

ANNUAL REPORT



2020

MISSION

The Community Action Agency of Western Connecticut, Inc. provides social services and programs to low-income individuals and families in the western area of Connecticut to help them stabilize and improve their lives.

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Junior Mendez, Program Manager (Energy)
Stephanie West, Program Manager (Danbury)
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Raquel Sosa, Planning & Development Specialist
Merline Rosado, Administrative Assistant

A MESSAGE FROM CAAWC

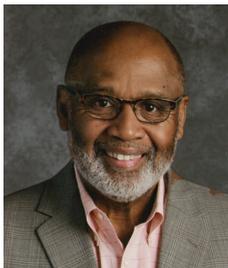
It would be hard to erase from memory the year 2020. The year started off normal, then the pandemic hit and presented a crisis for our communities on a scale many of us have never before experienced. On March 16th, most of the country shut down but CAAWC did not. We were considered essential workers providing important and needed services to the 25 communities we serve.

Individuals and families began looking for services that they had never needed previously. The demand for energy assistance grew and our phones rang with residents looking for help and information during the pandemic. The demand for food assistance also escalated, not only at our food pantry, but at pantries all over town.

With the need increasing, we saw an opportunity to assist these pantries. Through the Danbury Food Collaborative, it was decided to restart rescuing food. CAAWC established the Community Food Rescue Program. With a generous donation, we were able to acquire a refrigerated truck and began rescuing produce and other staples from local grocers and big box stores throughout the community. We deliver these rescued food items to the pantry that is open on that day, Monday through Friday. This offers us the opportunity to help individuals and families have access to healthy food.

It truly was a challenging year. AELC had to close for 10 weeks at the recommendation of the health department. We needed to ensure that the students and staff were kept safe during these difficult times. The childcare center reopened with reduced enrollment. Families needed a safe and secure environment for their children so that they could return to work.

As the end of the year rolled around, a vaccine was being introduced. We looked forward to helping promote COVID-19 safety precautions and encourage vaccinations to those eligible. We look forward to continuing to provide assistance to the communities we serve with information and access to programs and services to help those economically challenged become self-sufficient and thrive.



Creighton W. Lee Sr.
Board Chair



Michelle H. James
Executive Director

OUR CLIENTS | OUR PURPOSE

JENNIFER SMITH

Our client, “Jennifer Smith”, a single mother of three, 31, came to CAAWC seeking assistance for a barrage of challenges. Jennifer had recently relocated back to Connecticut after fleeing a domestic violence incident. Since she fled in haste, she was unprepared for the undertaking of starting over. The client had very limited resources and was in need of assistance to reclaim her independence.

After a short stay with a friend, Jennifer found herself and her children in a women’s shelter and her time at the shelter was limited. Through the collaboration of the client and her Community Support Specialist, a service plan was created to address her barriers in addition to identifying steps and services to help her accomplish her goals. Shortly after the plan was developed, Jennifer began accomplishing her goals, one at a time. Even when faced with challenges, she remained committed to creating a safe place for her family.

During the time spent assisting the client, she was helped with securing SNAP benefits and health insurance for her family. Additionally, Jennifer was able to secure a full-time job and secured a section 8 voucher to cover her housing cost. Additional CAAWC services utilized by the client included the Food Pantry, Energy Assistance, VITA, and household budgeting. Jennifer provided great feedback regarding services received and is now functioning self-sufficiently in the community.

ROGER KING

“Roger King” a 45 year old, legally blind, male came to CAAWC’s Stamford office in June 2020, seeking help for cash assistance and housing; he was already receiving SNAP and HUSKY benefits. Roger was living with his aunt and uncle but was having many difficulties. His mother, who was his caregiver, also needed housing. The Community Services Specialist (CSS) assisted Roger with his cash assistance application, which was approved and created a service plan to address his needs.

In August 2020, Roger was asked to leave his Aunt’s house so 211 was contacted, but no rooms were available and due to COVID-19, all shelters were full. Unfortunately, Roger experienced homelessness and the pandemic made it more difficult to find a new home. Roger was referred to Family Centers, who provided a case worker and Community Care Team for additional resources.

Through Pacific House, an intake was done and shelter was obtained. Also a referral was made to Person-to-Person for clothing. Clothes and gift cards were provided and hygiene products, food, and snacks were purchased. Even though Roger was residing in the shelter, our CSS kept trying to help him find housing. Finally, the Family Centers’ case worker in connection with Stamford Manor was able to obtain permanent housing for Roger and his mother. They were approved for a two-bedroom apartment and Family Centers also donated furniture. Through the SSBG Housing Support Fund, CAAWC assisted Roger with part of the security deposit. Roger is doing well, is very happy now, and is back with his mother who is able to care for him.

2020 HIGHLIGHTS

6,101

Households avoided crisis with energy assistance

33

Households maintained their home with payment assistance

79

Individuals assisted through our Job & Life Skills Program

313

Households assisted for other energy needs, totaling \$158,252 in client assistance

98

Children enrolled in our early childhood program of which 55 children graduated with school readiness skills to enter kindergarten

20

Individuals obtained & maintained employment (up to a living wage)

2020 HIGHLIGHTS

14,291

Individuals connected to state and community services supports

99,000

baby diapers distributed to 275 Families

66,393

Meals provided through our Food Pantry

200

Households received a Thanksgiving Food Basket

1,219

Volunteer hours served through the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)



**Community Food
RESCUE**



The Danbury Food Collaborative consists of members of the City's food pantries and programs who meet to discuss the food needs of the community. The CT

Food Bank's "Man with a Van" food rescue program came to an end in June 2020.

The Collaborative saw a need to continue rescuing food on a weekly basis from local grocery stores, BJs and Costco. CAAWC stepped in to host the Community Food Rescue Program.

Through an anonymous donor, CAAWC received \$50,000 to purchase a refrigerated truck to provide this weekly service to the participating food pantries in the greater Danbury area. With the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, now more than ever, it is crucial that we pull together our resources, skills, and volunteers to continue to help those who are in need.

ACTION EARLY LEARNING CENTER (AELC)

Action Early Learning Center received supplies from the Office of Early Childhood for distribution to child care providers in our area. These PPE resources were offered to providers that were open during the pandemic. They are Connecticut's essential and frontline child care workers.



The Community Action Agency of Western Connecticut
Statement of December 31, 2020

CHANGES IN NET ASSETS WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS	2020
Revenues, gains and other support	
Federal and state grants	\$ 7,803,471
Childcare program income	389,378
Local grants and contributions	253,606
Bond debt service funding	25,523
Other income	7,203
Net assets released from restriction	10,784
Total revenues, gains and other support	8,489,965
EXPENSES	
Specific assistance	4,618,742
Salaries and benefits	2,872,706
Materials, supplies, and other consumables	108,433
Professional and contracted services	223,094
Occupancy	196,486
Repairs and maintenance	39,820
Depreciation	65,485
Other	44,845
Conferences and training	7,827
Interest	12,167
Total expenses	8,189,605
Changes in net assets without donor restrictions	300,360
CHANGES IN NET ASSETS WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS	
Support and revenue	
Contributions	46,618
Net assets released from restrictions	(10,784)
Changes in net assets with donor restrictions	35,834
CHANGES IN NET ASSETS	336,194
NET ASSETS— BEGINNING OF YEAR	659,049
NET ASSETS—END OF YEAR	\$ 995,243

2020 HIGHLIGHTS

34

Individuals provided with resources to help them budget, save, and improve their financial well-being

295

Tax Returns were filed through our VITA Program, returning over \$447,732 to CT's economy, including \$94,276 in Earned Income Tax Credits (EITC)

THANK YOU!

On behalf of The Community Action Agency of Western Connecticut, we would like to say thank you for your financial support in 2020. With your partnership, we were able to grow through the year and come out ahead.

We are so thankful for the board members, staff members, donors, and volunteers who have come together to support our mission.



CAAWC SERVICES

Action Early Learning Center (AELC)
Case Management Services
Diaper Program
Elderly Fuel Program
Employment & Education Services
Energy Assistance
Food Pantry
Retired Senior Volunteer Program
(RSVP)
Volunteer Income Tax Assistance
(VITA)

COMMUNITIES WE SERVE

Bethel	New Fairfield	Salisbury
Bridgewater	New Milford	Sharon
Brookfield	New Canaan	Sherman
Canaan	Newtown	Stamford
Cornwall	North Canaan	Warren
Danbury	Norwalk	Washington
Darien	Redding	Weston
Greenwich	Roxbury	Westport
Kent	Ridgefield	Wilton

OUR OFFICES

CENTRAL

78 Triangle St.
Danbury, CT 06810
203.744.4700

STAMFORD

34 Woodland Ave.
Stamford, CT 06902
203.602.8833

AELC

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NORWALK

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