

A Focus on Food and Nutrition

Essentially, while we do assist those in need with motel or food vouchers, or help with paying a power bill, our true mission is to connect with families over an extended period of time – working to offer education and goal-setting opportunities to help individuals and families achieve major life changes.

Last year, Community Action touched the lives of over 36,000 low-income people, helping about a fifth of our county’s population get past emergencies and on their feet again. Because we are constantly studying, listening to, and evaluating our community’s needs, we are able to adapt our programs to meet challenges faced by our clients. We offer six major focus areas including Crisis Intervention; Housing and Shelter; Food Access and Nutrition; Health Care Access; Education, Literacy, and Job Skills; and Volunteerism.

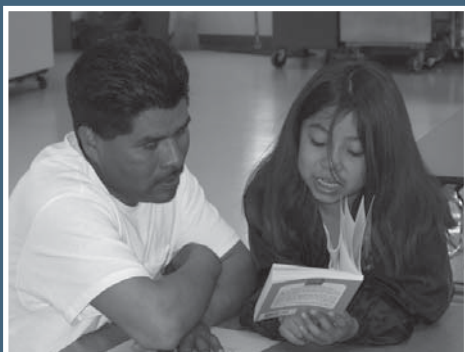
In this edition of the newsletter, we highlight programs that encompass **Food Access and Nutrition**, such as:

1. **Mobile Food Express:** distributes food to disabled and homebound residents.
2. **Basic Food Outreach:** provides education and assistance in applying and getting approved for food stamps through DSHS.
3. **Food Bank Distribution Center:** aims to reduce hunger in Skagit County by facilitating food acquisition and distribution for food banks, meal programs and other partners fighting hunger.
4. **Skagit Food Share Alliance (SFSA):** purchases produce from local farmers for distribution to local food banks.
5. **Victory Gardens:** encourages people with home gardens to donate their excess produce.
6. **Food Bank Support:** provides logistical support to local food banks.
7. **Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Nutrition and Breastfeeding Program:** addresses the special nutrition needs of low-income pregnant and post-partum women, infants and young children run, as well as provides breastfeeding support.
8. **Farmers Market WIC Program:** increases nutritional options of whole grains and fresh vegetables during the Farmers Market season.



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Have a Heart Run

A Fun and Healthy Way to Support Community Action

This year Community Action will host its first agency-wide fundraising event, the **Have a Heart Run**, on May 22, 2010. The **10k run and 2 mile run/walk**, professionally managed by the *Skagit Runners*, will begin at Edgewater Park in Mount Vernon and run south along parts of the Skagit River dikes and beautiful farm lands. The registration fee is \$30 if you preregister before May 19 (\$35 day of race). There will be trophies awarded to the best time in each class and gender, prizes awarded to the most money raised (for more information, visit our website at www.skagitcap.org), and every pre-registered participant will receive a ribbon.



To make this fundraiser more successful, participants are encouraged to seek

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Linking People with Resources

During this economic storm of uncertainty, more and more Skagit County residents are, for the first time in their lives, finding themselves needing a hand up. Whether in housing and homeless prevention, food and nutrition, literacy and job skills, crisis intervention, health care access, or volunteerism, Community Action ensures that people in need have a place to turn. Last year, our more than 35 anti-poverty programs served a record high 36,215 local low-income people, a 30% increase from two years ago.

The concept for the Community Resource Center (CRC) grew out of community feedback who see a clear need for improved and updated referrals, stronger and more frequent communication among providers, and a central location for those in need to access information on resources available to them. Community Action is often the “first stop” and a crucial source of information and referral for those experiencing poverty or struggling for stability in the face of job loss,



In 2009, Mobile Food Express served 3,404 twenty-five pound boxes of food to homebound individuals.

Expanding the Food Bank Distribution Center More Food to Hungry Families

Community Action has several programs that serve those in need in this community. For example, our Mobile Food Express program serves homebound seniors and disabled people and last year delivered over 3,400 food boxes. In addition, the Skagit Food Bank Distribution Center, managed by Community Action, helps coordinate 13 local food banks in serving over 51,000 unduplicated individuals and provides over 900,000 pounds of food. The Food Bank Distribution Center also helped increase nutritional content of food available at food banks by providing more than 60,000 pounds of fresh

homelessness or hunger.

The CRC is a drop-in center for people who are unsure of the services available to them and who need help identifying and connecting with those services. Services may include referring people to several programs within our agency as well as linking clients with the many services that are out in the community.

The CRC provides clear and simple referral information both online and in written form, a kiosk for self-service (coming soon), a computer linked to the internet to help determine DSHS eligibility and the like, a phone available for client use, as well as caring, knowledgeable staff. This new service was made possible by Community Service Block Grant stimulus funds, and the Medina Foundation allowed additional staffing and new tools to better and more quickly assess a person’s needs and link them to resources. Though the need is daunting, our services change lives for the better.

For more information about the CRC, please contact Justin Keefe at 360-416-7585 or visit www.skagitcap.org.



A service of Skagit County
Community Action Agency

HOURS:
12-2 p.m. Mon, Wed, Fri
No appointment necessary

produce purchased from local growers through our SFSA.

Although we are pleased with the amount of food and services we can provide our neighbors in need, there is more to be done. Community Action, in partnership with Skagit County, has raised nearly \$1 million to add 5,400 square feet of dry storage space to the Center, which will help us greatly increase the amount of food we get to hungry families. The current facility boasts ample refrigerator and freezer space, but it has no room for dry storage or pre-packing.

We are close to our fundraising goal. Only \$60,000 is needed to break ground this summer! **Would you consider donating to this project to help us reach our goal?** If you contribute by April 30, a portion of your donation will be matched by the *Feinstein Foundation*, with the potential to access up to an additional \$40,000! To make a donation or for more information, please visit our website.



The mission of Skagit County Community Action Agency is to foster and advocate for self-sufficiency among low-income people in Skagit County.

(Have a Heart Run continued...)

additional pledges from friends, family, and cohorts in honor of their run/walk. Additional donations will go directly to the program with the greatest need or they may choose a major service area. Prizes will be awarded to individuals who bring in the most pledges for each major service area by May 22.

For more information, to sign up, or if you would like to join our sponsors to help underwrite this event, please visit our website or contact Susan Lange at 360.416.7585 x1167.



Heart Stories

• Providing Hope and Food to Families in Need

While Skagit County is a beautiful place to live and work, roughly 25 percent of Skagit County residents rely on food banks to feed their families. In a community with such an abundance of fresh produce grown locally, it seems hard to comprehend families going hungry.

Just recently, a young family of five who once did very well for themselves, owning their own construction business and a comfortable home, are now finding themselves in need of help. Like so many others, because of the downturn in the economy and housing market, this family was forced to close their construction business – their sole source of income. With the threat of foreclosure looming, and having eaten nothing in three days, this family visited Community Action not knowing where to turn, and desperate for help.

We were able to give this family access to food immediately, assist them in the process of getting approved for food stamps, as well as direct them to a local food bank which they can visit weekly. Our efforts to end hunger are fueled by stories like this.

From Food Stamps to Full Employment

A distraught client on the verge of bankruptcy came in for food assistance, having never needed services before. During the conversation, he mentioned that he and his wife had recently been laid off and were looking for work. Understanding their situation, our food access staff helped connect the family with Basic Food assistance as well as Apple Health for Kids (a health insurance program for children), Energy Assistance to keep their power from being turned off, to our Volunteer Lawyer Program for assistance and advice regarding the bankruptcy, and finally to an employment program where he obtained employment. Now the family is out of crisis and the future is looking more optimistic.

The services offered at Community Action provide clients with the support and tools they need to get out of crisis and move toward long-term self-sufficiency. For more stories, check out our blog!

A Word from Bill

The year that passed will likely go down in history as one of our country's most challenging. But history has many stories.

One story we know too well - of pain, stress, recession, and double-digit unemployment.

But 2009 was also a story of hope, of 36,215 lives touched, of hundreds of families working their way out of poverty, of organizations coming together as never before, of people stepping up and asking how they could help.

As we welcome in the spring of 2010, what's our vision for the future?

It's built on partnership. Community Action's goal is to be a vital center, to help draw together people and organizations for solutions.

It's about connection. Our goal is to be an excellent first stop. If you are struggling and confused, we want to welcome you and link you with resources, ours and others. If you want to give back but don't know where to start, we want to connect you to volunteer opportunities, ours and others.

It's a vision of inclusiveness, where everyone has the opportunity and support to be safe, healthy, and successful.



Bill Henkel
Executive Director

2010 Upcoming Events

May 22

Have a Heart Run

For information call Susan Lange
at (360) 416-7585 x1167

July 31

Bite of Skagit Skagit

For information call Arielle Stein
at (360) 416-7585 x1128



2010 Community Action Board of Directors

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To learn more about Community Action, join us on the 3rd Thursday of each month from 12-1pm. A light lunch is provided and donations are accepted to help cover the cost. RSVP at sccaa@skagitcap.org or call (360) 416-7585 x1150.



A United Way Agency

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Highlights from 2009: Our 30th Year of Service

- With our over 35 anti-poverty programs, last year Community Action touched the lives of 36,215 low-income people.
- 1,562 volunteers attached to our agency provided 133,107 hours of volunteer service, at a conservatively estimated value of \$2,683,876.
- Our Women, Infants, & Children (WIC) Nutrition Program contributed nearly \$2.1 million into the local economy and an additional \$16,658 through the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program.
- 2,475 clients received supportive services to help reduce or eliminate barriers to future employment. Community Jobs and Literacy programs helped 45 people gain full-time employment.
- Our Critical Needs services provided 4,565 people with transportation assistance, 3,160 with emergency food, 310 with clothing, 636 with emergency medical care (dental care, prescriptions, etc.).
- Our Literacy and Maternity Support Services programs helped 337 parents exhibit improved parenting skills; 1,073 youth increase their academic or social skills; and 304 children develop school readiness.
- Community Action partnered with 554 organizations to expand resources and opportunities in order to achieve family and community outcomes.

For more highlights and information about services Community Action provides, please visit our website at www.skagitcap.org.