



A Publication of Community Action Partnership of Suburban Hennepin (CAPSH)

## COMMUNITY ACTION KEEPS ITS PROMISE TO HELP PEOPLE AND CHANGE LIVES

### CAPSH Marked the Occasion during National Community Action Month in May

Every day many promises are made, but few are kept, especially when it comes to low-income people. Community Action Agencies (CAAs) such as CAPSH do not want those living in poverty to struggle. That is why CAPSH and CAAs across the country live by the promise of Community Action to help low-income people change their lives. We have kept this promise in suburban Hennepin County for over twenty years and recently celebrated our commitment with two community projects to honor National Community Action Month (NCAM). Every year in May, the 1,000-member CAA network celebrates NCAM by highlighting the innovative ways Community Action helps people and changes lives.

Partnerships are a key element of NCAM. Over the years CAAs have developed a variety of unique collaborations to enhance their ability to help people and change lives. CAPSH formed partnerships with two organizations also serving low-income clients to work together to help others and celebrate NCAM.

#### Spring Clean-Up with Community Emergency Assistance Program (CEAP)

On May 4th, CAPSH partnered with CEAP, an emergency service provider in Brooklyn Park, to spend the afternoon doing yard work for senior and disabled homeowners who are CEAP clients in Brooklyn Center. This was a great team-building, community service project allowing us to partner with a like-minded organization and giving us the opportunity to get some exercise and fresh air while helping others and recognizing NCAM. **Continued on Page 5.**

#### Helping People, Changing Lives

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3 (Top-right) CAPSH employee Johanna Eckman bags leaves at the home of a senior homeowner who is blind.



(Top-left) CAPSH staff members Jennifer Laird and Bill O'Meara prepare to plant grass seed for a disabled homeowner.



(Bottom-right) CAPSH worker Cecilia Howard prunes a rose bush for an elderly homeowner.

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S CORNER



The Promise of Community Action reads as follows: "Community Action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other." As you can imagine, this can be a seriously challenging promise to live up to each day.

The first thing that each of our employees must do each day is to prepare themselves to meet this promise by ensuring that each individual and family we come into contact with have this promise fulfilled. To do this we must find ways to incorporate the wisdom of the ages into ourselves and our activities. In his work, The Advancement of Learning, Francis Bacon says: "The sum of behavior is to retain a man's own dignity, without intruding upon the liberty of others." Booker T. Washington also noted in an article published February 20, 1955, in the New York Times Magazine: "You can't hold a man down without staying down with him." Now as you feel the awesome potential that you have to help others and impact the world, what is keeping you from action?

It is time to pick a direction, task, group, individual, community or organization and get involved in making positive changes take place, helping people to experience human dignity, liberty and a sense of worth. Do you see how easily this domino effect begins inspiring positive change in our world? Remember the words of Booker T. Washington from The American Standard, in 1896, when he said: "I beg of you to remember that wherever our life touches yours we help or hinder...wherever your life touches ours, you make us stronger or weaker...there is no escape—man drags man down, or man lifts man up." Negativity is too valueless to be shared. This is why we must stress the need for positive outlooks and positive interactions.

Finally, remember the words of Tenzin Gyatso, the fourteenth Dalai Lama, who in 1992 observed: "It is not enough to be compassionate, YOU MUST ACT!"

We look forward to your assistance in helping us to implement the Promise of Community Action bringing light into people's lives. Thanks.

-Richard Zierdt

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|---------------------|------------------|
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## CAPSH MADE TAX TIME LESS TAXING FOR LOW-TO MODERATE-INCOME INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES



*Opheouse Randall prepares a tax document.*

CAPSH helped ease the burden by providing free tax preparation for more than 200 Minnesotans with low-to moderate-incomes this tax season. The tax assistance program, put on in collaboration with AccountAbility Minnesota (AAM) and the Minnesota Department of Revenue proved to be tremendously valuable this year. During February, March and April, the program utilized trained CAPSH staff members and volunteers to prepare income tax returns for families earning \$37,000 or less and individuals earning \$27,000 or less annually.

According to Opheouse Randall, CAPSH's tax site coordinator, the program completed tax returns for 213 households, which resulted in \$431,306 in tax refunds and credits for low-income households in suburban Hennepin County. "This is an essential service for people who are struggling with tax forms and cannot afford to pay professional tax preparation fees," Randall said. "The tax season was hugely successful this year, thanks in part to clients, volunteers, staff and community partners."

"Our tax services enable low-income working families to claim tax overpayments and, perhaps most importantly, to claim the Earned Income Tax Credits (EITC) or Child Care Tax Credits for which they may not realize they are qualified. These are important tax benefits and can be as much as \$4,400 per family and \$1,000 per child," Randall said. This year the program helped 84 filers receive EITC, returning hundreds of thousands of dollars to working families in the area. "This significant increase in a family's income means a more secure life and gives a boost to suburban Hennepin County's economy," concluded Randall.

More than 28 million Americans earn less than \$9.04 an hour. Worse, 63 percent of the American households that fall below the federal poverty line (now \$16,600 for a family of three) include at least one working adult. Community Action Agencies like CAPSH are giving these hard-pressed working families the same access to the tax system that is available to those who can pay for professionals to keep their taxes as low as is allowed.

### ***2005 Tax Program Outcomes***

CAPSH provided 13 tax assistance sessions at 7 locations in suburban Hennepin County during February, March and April.

Federal, state and property refunds for taxpayers totaled \$431,306.

213 households received tax services.

The average household refund was \$2,024.91.

39% of households received Earned Income Tax Credits.

## CAPSH EXTENDS DEADLINE FOR ENERGY ASSISTANCE TO JULY 15, 2006



CAPSH has extended the application deadline for its Energy Assistance Program (EAP) from May 31st to July 15, 2006. Residents of suburban Hennepin County who are struggling to pay their home energy bills are encouraged to apply for the

program now. EAP is CAPSH's federally-funded program that provides financial assistance to support low-income households in paying their home energy bills. The program assists families who would otherwise be unable to pay the cost of their home heating.

“This has been an especially difficult year for people to stay on top of their energy bills,” said Scott Zemke, CAPSH director of operations. “We want them to know that help is available and the extended deadline provides them an opportunity to clean up any outstanding bills from the past winter.”

Energy Assistance is available to both homeowners and renters who meet stated income guidelines. It is not necessary for the household to be facing a disconnection in order to receive help. Energy assistance is a grant, not a loan, so it does not need to be repaid.



*Members of the CAPSH 2005-2006 Energy Assistance team and volunteers.*

To be eligible, a household's total gross income may not exceed maximum income guidelines. Eligibility for energy assistance is calculated looking at gross income (income before taxes and other deductions) for a three month period. There are no deductions.

To be eligible for assistance, maximum three month income must be at or below the level on the following chart.

### 2006 Energy Assistance Guidelines

Household Size	Maximum 3 Month Income
1	\$4,987
2	\$6,522
3	\$8,056
4	\$9,591
5	\$11,126
6	\$12,660
7	\$12,948
8	\$13,236

For household sizes 9 through 15 add \$288 per additional member. For more than 15 household members, please inquire with an EAP staff member.

Filling out an application is required. No household is automatically eligible. All households must send in an application and provide proof of income. For more program information and application materials, suburban Hennepin residents can call 952-930-3541 or visit [www.capsh.org/energyassistance.htm](http://www.capsh.org/energyassistance.htm).

## COMMUNITY ACTION KEEPS ITS PROMISE TO HELP PEOPLE AND CHANGE LIVES

CAPSH Marked the Occasion during National Community Action Month in May (Cont. from Page 1)

### Provide A Meal to the Hungry with Loaves & Fishes

To honor NCAM staff also partnered with the Loaves & Fishes organization to prepare and serve a meal at Holy Rosary Church in South Minneapolis on May 23. The CAPSH team of volunteers had a rewarding experience taking care of food preparation, cooking, and serving almost 300 guests while commemorating NCAM.



Loaves & Fishes team members Scott Zemke and Marcy Harris in the kitchen.



Win Grandstrand arranges fruit and salad.



Cecilia Howard and Yee Vang prepare to serve dinner to guests.

The spring clean-up with CEAP and the Loaves & Fishes meal were part of the festivities that occurred nationwide to mark NCAM, which was established by the Community Action Partnership. The month-long celebration was created by the national organization as “National Community Action Week” in May of 1997 and became “National Community Action Month” a year later.

Throughout May, CAAs across the country host a variety of community events to showcase how they are helping people and changing lives. NCAM tells the story of how CAAs all over the nation are positively impacting the lives of low-income people. The events associated with NCAM also provide an opportunity for CAAs to underscore the problems low-income people face and why programs such as those offered by CAAs like CAPSH are important.

## THE PROMISE OF COMMUNITY ACTION

*Community Action changes people’s lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.*

## WRIGHT-HENNEPIN COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION MEMBERS DONATE \$10,000 TO CAPSH'S ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



CAPSH's Energy Assistance Program recently received a \$10,000 donation from Wright Hennepin Cooperative Electric Association (W-H) members through their Operation Round Up (ORU) Program.

The ORU Program serves local communities by donating more than \$100,000 annually, and more than 1.4 million since it began in 1994, to local civic organizations and worthy causes.

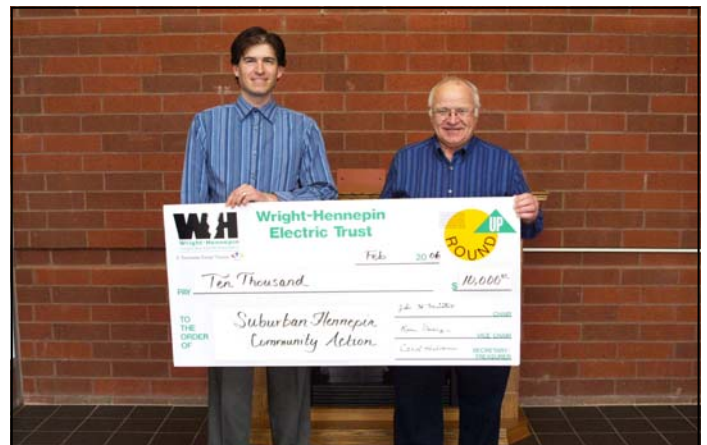
ORU funds are generated by W-H members who allow the cooperative to round up their electric bills to the next nearest dollar. More than 80 percent of W-H's members participate in the program. The money goes into a trust fund and is administered by a trust board, which is appointed by the co-op's board of directors.

Donations are made to local organizations like CAPSH through an application and selection process. The trust board uses special guidelines and policies in choosing recipients. The evaluation factors include: potential benefit to area residents and the entire community; level of community support for the program or the organization requesting funds; fiscal and administrative capability of the organization to deliver quality service; and results that are predictable and can be evaluated.

CAPSH falls under the major funding category of Emergency Energy Assistance. Community Action Programs, established by an energy provider within the service area of Wright-Hennepin Cooperative Electric Association, are eligible to receive the funds. Other major funding categories include community service, education/youth, and disaster relief. Other ORU funding recipients included Wright County Community Action, local food shelves, and the Buffalo High School All Night Graduation Committee.

Wright-Hennepin Cooperative Electric Association is a distribution utility that provides electronic power to much of Wright County and the western part of Hennepin County. The cooperative has been in the area for more than 69 years and serves more than 42,500 retail accounts.

CAPSH is extremely grateful to W-H and its members for their generous contributions.



Scott Zemke (left) director of operations at CAPSH accepts the donation from John Meister, Operation Round Up board chair.



Volunteers Enlisted to Assist People (VEAP), an emergency service provider serving the residents of Bloomington, Edina, Richfield and a small section of Minneapolis, is starting a pilot youth food program this summer. The need for VEAP's Emergency Food Shelf services continues to

grow and this new program will help families with children in grades K-12 who would qualify for free and reduced lunches and live in VEAP's service area. Approximately 45 percent of the clients VEAP serve are children. The innovative project is being sponsored by eight area churches.

### VEAP Summer Youth Food Program

**Services:** A five-day supply of groceries to prepare breakfast/lunch for children in grades K-12.

**Eligibility:** Recipients must live in Bloomington, Edina, Richfield or South Minneapolis (west of Cedar Avenue and South of 50th Street) and be eligible to receive free and reduced lunch or be in financial need.

**Registration:** Begins June 15. Individuals must register by phone at least one day before the distribution day, but may only register for one week at a time. Participants must register each time they want to receive summer food at least one day before the distribution date. To register, call the VEAP office at 952-888-9616 during regular office hours.

**Distribution Dates:** Thursday evenings from 4:00 p.m.— 6:30 p.m.

June 29, July 6, 13, 20, & 27, August 3 & 10

**Program Dates:** Eligible individuals may receive summer groceries each Thursday evening as needed, beginning with the distribution date June 29, through August 10th, 2006.

**Identification:** Individuals will need to bring the following to the distribution appointment:

1. Picture Identification
2. Official mail with name and address postmarked after May 1, 2006, e.g., utility or medical bill, bank statement, etc. (No Qwest bills will be accepted)
3. For each child 18 years of age and under, applicants must bring **one of the following** (no copies accepted)
  - Certified Birth Certificate
  - Vaccination Record
  - Original Medical Card/Bill
  - School Registration/Report Card
  - Original Social Security Card

**For more information:** Visit VEAP at 9731 James Ave., South in Bloomington or call 952-888-9616.

## CAPSH RESOURCES AVAILABLE

To help make our programs known to those who need them, CAPSH has developed an assortment of resources that explain our services to prospective clients. Brochures are available in five languages; English, Russian, Spanish, Somali, and Hmong. The brochures cover a wide variety of CAPSH services including energy assistance, housing programs and planning and development services.

We have also created magnets and pens that provide a listing of CAPSH services along with our contact information. Finally, our constantly expanding Web site has evolved into a comprehensive resource featuring much of the information contained in our brochures as well as Web-exclusive stories and links.

**To obtain CAPSH resources, please call us at (952) 933-9639, or visit our Web site: [www.capsh.org](http://www.capsh.org).**

## ADDING A TAG LINE—ENHANCING OUR BRAND

Community Action Partnership has enhanced our current brand by adding the words, “America’s Poverty Fighting Network” to the Partnership logo. These four words further define our network and add strength to the logo. Including the words: “America’s Poverty Fighting Network” focuses on the idea of Community Action being defined as “the” poverty-fighting network, not one among many.



## COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP OF SUBURBAN HENNEPIN

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