resources used to operate our Virtual Food Pantry, supported more than a thousand households struggling with rent, mortgage and car payments, medical bills, relocation expenses, transportation and basic necessities. In partnership with Worcester Together and the Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester, we were able to support volunteer coordination for distribution of PPE and other critical supplies, as well as support the delivery of hot meals to COVID positive residents of some of our city's most vulnerable neighborhoods.

WCAC stands proudly with our vast array of community partners, knowing that together many, many vulnerable and at-risk families were assured of basic needs during this incredibly challenging year. It was a demonstration of community in action in its truest sense.

WCAC is resolute to stand as an ally in our community, a leader among and with our peers, and as a fierce advocate for our most vulnerable populations.





A COMMITMENT To Reform

LIKE COUNTLESS OTHERS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY.

WCAC Board and staff were shaken by the brutal murder of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and countless more

precious Black lives, which have left us collectively searching for words adequate to express our disgust and horror over the actions of those responsible for their

death and struggling with our anger over the repeated dehumanizing and fatal oppressive actions that threaten our nation.

Worcester Community Action Council is directly and indirectly affected by the tragic events repeated in our country, which have

the impact of these events in deeply personal ways, and struggle with the feelings of fear, mistrust, separation, and anger. We stood then and continue to stand today, together in solidarity with our community and with the

WCAC recognizes that we must hold ourselves accountable as an ally to act as a relentless force for positive change and as a strong voice against injustice, oppression and hate by advocating for policies that create equitable access to education, health, social and economic systems.

> thousands of people across the country who demand justice and an end to systemic racism and intentional acts of oppression imposed upon communities of color.

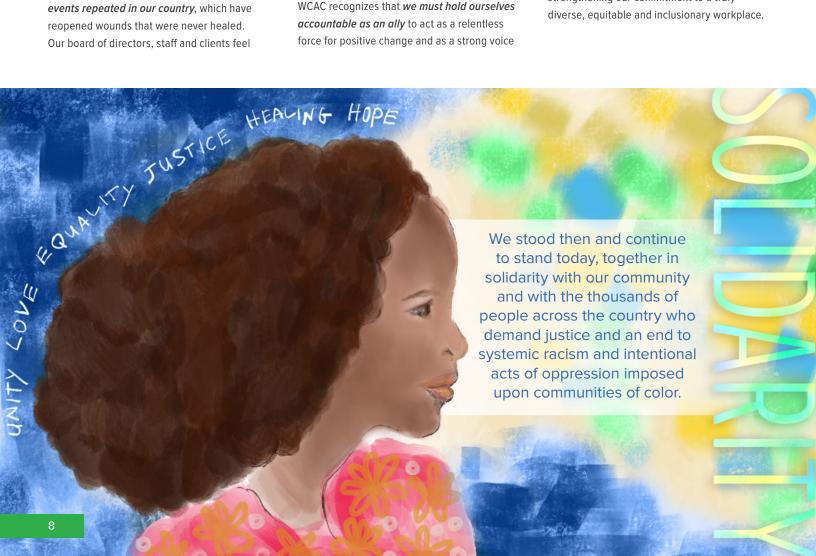
> WCAC recognizes that we must hold ourselves accountable as an ally to act as a relentless force for positive change and as a strong voice

against injustice, oppression and hate by advocating for policies that create equitable access to education, health, social and economic systems. We are early in our journey to advance racial equity as both a community

> organization and an employer. To that end we are working towards goals to create economic self-sufficiency through financial building blocks.

We are dedicated

to strengthening our own internal policies and procedures on recruiting, hiring, and advancing a more diverse talent pool in our agency and across our Board, and strengthening our commitment to a truly diverse, equitable and inclusionary workplace.



races

WORCESTER COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL

2020 BROUGHT A LOT OF CHANGE TO WCAC'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

including new members and a new way of interacting with our agency through Zoom. In February we bid farewell to three long-serving members of the Board representing more than forty years of service between them. We thank *Michael Keegan, Steve Joseph* and *Alejandro Mango* for their dedicated and outstanding service. We also welcomed to the Board five new members in February and March, *Kathryn Crockett, Marco Estrella, Sean Lauziere, Kristen Lemire* and *Janice Ryan-Weekes*.

Katie is the president of Lamoureux Pagano
Associates Architects. In her role as president,
she takes the lead on the strategic vision and
direction for the company, cultivating and
maintaining client relationships, and developing
LPAA's staff. She has held a key role in many
of the firm's most prominent projects with
municipalities and institutions in the greater
Worcester area, including WCAC's Webster Head
Start Center.

Marco works in Global Talent Acquisition for Perkin Elmer, Inc. of Waltham where he is responsible for developing the marketing and media strategy, U.S. contingent labor program oversight, vendor relations and contracts management, talent market analysis and recruitment metrics reporting. He is a graduate of North High School and Worcester State University.

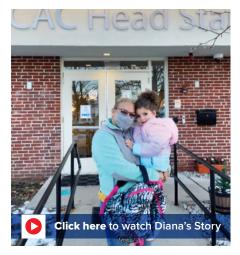
Sean is a Community Relations & Economic
Development Specialist at Eversource. He
holds degrees from Quinsigamond Community
College and Northeastern University, and
brings substantial public relations and intergovernmental relations experience to the Board.

Kristen is the Director of Digital Governance & Operations at National Grid USA. She is currently responsible for all National Grid US social channels, web content and email delivery, as well as the three Sustainability Hubs across the company's US service territory. She holds a Bachelor of Science from Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, CT and a Master's in Business Administration from Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Worcester, MA. Janice is the Director of the Central Massachusetts Workforce Development Career Centers in Worcester and Southbridge, bringing with her strong leadership and organizational skills. She has over ten years' experience leading a college access program with emphasis on academic success, college awareness, leadership, retention, life skills and career exploration for at-risk youth.



Start

FOR DIANA HRYZAN the fact that WCAC's Head Start Center remained open for full days despite the COVID pandemic was crucial. "I was honestly surprised to find a program still open with full days," she said. "It makes me so happy. She (4 year-old daughter Aubry) needs the socialization, the routine and the structure."



Despite having never been able to set foot in Aubry's classroom due to COVID19 protocols which prohibit visitors of any kind to the center, Diana knows her daughter is in a clean, safe, dynamic learning environment and has already seen tremendous growth in Aubry's social skills. "It's tough... I've never been in the building. I'm used to volunteering in my children's classrooms to see them in action, to see how they interact and learn," she said.

A single mom of three, the program was a blessing when she was called back to work as a bus driver for the Dudley-Charlton school district in September after having been laid off since March. Having a quality program to enroll her youngest daughter allowed her the flexibility to work while also managing remote learning with her two older daughters. "I give the teachers and all the staff so much credit for being here every single day, being there teaching our children under these circumstances," she said.

AFTER NEARLY TEN YEARS as a Head Start teacher, you wouldn't think one would still get 'back to school' jitters. But for Ashley Pope, that's indeed what happened heading back into her classroom after COVID19 struck.

"It was scary in March," she remembers. "We knew something was happening, but nobody really knew what." Then, like childcare centers throughout the Commonwealth, WCAC's Head Start centers were ordered closed by the Governor in mid-March. "We went from everyday having a plan of what was going to

YouTube to share activities and lessons, virtual classrooms, phone calls and more, staff continued to focus on what the children and their families needed while operating remotely.

Despite a myriad of new and ever-changing health and safety protocols, WCAC reopened four classrooms for the summer and welcomed 100 children back to school in ten classrooms in September. "Having our doors open gives them

I give the teachers and all the staff so much credit for being here every single day, being there teaching our children under these circumstances.

Diana Hryzan, Parent

take place in our classrooms to trying to figure out how we were going to keep doing this... how we were going to go remote and get four-year olds to sit in front of a screen," Ashley recalls.

"It was important for the parents to know we were still present... still part of their lives... providing a safe place for their children while they themselves were working or juggling remote learning with older siblings," she says. A mom to a four- and one-year old herself who became homebound after their own home daycare closed due to COVID, Ashley readily admits to having her little ones heads pop up occasionally on a Zoom screen while trying to teach her class. But from monthly calendars of do-at-home learning activities to utilizing

a sense of security. And while the world is very different, we know these kids will be ready for whatever life brings," Ashley said.

While virtual tours and meetings for parents restricted from entering the buildings have become the norm, and the hugs and high-fives so prevalent pre-COVID19 have disappeared, Ashley reports plenty of thumbs up and elbow taps as children grow and learn.

"We are a tight knit group of teachers who want to be here everyday," Ashley says. "It was important for the children and their families to know they were not going to be left behind. From the beginning we've been figuring it out together and we will be here whenever they need us."



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FY2020

Private Grants & Donations



14TH ANNUAL ACTION HEROES CELEBRATION

(Postponed until 2021)

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Anna Maria College

Caroline Sullivan

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Dexter Russell, Inc.

Digital Federal Credit Union

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AGENCY WIDE

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In Memory of Anne Brooks

Secretary of State's Office

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Stoddard Charitable Trust

COAT DRIVE

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MAPFRE Insurance

Alice Pellerin

WorkHuman

COVID RELIEF

Combined Jewish Philanthropies

Dexter-Russell, Inc.

Fish Family Foundation

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Foundation

MAPFRE Insurance

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Worcester County Food Bank

Worcester Together & Mass COVID19 Relief Fund

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In Memory of Marilyn Lynch

Ronald & Sheila Hokanson

Strada Education Network

HEALTHY FAMILIES

Hyde Charitable Foundation United Way of South Central Massachusetts

HOLIDAY HAPPENING AT HANOVER THEATRE

Meredith Galena & Dale Allen

Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts

JOB & EDUCATION CENTER

Amanda Fort

Greater Worcester Community

Foundation

DCU

TJX Foundation, Inc.

Wormtown Brewery

RESILIENCY CENTER

DCU

VOLUNTEER INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE

United Way of South Central Massachusetts



FY2020* Financials

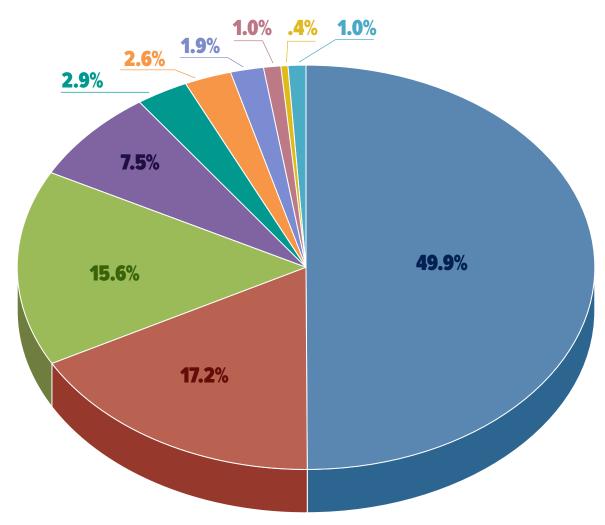
SOURCES OF FUNDS

Mass. Dept. Housing & Community Dev.	\$13,401,873
Earned Revenue Fees	2,587,309
Federal Funding – Head Start	2,824,501
Federal Funding – Other Pass Thru	51,733
City of Worcester – Pass Thru Fed & State	1,266,508
In-Kind Contributions	477,094
The Children's Trust Fund	334,672
State Revenues – Other	395,438
Mass. Dept of Public Health	93,398
Corporate, Foundation & Private Grants	1,049,609
United Way	169,931
Mass. Dept. of Early Ed. & Care	285,638
Mass. Dept. of Education	98,827
Individual Donations	34,185
Other Income	13,300

Total Sources of Funds \$23,084,016



*Unaudited Financial Statement WCAC's fiscal year is October 1 to September 30.



USE OF FUNDS



USE OF FUNDS

Total Use of Funds	\$23,036,731
Other Admin	230,407
Fundraising	91,377.00
Asset Development	222,343
Healthy Families	426,998
Covid 19 Relief	606,275
Community Services	676,774
Job & Education Center	1,717,603
Head Start	3,604,720
Weatherization/Energy Conservation	3,957,985
Fuel Assistance	\$11,502,249

SERVING THE CITY OF WORCESTER AND **45 NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES:**

WORCESTER COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL Auburn, Blackstone, Boylston, Brimfield,

Brookfield, Charlton, Clinton, Douglas, Dudley, East Brookfield, Hardwick, Holden, Holland, Hopedale, Hubbardston, Grafton, Leicester, Mendon, Milford, Millbury, Millville, Monson, New Braintree, North Brookfield, Northborough, Northbridge, Palmer, Oakham, Oxford, Paxton, Rutland, Shrewsbury, Southbridge, Spencer, Sterling, Sturbridge, Sutton, Upton, Uxbridge, Wales, Warren, Webster, West Boylston, West Brookfield, and Westborough.

