



The Community  
**Action**  
Agency of Western Connecticut

# 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

**“TAKING ACTION, ONE NEIGHBOR AT A TIME”**

# MISSION

The Community Action Agency of Western Connecticut provides social services and programs directly and through partnerships to vulnerable and low-income individuals, families and communities in Western Connecticut to help them achieve self-sufficiency and to improve their lives.

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## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Cynthia Whitaker

## LEADERSHIP TEAM

Michelle H. James, Executive Director  
Andrew Drap, Finance Director  
Jane Bucher, Assistant Finance Director  
Gloria Sanchez, Human Resource Manager  
Mini Santosh, Child Care Director (AELC)  
Sonya D. Van Norden, Site Director (Stamford)  
Junior Mendez, Program Manager (Energy)  
Stephanie West, Program Manager (Danbury)  
Raquel Sosa, Contract Compliance Specialist  
Hope Jackson, Planning & Development Specialist  
Merline Rosado, Administrative Assistant

## A MESSAGE FROM CAAWC

The year 2021 was a year of uncertainty for so many. COVID left an indelible mark on all of our lives and in history. By January, vaccines were beginning to be administered and hope was reborn. Suddenly 2021 became synonymous with hard work and resilience. At CAAWC, we continued to toil endlessly, with a special focus on individuals and families directly impacted by the Coronavirus. Quarantined and isolating households received deliveries of food, personal protective equipment, medications, and cleaning supplies at their front door. Hotel stays, food boxes, and gift cards were just a few ways we continued to reach those in distress. There was no barrier to our assistance; within twenty-four hours, we were there. In spite of displacement status, age, gender, or homelessness, we answered the call and provided solutions to meet the needs of our clients.

Although retail shelves were restocked with much needed supplies, the prices for once affordable items increased exponentially. Changing fuel costs, increased utility prices, and the cessation of unemployment and stimulus checks equaled a larger population for us to serve. Again, we answered the call.



In the midst of all we were dealing with, we moved our Danbury central office to a new location. Bigger, brighter and easily accessible to the community, we are now located at 78 Triangle Street in Danbury.

We continue to address food insecurity through our Community Food Rescue and Food Pantry programs to help feed hungry individuals and families with nutritious meals for households throughout the Danbury area.

Although our challenges were substantial, with the work of our exceptional team and support of our partners, our dedication was greater and another amazing and successful year is in the books.

We answered the calls with the belief that our clients can and will overcome insurmountable odds. Our vision for the future is clear and we remain focused. With the assistance of our partners and staff, we have no doubt that we can help our clients to achieve self-sufficiency.



**Creighton W. Lee, Sr.**  
Board Chair



**Michelle H. James**  
Executive Director

## LINDA JONES



“Linda Jones” is a recently widowed, mother of two, who came to CAAWC seeking assistance for a barrage of challenges.

Her husband had been the family’s primary financial support and tragically died in an accident. She was a stay-at-home mother and had limited resources and no knowledge of available help for her family and was on the verge of losing her home.

The Community Services Specialist created a service plan with the client and assisted her with pre-applications for SNAP benefits, housing rental assistance, Social Security death benefits for the children and health insurance.

She also received assistance via the Food Pantry, Energy Assistance, VITA, employment assistance, and household budgeting programs. She attained full-time employment and avoided eviction.

The client provided positive feedback regarding the services she received at CAAWC, which helped support her immediate needs and create goals to help her reach self-sufficiency.

*\*Photos do not represent actual clients*

## IAN FOSTER

“Ian Foster” is a senior that came into our office for SNAP and rental assistance. Due to COVID-19, he lost his job as a private house cleaner and was ineligible for unemployment benefits. He depleted all his savings on rent and so a friend referred him to CAAWC.

The Community Services Specialist first helped the client with a SNAP pre-application, which was later approved. CAAWC assisted him with \$2,300 towards past due rent through the SSBG Housing Support Fund. The client also received support from our Job & Life Skills (J&LS) program for a job lead in Danbury.

Through J&LS, he obtained a job in his field as a cleaner. We assisted him in the employment application process, including the financial support for required pre-employment background check. He sustained employment for over three months.

During that time, the Norwalk Housing Authority was accepting applications for Senior Housing. We assisted the client with the application process and after two months he secured a one-bedroom apart-



ment. Through perseverance, hard work, and the support of CAAWC, the client obtained SNAP benefits, gainful employment, and a safe and affordable place to live.

## 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

### 916 HOUSEHOLDS

received referrals and information to other resources

### 56%

of our clientbase are referred by a friend or family member



Action Early Learning Center students celebrating Touch-A-Firetruck day in March 2021



## SENIOR BOX PROGRAM

The Community Food Rescue (CFR) created “Senior Boxes” for four subsidized senior housing facilities in Danbury. These locations were referred by the Executive Director of the Danbury Housing Authority and CAAWC Board Member, Jeff Rieck, as having seniors who experienced the most need of food insecurity. We rotate the facility we serve each week. CFR delivers a 30-40 pound box that contains dry goods and health & beauty aids such as toilet paper, shampoo, soap, etc. to the seniors that have signed up for “Senior Boxes”.



Diaper donations from businesses and the community.



## 2021 OUTCOMES

**16,272**

Individuals connected to state and community services supports

**58,176**

meals provided through our Food Pantry, helping 6,090 individuals with food insecurity

**200**

households received Thanksgiving Food Baskets to celebrate their holiday

**135**

children received early childhood education of which 55 children graduated with skills to start kindergarten

**115,500**

baby diapers provided to 350 families to help bridge the affordability gap

## 2021 HIGHLIGHT

**90%**

of our clients indicated that CAAWC met their need(s)

**93%**

of our clients were satisfied with our services

# FINANCIALS

## The Community Action Agency of Western Connecticut Statement of December 31, 2021 and 2020

| <b>CHANGES IN NET ASSETS WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS</b>  | <b>2021</b>        | <b>2020</b>      |
|--|--------------------|------------------|
| Revenues, gains and other support:                       |                    |                  |
| Federal and state grants                                 | \$11,371,999       | \$7,803,471      |
| Childcare program income                                 | 382,802            | 389,378          |
| Local grants and contributions                           | 196,749            | 253,606          |
| Bond debt service funding                                | 24,643             | 25,523           |
| Other income   | 25,576             | 7,203            |
| Net assets released from restrictions                    | 8,638              | 10,784           |
| <b>Total revenues, gains and other support</b>           | <b>12,010,407</b>  | <b>8,489,965</b> |
| Expenses:  |                    |                  |
| Specific assistance                                      | 7,841,915          | 4,618,742        |
| Salaries and benefits                                    | 3,239,724          | 2,872,706        |
| Professional and contracted services                     | 289,009            | 223,094          |
| Occupancy  | 222,752            | 196,486          |
| Materials, supplies and other consumables                | 188,449            | 108,433          |
| Depreciation   | 79,888             | 65,485           |
| Repairs and maintenance                                  | 66,735             | 39,820           |
| Other  | 44,930             | 44,845           |
| Conferences and training                                 | 15,812             | 7,827            |
| Interest   | 5,400              | 12,167           |
| <b>Total expenses</b>                                    | <b>11,994,614</b>  | <b>8,189,605</b> |
| <br>Changes in net assets without donor restrictions     | <br>15,793         | <br>300,360      |
| <br><b>Changes in Net Assets with Donor Restrictions</b> |                    |                  |
| Support and revenue:                                     |                    |                  |
| Contributions  | 142,000            | 46,618           |
| Net assets released from restrictions                    | (8,638)            | (10,784)         |
| Changes in net assets with donor restrictions            | 133,362            | 35,834           |
| <b>Changes in Net Assets</b>                             | <b>149,155</b>     | <b>336,194</b>   |
| Net Assets - Beginning of Year                           | 995,243            | 659,049          |
| <b>Net Assets - End of Year</b>                          | <b>\$1,144,398</b> | <b>\$995,243</b> |

## 2021 OUTCOMES

**5,333**

households received Energy Assistance  
to stay warm during the  
winter months

**234**

Tax Returns were filed through our VITA Program,  
returning over \$493,226 to CT's economy, including  
\$141,764 in Earned Income Tax Credits (EITC)

# A MILLION THANKS!

The Community Action Agency of Western Connecticut is grateful to all of our community partners, individuals, businesses, and organizations for their volunteering, services, and/or financial support. With the commitment and dedication of our Board members, staff, volunteers, and donors, our mission to help transform lives continued to be a reality in 2021.



## OUR PROGRAMS

Action Early Learning Center (AELC)  
Case Management Services  
Community Food Rescue Program  
Diaper Program  
Elderly Fuel Program  
Employment & Education Services  
Energy Assistance Program  
Food Pantry  
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     |

*\*only SSBG services provided*

## OUR OFFICES

### CENTRAL

78 Triangle Street  
Danbury, CT 06810  
203.744.4700

### STAMFORD

34 Woodland Avenue  
Stamford, CT 06902  
203.602.8833

### AELC

75 Balmforth Avenue  
Danbury, CT 06810  
203.743.3785

### NORWALK

1 Park Street  
Norwalk, CT 06851  
203.939.9650



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