

## Winter 2010

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## NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS OFFER TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

The Community Services staff in our eight Neighborhood Centers have been providing job training and work experience to low-income community members for several years through our Volunteer Employment Program. In this program, parents who need to work as a requirement for their Kentucky Temporary Assistance Program (K-TAP) benefits come to our Centers for a place to volunteer. Other unemployed clients volunteer, as well, for a variety of reasons. Knowing that employment is a pathway out of poverty, we work closely with our volunteers, providing skill-building, on-the-job training, mentoring and a chance to create a resume and earn a reference for employment.

Through American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding, we had the opportunity to expand the Volunteer Employment Program to also include a paid training program. Trainees receive the same skill-building, on-the-job training and mentoring, but are also paid a training wage, similar to those paid in our Mature Workers and YouthBuild programs. Trainees assist with food and clothing distribution programs; learn phone; clerical and customer service skills; attend classes at the Life Learning Center; and prepare for job searches and higher education. Our class of trainees started in October and will stay on until they secure employment or until ARRA funding ends in September.

Matt Harris is one of our trainees, stationed at the Owen County Neighborhood Center. He graduated with a 4.0 GPA from Owen County High School in 2009, where he played both baseball and football. He was in the Top Ten of his graduating class. Matt grew up in a large family in Owen County,



Pictured from left to right, trainees hired as part of NKCAC's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) program. Tonya Strasinger, Boone County; Josh Webb, Grant County; Kim Carter, Kenton County; Taylor Wood, Gallatin County; David Leitz, Carroll County; Barbara Graves, Kenton County; Matt Harris, Owen County; and Ame Vanorio, Pendleton County. Not pictured: Ginny Chinn, Campbell County.

with two younger sisters and a younger brother. Upon graduation, Matt married and delayed his post-secondary education for a year. Job postings are limited in Owen County, even for High School graduates. So Matt applied for the training position at the Neighborhood Center. He is undecided as to what career path he wants to follow, but is interested in either Social Work or Ministry. His training at the Center has enabled him to work with those for whom he has a great passion. He has also helped out with youth groups in several local churches as he explores

his career goals. Matt appreciates all he has learned about community needs, the different living situations families face, and the trials they endure. He and his wife reside in Owenton and Matt plans on enrolling in college.

Additional ARRA funding is being invested in educational scholarships for trainees and other low-income clients through our Neighborhood Centers. For those who are unemployed, the time without steady work can be invested in post-secondary education or certificate programs to train or re-train them for jobs that are emerging as the economy recovers. According to Deputy Director Jennifer Belisle, "We see work experience, up-to-date job skills, and education as a wise use of our ARRA funding. Matt and the other eight trainees are proving themselves to be reliable, able, and willing workers. We hope the experience will be the catalyst these individuals need to achieve economic independence and success."



## Making Holiday Memories at Head Start

The Holiday Season was full of bustle and magic at Northern Kentucky Community Action Head Start. Heartwarming scenes abounded at all six of our preschool centers. Staff, parents, and volunteers worked as fervently as Santa's elves to make the season bright and special for each child.

As we closed the year 2009, each of us whispered a little prayer of gratitude: grateful for the smiles and happiness of the children, grateful for the camaraderie of our co-workers, and grateful for the upcoming break. As we all wished Happy Holidays to our children and families, and to one another, we now look forward to a successful 2010, working together to make a difference in the lives of the children, families, and communities of Northern Kentucky.



Children at the Newport Head Start Center show off their stockings, lovingly sewn and donated by the Cincinnati Bell Pioneers. The Pioneers have been making, filling, and donating stockings for the 444 children in our six Head Start Centers for more than a decade.



Left: All of the centers put on special Holiday programs each year. Elsmere Head Start children Angelina and Alexis are all dressed up and ready to hit the stage with their classmates to sing some holiday songs for 100 or more parents and guests.

Besides the singing, Senator Jack Westwood read *T'was The Night Before Christmas* and, of course, Santa made an appearance. The Erlanger/Elsmere Family Resource Center provided refreshments for the event.



Left: At the Covington Head Start Center, Adam and Jahmir clap and sing for their families and friends with some help from teacher Connie Lindsey.

Right: Heather, from the Falmouth



Head Start center, shows off her gifts. St. Peter and Paul Church in California, KY donated gifts and dinner for the children and their families. The children responded by delighting their audience with three holiday songs they had learned for the occasion.



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Florence Tandy, Executive Director  
[www.nkcac.org](http://www.nkcac.org) (859) 581-6607  
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## County News Briefs

### Boone County

The Boone County Neighborhood Center started a new partnership with the Boone County Fiscal Court to provide financial assistance to low-income Senior Citizens in the community. The *Senior Plus* program has helped more than 150 households with nearly \$24,000 in assistance for rent, utilities, and other financial needs since July 2009.

### Campbell County

Twenty-nine Head Start children received dental exams, x-rays, fluoride treatments and cleanings from the dental van operated by HealthPoint Family Care. The van parked at the Newport Head Start Center for six days in November and December. Children were transported from Covington, Dayton, Newport and Elsmere to the van for the free exams.

### Carroll County

The Carroll County Neighborhood Center is partnering with Dare to Care Food Bank in Louisville to increase emergency food assistance for low-income residents in the County. Starting in October, 2009, Dare to Care has provided emergency food boxes and special produce deliveries. With this new source of food, we've been able to help between 80 and 100 additional families per month.

### Gallatin County

The Gallatin County community united to help 80 families with food and Christmas gifts. Partners included the Family Resource and Youth Service Center, St. Joseph, Union Presbyterian, St. Timothy, Gallatin Co. Extension Office, Gallatin Schools, Gallatin County News, Glencoe Baptist, Scenic View Church of Christ, Warsaw Christian, Paint Lick Baptist, Attorney Rhonda Huddleston, First Farmers Bank, Warsaw Baptist, and more than 50 volunteers.

## From the Desk of the Executive Director

### All in a Year's Work

Northern Kentucky Community Action Commission has a lot to be proud of at the beginning of the new decade. Most of what our staff accomplishes is usually chalked up as “*all in a day's work*.” But as 2009 came to a close, it was gratifying to reflect noteworthy ways we have helped low income families achieve their dreams during this past year.

- Our eight neighborhood centers provided financial assistance for more than 11,000 low and moderate income families—a 25% increase—to help them get through the economic downturn. But even more gratifying—we did not do it alone. Several local funders helped, including Duke Energy and its Foundation, the Butler Foundation, and the Greater Cincinnati Foundation, through its *Weathering the Economic Storm* fund.
- Our Head Start program launched a new partnership with the Cincinnati Museum Center and PNC Foundation, to provide science education for children in our six centers, and to train our Head Start teachers to integrate more science instruction into classroom activities throughout the year.
- We have initiated a new partnership with Boone County Fiscal Court and the Boone County Schools to establish a Head Start Center in central Boone County. We expect the Center to be open for children in August 2010, achieving a goal we have had for several years.
- NKCAC takes funding granted through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act very seriously, using it to increase capacity across the region. To that end, we have partnered with several other organizations, providing them ARRA-funded staff. We have also created opportunities for low and moderate income individuals to improve their job skills through at least 25 ARRA-funded entry level positions, including the nine trainees featured on page one.
- Not only have we increased efforts to help our clients get more job experience, but we are facilitating increasing their credentials, too. Nineteen YouthBuild participants earned their GEDs and 32 earned Carpentry Certifications in 2009; and participants in our Mature Workers program—for the first time ever—have the opportunity to enroll in courses that will improve their job and scholastic skills.

There is more—from our educational programs that help families better cope with relationship stresses, to the health initiatives at our Senior Center in Owenton; from our 50 plus partnerships with community organizations to our physical presence in each of our eight counties. With this and more, we are contributing to the economies and the quality of life across the region.

It has been a challenging year in Northern Kentucky, but NKCAC is proud that we have strengthened our resolve to make the region a better place for all residents. It may be *all in a day's work* for us, but that work is proving to be more important now than ever.

*Florence Tandy*



NKCAC Head Start relies on donations and volunteers from throughout the region all year long; but during the holidays, special donations help make the season brighter for the children and families. Pictured here, Head Start Director Laurie Wolsing accepts a donation from Bill Lorenz, a member of the Covington Scottish Rite of Free Masonry. Other donors to Head Start this Christmas included Arc Electric Air Conditioning & Heating; Citizens Bank–Newport; Dobbins Funeral Home; Fort Thomas Lodge #808; Herringer Meats; Middendorf Bullock Funeral Home; Northern Kentucky University; Thomas More College; Barnes and Noble, Florence; Anneken, Huey & Moser; Don Maddox Lawn Care; US Bank, Florence; Carolco; Steele's HomeTown Tire and Auto; Best One Tire; Performance Body Repair; NKU–NAACP Chapter; Saint Peter and Paul Church; along with numerous individual donors.

## County News Briefs

### Grant County

NKCAC's Weatherization crew has been expertly renovating two units at our Crittenden Apartment complex. The complex has a total of eight apartments for low to moderate income households in Grant County. The two renovated apartments will be available for rent in February. For more information, contact Jennifer Belisle at 581-6607.

### Kenton County

The Kenton County Neighborhood Center has a new resource to help families who are in danger of becoming homeless. Kentucky's Housing and Emergency Assistance Reaching the Homeless program (KY HEARTH) is the state's Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program under the ARRA. The Focus is housing stabilization, temporary financial assistance, and services to help people gain housing stability. Through assistance and counseling, we're working to keep families in their homes.

### Owen County

The Owen County Senior Center has developed a new partnership with Owenton Manor. The nursing home is now providing the Senior Center with hot lunches every weekday. Lisa McBurney, Center Manager, reports that the meals are tasty and very popular with the seniors. Meals are served daily at noon, as a part of the daily activities at the Center. Besides the hot meals, attendees participate in educational programs, health promotion, and recreation to keep their minds and bodies sharp.

### Pendleton County

The Pendleton County Neighborhood Center relocated last summer, and YouthBuild Hired Hands have painstakingly renovated and converted the building formerly housing the Center in Falmouth back into a residential home. With their skillful repairs, plastering and painting, the property will make an excellent home on a quiet residential street, just a few doors down from the Falmouth Head Start Center. The house went up for sale in January.

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Northern Kentucky Community Action Commission is the proud recipient of the 2009 **Monsignor Bill Cleves Award** from Faith Community Pharmacy.



NKCAC was awarded the prestigious Monsignor Bill Cleves Award at a recent dinner at the Marquise Banquet Center in Wilder. The award recognizes a person or agency from the community that has collaborated with the Pharmacy in a way that fulfills their mission. NKCAC provides space in each of our eight neighborhood centers for Pharmacy staff to determine eligibility and distribute prescription medications for those who cannot afford their medicine. This year, NKCAC is also helping the Pharmacy increase capacity by paying some staffing costs through American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding. Pictured from left are Faith Community Pharmacy Technician Christine Sokol; NKCAC Deputy Director Jennifer Belisle; Channel 12 reporter Liz Bonis; NKCAC Executive Director Florence Tandy; and Faith Community Pharmacy Executive Director Rosana Aydt.

The mission of Northern Kentucky Community Action Commission is to help low income individuals and families develop the knowledge, opportunities and resources they need to achieve self reliance.

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Northern Kentucky  
Community Action  
Commission  
717 Madison Avenue  
Covington, KY 41011  
(859) 581-6607  
www.nkcac.org

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