

# STATE OF NEW YORK

## DEPARTMENT OF STATE

### DIVISION OF COMMUNITY SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT

# Community \* Services \* Block \* Grant

Personal Accounts

Compilation of Narratives

Federal Fiscal Year 2005

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**COMMUNITY ★ SERVICES ★ BLOCK ★ GRANT**

Annual Program Report – Narrative Compilation

Personal Accounts – FFY 2005

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This compilation is based upon submissions of Section C, part 1, of the Annual Program Report by CSBG grantees. DCS requests narrative information which focuses on customer/personal accounts. Grantees submitted personal accounts which focus on Self-Sufficiency and Family Stability. These narrative accounts are used in this compilation; several are included in the CSBG Report to the Governor and Legislature.

These personal accounts were edited to ensure confidentiality and to improve readability. References to location and names were deleted. This is particularly important when dealing with accounts about domestic violence or crime victims, or [former] substance abusers. About 20% of the stories submitted by NYS CSBG grantees dealt with domestic violence. Some program information: Head Start, WIC, Weatherization, and other statewide and national programs, will continue to be identified in this text, because deleting it could lead to confusion for the reader.

Note: Family Support, Family Resource[s], and similarly-named Family programs may be local names for Family Development, the case management, strengths-based partnership-style interventions that are operated by nearly all of the CAAs/CSBG-funded agencies in this state.

### **About Personal Narratives**

The following accounts include personal details of the lives of customers served by CSBG grantees. The situations described in these personal accounts are not unfamiliar to grantee staff and Family Development practitioners across New York State who may have opportunity to read this compilation. However: please know that while the stories may be similar from county to county, they represent a unifying theme: people helping people. These narratives represent Community Action in action. The personal accounts serve as a reminder of what our goals and outcomes can be.

These accounts also reflect the diversity of New York State itself, where the largest metropolitan area in the country is located within a short drive of the smallest hamlets, tucked away in the mountains. Without CAAs /CSBG grantees, many people might suffer from their isolation or inability to access needed services. In some cases, a CAA is the court of last resort: some people literally have no place else to turn. Community Action and CSBG agencies reach out as well - ensuring that the safety net catches those who might otherwise fall through. These accounts truly reflect the idea of helping people and changing lives.

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The narratives on the following pages are examples of situations faced by individuals in poverty, and grantee agency response. This year, the wide range of need was also punctuated by emergencies and disasters. For those who were willing to try, and who reached out to a CAA for help, a hand was ready to clasp theirs and join in their struggle to reach self-sufficiency. For many, the engagement was no easy walk, as they worked toward relief from hunger, homelessness, and in some cases, despair.

It would be easy to describe these persons as victims; but it wouldn't be fair to those individuals and families to do so. Their stories are ones of survival as well as struggle. These document the conditions and situations which have brought old, young, single, married, divorced, abused, controlled, displaced, illiterate, addicted – and others in between – to the doors of a community action agency. A significant number have suffered from domestic violence. Others, through perhaps bad decisions and poor choices, became addicted to drugs and alcohol. A number are mentally ill, or are parents of mentally ill, or physically disabled children.

Some responses appear relatively simple: teach a young, frightened, new mother how to nurse her baby; connect an elderly woman with a program that provides companionship; find a way to repair or replace a car so that employment is maintained. Many responses take a great deal of time, effort, and energy on the part of tireless frontline family workers and executives. Sometimes, entire new programs were developed to meet pressing and developing need. For example, lack of transportation, a long-standing issue in rural areas, and, for the elderly in some urban areas, was met by CAAs through development of door-to-door services, rides on demand, and public transit systems, resulting in provision of transportation. Other matters are complicated, involving family interaction, the judicial system, psychological counseling, and guarantees of safety and security. These require complex responses involving many systems and resources. CAAs are the connectors, the liaisons, and the links in despair localities, assuring that intricate needs are met. Often, almost magically, a family moves from dependency to self-reliance. But the steps in between are not magic; rather, they are slow processes, moving people from states of confusion, chaos, and despair to that of quiet relief, assurance, and security.

Grantees reach out – and find that their welcoming ways and attitudes are responsible for creating a climate of kindness and openness, underwriting their willingness to persevere, despite obstacles and barriers.

The Division of Community Services thanks grantees and customers for providing the often candid information included in these personal accounts.

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 Barb Goldstein, CCAD, general editor

Personal Narratives respond to the following national CSBG goals:

GOAL 1 - Low-Income People Become More Self-Sufficient

GOAL 6 - Low-income People, Especially Vulnerable Populations, Achieve Their Potential by Strengthening Family And Other Supportive Systems

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**Goal 1: Low-Income People Become More Self-Sufficient**

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A teenage mother and her year-old son were living with relatives. She initially contacted CAP for assistance with housing, and indicated that it was very important that she care for her child on her own. A family development plan was completed, resulting in 4 primary goals: housing, education, employment, and parenting. Over the course of a year, this young mother earned her GED through home visiting tutoring sessions, obtained a part-time job, and participated in parenting classes. She attended workshops on budgeting and opened a savings account. With further assistance she obtained her driver's license and is receiving assistance from the One-Stop employment center to attend vocational classes as a prerequisite to earning a medical services credential. Although she has yet to move into her own apartment, she plans to do so after graduation.

★Mr. Y came to the CAA soup kitchen, where the agency discovered that he was also homeless, staying with a friend. A CAA employee referred Mr. Y to its Single Room Occupancy-supportive living program, in hopes he could stabilize his housing situation. Mr. Y fit in well in the supportive living program, where he received intensive support services for his many barriers. He took pride in his appearance, cleanliness, and the overall well-being of the property, but he was still without employment and had many issues with his self-esteem. The CAA offered Mr. Y a position cleaning and maintaining the supportive living property, where he exceeded expectations. Mr. Y did so well that he began performing similar duties at 2 other agency-owned facilities, and his self-confidence improved dramatically. Mr. Y has now obtained full-time employment at a local university, and transitioned out of the supportive living program to full independence. He has successfully met his individual goals and is living without assistance. CSBG supports the soup kitchen, intake and referral process, and the employment opportunities at the supportive living program.

Mrs. M is a 70-year old senior citizen who first contacted the Outreach Office in early January when she was having trouble keeping up with her heating bills. She was scared that her utilities soon would be shut off. We scheduled a home visit to complete a HEAP application; upon arriving, it was apparent that Mrs. M was having trouble caring for herself and the upkeep of her home. She also had very little food in the house and said she found it difficult to get to the store as often as needed, on her limited financial budget. She was concerned about maintaining her independence: Mrs. M wanted to stay in her home. Staff first began to assist with her immediate needs; we helped complete the paperwork to stop her utility shut off, then provided food from our emergency food pantry. Next we discussed several local resource possibilities that could help Mrs. M to maintain her independence. She was referred to Meals on Wheels, which now delivers nutritious prepared meals daily to her home. We also contacted her case worker at LDSS. Our staff assisted Mrs. M in completing what appeared to be mountains of paperwork and she was assigned a visiting nurse who comes to her home a few times a week to help with bathing and some housekeeping. She enrolled in our senior transportation program, where she has access to transportation services to medical appointments, grocery shopping, and social activities. CSBG funds were used to network and advocate for Mrs. M, who now maintains her lifestyle and will not be forced to leave her home.

MB is a disabled single parent raising a severely disabled child, confined to a wheelchair. The apartment was not accessible and consequently the child had to be carried. In addition, the child requires round-the-clock medical attention; this mother was the only caregiver, preventing MB from entering the work force. The family's only income was from SSD and Food Stamps. The family was living in a substandard rental, with numerous code violations - toilet and electrical appliances did not work properly, windows could not be opened, among other violations. Every time the family complained, the landlord retaliated by making their living situation even worse. Finally, after the family complained to the City Code Enforcement Bureau, the landlord put the building up for sale and ordered them out. Facing homelessness, the family turned to another local agency that serves the handicapped population of our County. That agency immediately reached out to our CAA for help. CAA Family Advocates immediately began looking for an appropriate apartment for this family. A call by the CAA Family Advocate to the State agency for Homeless Assistance resulted in a determination that this family met the definition of homeless and therefore met the requirements for transitional homeless housing assistance. The family moved from a substandard housing unit to one of the CAA's newly renovated apartment units with a handicapped lift for the young child in the wheelchair. A CAA family development specialist has now started working with this family on its journey to self-sufficiency. MB has developed a short-term goal to arrange appropriate daycare medical care for her son while she pursues her long-term goal of finding permanent employment.

☆ Ms. X called the CAA domestic violence hotline and talked to an on-call CAA advocate about her options for safety and housing. Fearing for her safety, Ms. X was sheltered at the Agency safe home where staff assisted with establishing some short and long-term goals, including affordable housing, employment, furthering her education, and seeking a divorce. Agency staff helped Ms. X find and move into an apartment, and through CSBG-funded programming, secured household items and furniture. When Ms. X found employment, she was linked to Wheels to Work, which assisted her with purchase of a vehicle. Ms. X received free legal services through the legal aid agency that the CAA collaborates with to obtain a divorce. In addition to working a full-time job, Ms. X is also enrolled in a nursing program and on track to receive her certification next Spring. CSBG-funded programming and staff were used to assist this customer toward self-sufficiency.

☆ In October 2001, a single mother of 3 who worked at our agency through LDSS, was notified that her house was being foreclosed; following marriage dissolution, the mortgage was not being paid. The customer worked with the housing counseling program to try and stop the foreclosure. In June, 2002, unable to avoid foreclosure, the customer was accepted into the housing Voucher program and placed in a scattered site housing unit. She achieved full-time, permanent employment in July, 2002. Customer still received a rental subsidy to assist in rent payments. By July, 2004 this woman pursued homeownership through our Homeownership Program. She participated in homeownership counseling and education, cleared some past debt, initiated a savings program, attended financial literacy training, and was linked with mortgage programs and grants specifically designed for low to moderate income homebuyers. In September, 2005, she purchased a home. She remains involved with our agency services, and participated in all programs designed to promote self-sufficiency, bringing her family from the verge of homelessness to homeownership.

The Family Support Program for people with mental retardation/developmental disabilities [MRDD] was working with a single-parent family for several years on behalf of its 11-year-old daughter with Down's syndrome and mental retardation. Her brother and sister also live at home. Dad left the family approximately 2 years ago and does not support the family either emotionally or financially. Mom began working with our Family Advocate in August 2004. At that time, she spoke with service providers and the school about feeling powerless; she felt she had no voice. She felt ashamed and looked down upon by others. On many occasions, she used the Family Advocate to vent, as well as to receive support and encouragement. When the father left the family, the financial responsibility became increasingly overwhelming, as did the lack of emotional support. Their apartment was foreclosed by the landlord's bank and was in poor repair. The utility bill was already in arrears when the father left and was mounting monthly. This parent worked with the Family Advocate to learn more about MRDD services such as Medicaid service coordination and specific free training for parents on advocacy and empowerment, as well as local community support groups. The family also used the reimbursement and recreation components of the program for disability-related expenses and recreational opportunities. The parent began attending trainings and she was beginning to feel more empowered, and found a new sense of her own self-respect and value. The Family Advocate worked with the Medicaid service coordinator and utility company to help the family enroll in an energy program and use an LDSS grant and other MRDD reimbursement programs to assist reducing the utility arrears to a manageable amount. The Family Advocate also brought the family situation regarding the utility arrears and the foreclosure to the MRDD family reimbursement committee. They received reimbursement assistance for some of the utilities, and help to move into improved, adequate and safe housing. This assistance, training opportunities for the mother, and recreational opportunities for mother and daughter, helped the family by offering consistent personable support and encouragement, helping to relieve chronic stress. This parent is now a Lay Advocate herself and is active in the MRDD community, serving on its committees. She is also now preparing to work as an MRDD service coordinator herself. She attributes this success to a mutually benefitting relationship with MRDD Family Support and her own training and learning.

Ms T, her boyfriend, and their 3 children came home to our area about a year ago from another state. They were both employed and lived approximately 2 miles from her place of work, but her vehicle broke down shortly after they arrived, so she had to walk or take her bicycle to work. Our winters are harsh: it was often difficult to get the children to school, and both adults to work on time. She came to our transportation program seeking assistance in obtaining a vehicle for work. Ms T also had problems with self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy. She worked with a Family Development worker every month on budgeting, credit repair, and her personal worth issues. She received a vehicle. Ms. T and her boyfriend married. She took on 2 additional part time jobs. In June, 2005, she was hired as job counselor in a city 30 miles from home and is now making a living wage from only one job.

Each year Mr. and Mrs. P have to set money aside to pay to have their income tax forms prepared. They often have to wait until the end of the filing season before they have enough money. They learned about the free income tax service offered by our local CAA while attending a first time homebuyer program. They called and made an appointment the next day. They received free income tax preparation services for the current year, and the tax preparer found a substantial error on their past year's return. Their tax return was filed electronically and they received a tax refund that included an EITC, Child Tax Credit, and Child Care Credit – within 10 days.

★ Mrs. D came to our CAA with a utility shut-off notice, rent arrears, and no resources or income.

Her husband is a self-employed but had not worked for several months. Mrs. D was denied Emergency Assistance by LDSS because family income was less than expenses. During our interview it became evident that the utility bill was extremely high. Mrs. D was advised to contact her landlord and the utility company to have the meter checked. An energy audit was also suggested. Mrs. D was referred to several local businesses for employment openings, and gained employment the following week; soon she was working full-time. The utility company put a hold on the shut-off, pending further investigation. LDSS helped with rent arrears. The family also received food and school supplies from CAA. As a result of CAA information, referral, and services, the family resolved its immediate emergency needs and continued to maintain home and employment.

Mr. V is a 36- year old paraplegic who received services from CAA Personal Assistance Program. Mr. V was currently in a nursing home and looking for alternatives. A meeting was arranged with several service providers to assess Mr. V's ability to live independently. The meeting addressed certain barriers to Mr. V's discharge from the facility which included: durable medical equipment, the completion of a nursing assessment and care plan, and personal care aides to assist him once he was discharged. As part of the nursing assessment, Mr. V would need to reside at home, but required 24-hour care, and his aide service could not be in place until after completing the assessment. After several meetings with service providers, the team came up with a plan to discharge Mr. V from the nursing facility for 2 days to complete the nursing assessment and care plan. Mr. V's family provided his aide service during that interim period. While waiting for LDSS to complete necessary paperwork, CAA staff began arranging personal care services: advertising for personal care aides, assisting with scheduling, providing training on employment practices and interviewing techniques. After 2 months, Mr. V was discharged from the nursing home into the community. The only barrier Mr. V has is finding an appropriate bed which will allow him to turn himself during the night. Currently Mr. V has 24-hour care, 7 days a week. Once the appropriate bed is assured, Mr. V will be able to remain by himself throughout the night, which will reduce the number of hours needed for care.

★ Our agency first began working with the L family 3 years ago. At that time, this family of 4 was living below the poverty level, with the only family income coming from Mr. L's employment. They were receiving food stamps, Medicaid, HEAP, and other benefits, but were struggling to pay bills and used credit cards, which put them further in debt. Family Development staff began the process of goal setting and planning. In addition to financial problems, Mrs. L suffered from depression and was unable to cope with household chores. Mrs. L established goals related to budgeting and housekeeping. Mr. L was assisted (with the assistance of the Workforce Investment Board) in obtaining a license to operate heavy equipment and subsequently to obtain a better job, increasing family income by 40%. The family was also assisted in obtaining weatherization assistance. The increased family income resulted in a loss of Medicaid, and health insurance was not available from Mr. L's job. Accordingly, the family was assisted with the obtaining the statewide health insurance program. During this process, the family was assisted in consolidating debts and establishing a reasonable repayment plan. Mrs. L was referred to the agency's employment services program, and with support there found a job. Mrs. L is happier and feeling better physically and emotionally. The Family Development program is 100% funded by CSBG.

★ M was a new resident to the area when he first came to CAA, unemployed, uninsured, and living with relatives. Our Family Development worker assisted with applications for services for which he might be eligible: Food Stamps, and the statewide health insurance program. M and his caseworker developed a family development plan, set goals for employment and identified resources to obtain it.

M accessed resources at the CAA One-Stop Employment center to develop his résumé, and to research employment opportunities. He is now employed by a large corporation, working in the computer industry and feels extremely proud of his steps towards self-sufficiency. As M's financial situation improves, he has set a goal of finding an apartment and starting a home of his own.

A low-income female head of household with one child resided in an apartment suitable for a small family. After a family tragedy, she became the legal guardian of 2 additional children, ages four and five. Her apartment became too small for this now-expanded family, so she sought assistance through this CAA to find appropriate living space. She moved into housing provided by CAA, and during her 3-year stay, she saved enough money to purchase the property from our agency. Since it is a duplex, it now provides a source of income as well as an appropriate residence.

★ CAP Even Start worked with Ms. J to set and pursue her goals – and overcome many challenges with the help of her family educator. Her long-term goal is to be a preschool/kindergarten teacher. In working toward this goal she obtained her GED, and attended mandatory teacher assistant training in violence prevention and child abuse and neglect at a local technical school. Staff worked with J to prepare for her Teacher's Aide certification exam, now completed. At one point she and her family became homeless and worked with CAP Emergency program – CSBG funded – to help her find stable housing. We next visited the local One Source employment program, housed at CAP, to complete her résumé and cover letter. She has now enrolled her son in CAP Head Start and was hired as a substitute Teacher's Aide, and will be completing the substitute training in November. She continues to work with Even Start on the Parents as Teachers curriculum. J used our programs to improve her education and that of her children. We provided the resources she needed.

★ A 31-year-old single father who relied on rides and taxis to get to work, applied for, and received a loan through our Wheels to Work program. Within months of purchasing the vehicle, he was promoted at his job and is working toward his goal to make a better life for himself and his daughter. He completed this through the budgeting education part of the loan program; through this process, he became more aware of his expenses, and what it takes to move forward with his plans. By obtaining the car loan, and paying on time and in full each month, he improved his credit rating, making it possible to receive a standard bank loan after his car loan is paid. He also placed his daughter into a full time, licensed and established daycare instead of relying on relatives and friends. He is reaching his goals and continues to move toward complete self-sufficiency.

Ms. X worked at a Day Care Center. She has a small child of her own. Ms. X applied for and received a 2-bedroom rental apartment and a state Rental Assistance Voucher. After working for several years, Ms. X enrolled as a full-time student at the local junior college for the 2-year program. It was determined Ms. X would not be charged rent because as a student, she had no income. The Agency made monthly checks for her utility payments over the next 24 months. Upon graduation, Ms. X found a job in advertising. She gave notice that she was moving from subsidized housing into commercial rental: her new, decent paying job provided enough to support her family. She no longer needed assistance.

Mr. & Ms J and their 2 children, ages six and seven, lived in a small, remote community. Ms. J had a 4-year degree and extensive professional career but had not worked outside the home since the birth of her first child. The children were home schooled. After 9 years of marriage, Ms. J began to realize she was living almost completely under the control of her husband. She was allowed to leave the house only to attend church or to bring the children to necessary home-school functions. She was living in almost total, social isolation and had little autonomy. Ms. J took the step of contacting our CAA Domestic Violence Program. Our Advocate helped Ms. J realize that she was in an abusive relationship and that as long as he was unwilling to seek help, nothing she could do would change her husband. She began helping Ms. J formulate a plan to leave. Ms. J was referred to our CAA Housing Program and granted a 2-bedroom apartment. She had to overcome several hurdles, including very limited resources and emotional insecurities. Ms. J was fortunate to have family members who supported her financially and CAA staff who located furnishings, food, and clothing as she made the transition. Our DV Advocate helped her to cope with insecurities. Ms. J immediately filed for custody of her children, and joint, legal custody was established. She obtained a part-time job within one month of moving. She has handled the transition with much optimism and enthusiasm which she shares with her children. She volunteers at their school weekly. Ms. J and her children are happy to take advantage of many community activities and opportunities. Ms. J obtained a second, part-time, flexible job which has significantly increased her income. She purchased a new, dependable car, and expertly managed her household budget. Although Ms. J struggled with the decision to leave her husband, she came to realize that she is a happier, healthier, stronger person and a better parent and role-model to her children. CSBG funds are used in directing both the CAA Domestic Violence and Housing Programs.

The mother of 2 young children left work to return to school, and the father owned his own business, which was growing, but not yet generating much income. CSBG funds subsidized child care for the children while the mother was finishing her education. When the mother graduated and received temporary employment, the CSBG subsidy was reduced, although the family continued to receive assistance with child care. The mother received an advanced degree and found employment. The family now pays all of their child care, with no assistance from CSBG funds.

J, a struggling mother of 3 young girls, came into our outreach center and accessed our onsite services. She enrolled in WIC, received emergency food through our food pantry, emergency clothing and outerwear for the children. She continued to access our services regularly and developed a rapport with the Center Coordinator, who talked with J about Family Development. J was interested, and the Center Coordinator arranged a meeting with a CAA Family Development specialist. J and the family development specialist developed a partnership; she began to set short term goals, and to achieve her long-term goal: employment, and personal transportation to maintain that employment, and to care for her family. J found employment, began accessing a transportation program where she received instruction and finally got her driver's license. The Family Development specialist helped her access Wheels to Work. Through this program J took a Defensive Driving Course, Budget Counseling, Basic Auto Maintenance and Repair, and an insurance 'smarts' class to prepare her to be a successful automobile owner. She accessed the transportation assistance program once again to help her with her initial insurance payment and was assigned a vehicle through the auto purchase program.

S, a 19-year-old mother, and her 3-year old daughter, have been involved in our Even Start for two years. When S was referred to our program by WIC, she did not have a high school diploma – she dropped out to care for her daughter. S and her daughter, and sometimes the child’s father, attended activities at our CAA and receive home visits from a Family Educator. S has no family supports; her mother lives out of state and continues to live with S’s stepfather, who is reported to have abused S prior to her leaving. She and her small family have very little income, just from her boyfriend’s construction jobs. S aspires to become an office manager. With assistance of her Family Educator, S received Food Stamps, utility assistance, and best of all, her GED. Her Family Educator with math skills and made sure that S was teaching her daughter the things she’d need to know for school success. S learned how to read to her child, giving S practice with her own reading skills. S and her daughter walked to our agency to attend Even Start activities. She attended adult education and parenting classes while her daughter attended early childhood learning activities. The educator would explain the children’s activities, and gave the parents an opportunity to practice before joining the children in the early childhood room. This helped build S’ confidence in her ability to succeed. In January, 2005, S took, and passed the GED exam. In the spring, 2005, S began to explore the possibility of attending college. With assistance of CAA resources, S researched the financial aid process, visited the local community college, explored various degree programs, and received information about registered day care providers to care for her child while she is in classes. In August, 2005, S became an office technology student at our community college. She drops her child off at registered day care provider in her neighborhood and takes the city bus to attend 2 classes on campus. S takes an Internet course, but she does not have a computer at home; she uses a computer at our CAA to access her Internet class, and to work on her homework. In 2 years, through efforts of our CAA, a young woman with no family supports other than her boyfriend, a small child, very little income, and no vehicle, completed her GED and is attending college.

Family A consists of a single mother and 2 children, one of whom was in early elementary school during FFY 2005, the other a pre-schooler at home. The family lived in a particularly rural and isolated area, and experienced little social, cultural, or recreational interaction, exacerbated by mother’s lack of driver’s license and vehicle. Over time, as our Family Educators developed a healthy relationship with the family, they helped the mother identify goals, including earning a GED, obtaining a driver’s license, pursuing post-secondary education, and securing employment. She also wanted more social interaction for her children, who were very shy. With instruction and support from the Educators, noticeable changes were observed. The family participated in several Even Start Program field trips with other families, and the mother began being more outgoing. Over time, she began to volunteer for some of the center-based activities. At school, the older child’s teacher observed significant improvement in reading skills. At home, the mother also noticed a significant change in social skills of both children. With hard work and determination, the mother completed GED course work and passed the exam. She is now focusing on obtaining her driver’s license, and plans to pursue post-secondary education, which will help her develop the qualifications necessary to eventually pursue employment as an Occupational Therapist Assistant. CSBG funding supports our Even Start Program.

★ A gentleman in his 40s was laid off from a manufacturing job and working with an Employment Specialist at our CAP to seek a new job. He needed steel-toed shoes in order to start the job he secured, but could not afford them. Our CAP provided a gift card to a local department store to purchase his boots. Later that day he returned to our office with good news that the boots were on sale; he returned the gift card with \$6.00 still credited 'for someone else who needs some help'. CSBG funding provides the opportunity for the attainment of self-sufficiency. Sometimes it takes only a small amount to incur life-changing opportunities, and to witness the true spirit of those assisted.

An HIV+ homeless individual was confused, which affected the ability to connect to needed health services in the community and had lost contact with the center. This individual did not follow-through on the established service plan. This individual re-established contact with the center. The center provided case management services; the counselor made referrals for detox and treatment at a half-way house, clothing, nutritional supplements and transportation assistance. As a result of the center intervention with this individual again, this individual is keeping counseling appointments, is off the street, living in the half-way house and receiving chemical dependency treatment and other services.

★ A member of a neighboring church referred the X family to the CAA on September 19, 2005. During our conversations we learned that the family were victims of Hurricane Katrina. Eager to assist the family, CAA staff contacted them at the hotel. The family journey from Louisiana was arduous and left them with very few personal items; their car broke down on the way. We found out the type of personal care items needed for basic and immediate needs. Staff personally delivered the items to the family later that evening. During this visit, we learned that they also lost the majority of their clothing and were seeking housing and employment. The next day, staff scheduled a trip to a local store to purchase clothing. Each family member was allotted \$100. Funds were expended from a grant CAA received from a faith-based charity. The family was pleased with their purchases and appreciative of our intervention; with assistance of a local municipality, one member of the family, along with her 2 sons, will be moving into an apartment soon, while the other 2 adults will be moving into a senior citizens complex in a nearby town. We worked with LDSS to secure a position that a local bank set up for victims of Hurricane Katrina. It has been a very rewarding experience for staff to assist a family during the time of despair. CAA will remain steadfast in assisting this family to reach its goal of stability and will provide any additional services.

Family A consists of a young couple with 2 children. One child had special education needs that the couple had difficulty addressing. CAA staff working at the local one stop employment center met the couple and suggested they come to the local CAA Outreach office. Staff provided the family with food and clothing, as well as first month's rent, and after advocating with LDSS they now receive food stamps. CAA staff advocated with the parents when speaking with local school personnel so that their child's needs would be addressed, including appropriate support services. Both Mom and Dad secured employment, and work opposite shifts to offset child care costs. Budget counseling was provided as the family became stabilized. As part of the family development plan, the family used its EITC to secure a reliable automobile. They also set aside some savings for emergencies. Mom and Dad have maintained full-time employment for the past year. CAA staff will continue to meet with the family as they expand their family development plan, including Mom's desire to pursue a college education.

★ A recent immigrant went to an agency funded by the CAA after being laid off from his factory job. He spoke very little English and hoped that while he was receiving unemployment benefits he could improve his language and work skills. This agency offered him both English language classes and later, a building maintenance training and certification course. The English classes were funded by CSBG. By mid 2004, he obtained a job as an assistant building superintendent, by December 2004, he advanced again by getting hired as a maintenance worker at a local research institute. All the while, he continued his studies in English. In spring, 2005, he passed his interview and test and became a United States citizen. He continues to study 2 days a week in this program and is currently at level 3. This program participant became more fluent in English and improved his employment status; he is one of the hundreds of students who attend our CSBG funded classrooms every year.

Following a major heart attack, Mr. C, an elderly gentleman, ended up having emergency surgery that led to a 6-week hospital stay. During that time, the public housing authority where he lived proceeded with a court eviction. Upon his release from hospital, Mr. C had nowhere to live and was unable to retrieve any of his personal belongings. He boarded a bus and arrived at his daughter's apartment in a nearby city with only the clothing on his back, still wearing his hospital identification bracelet. He came to our CAA extremely distressed and embarrassed, because he needed to seek assistance in completing an application to one of the that city's apartment complexes. Mr. C is illiterate and could not complete the application. It became quickly apparent to CAA staff that Mr. C needed more than simply assistance in completing an application. CAA staff assisted Mr. C with his application, but he still had no furniture, food, or clothing. CAA provided basic necessities such as small appliances, clothing, dishware, and toiletries through community and individual donations to the CAA. Mr. C was referred to other agencies, such as Catholic Charities, Food Bank, Salvation Army, and a local furniture store for his other needs. Mr. C receives SSD benefits, and CAA staff arranged for his funds to be transferred to his new residence in a timely manner. Today, Mr. C has a new home in a new city that allows him access to his daughter and family support. He has new doctors and maintains a healthy, active lifestyle within his new community.

A young woman, age 38, homeless, needed help to obtain emergency assistance and safety following Domestic Violence. Our Family Advocate intervened with her domestic abuse situation by collaborating with another local agency. This collaborative effort helped the woman into transitional housing and in obtaining other immediate services through the justice system. Food, clothing, and essentials were also provided. Through efforts of the Family Advocate, the woman acquired supportive counseling and supports services. The young woman is on the road to recovery and success. She routinely visits our family resource center, and has started attending college.

A mother of 5 lost custody of her children due to her alcoholism. She enrolled in day treatment through another agency, worked hard in her recovery, completed day treatment, regained custody of 3 of her children, received her GED, and is presently living in a CAA-owned apartment with her 3 children. She has maintained sobriety for 16 months as of this writing.

Mrs. M, a single parent of 2 young children, came to CAP requesting assistance with rental arrears. While meeting with the case worker, she discussed the difficulty in remaining current on all of her monthly bills due to a low-paying job and lack of child support. CAP assisted by funding her participation in a driver's training course, which enabled Mrs. M to obtain her driver's license and eventually a vehicle, through Wheels to Work. Mrs. M obtained a significantly higher paying position because she no longer had to rely on public transportation, thereby increasing the number of hours she is able to work.

★ Ms. C is a woman who is no stranger to the system. By the time she came to CAA, she was distrustful and suspicious. Initially, Ms. C believed CAA would be like all the other programs, where she had been treated rudely and with disrespect. However, she agreed to give CAA a chance. As she became more comfortable with staff, Ms. C decided she could trust CAA and that we were 'different'. She explained the various means and methods she had tried to stop the cycle of dependency on the welfare system and provide a livable wage for herself and her young daughter. These attempts had been in vain. With assistance of CSBG funding, CAA successfully partnered with another agency to provide Ms. C with suitable training to become a Certified Nursing Assistant. Ms. C graduated with honors, and, with CAA help and CSBG funding, she found a livable wage position in this field. Pleased with her performance, the medical facility already increased Ms. C's salary. She no longer needs public assistance. Additionally, with CSBG funding, Ms. C used another program to obtain a donated vehicle, enabling her to work additional hours, earning more money. This hard-working single mom might still be on welfare if it had not been for CSBG funds, which allowed CAA staff to work closely with her and break through barriers of distrust and resentment.

★ Mrs. D, a 56-year old low-income woman suffering from heart failure and on oxygen called Emergency Services at Community Action. She had tried for several years to resolve problems with roof leaks, but could find no help. The leaking was bad enough to soak the carpets, and pull kitchen cabinets from the walls. During heavy rains, she placed buckets, bowls, and dishpans under the leaks in almost every room, and then stayed awake all night trying to empty buckets. Mrs. D called our CAA case manager in desperation, and staff started looking for help – but there were no resources. The Case Manager started calling local businesses to get material and labor. She was successful. The community in which Mrs D lived came together and helped replace the roof, material was donated as well as food to feed the volunteers. Within 2 days an entire community banded together and Mrs. D had a new roof.

★ R has resided in the agency's supervised transitional living program for mentally ill adults for over 7 years. As a result of persistent mental illness, R was unsuccessful in completing an educational, vocational, or day treatment program. In 2001, the agency began providing a job training program in a small retail environment for consumers such as R, who presented with special needs; he began participating in the job training program in 2002. Initially, R wanted only isolated activities, such as cleaning when the store was closed, organizing the storage area, and electronic data input. As a result of program services, gentle guidance of staff, focusing on strengths of R and his ability to progress at a personal pace, R eventually acquired additional skills. Additionally, R volunteered frequently mowing lawns, shoveling and doing yard work for the business. Job training program staff built upon R's strengths and interest in yard work, encouraged application for a job as a Maintenance Helper that became available in the local community and assisted in making application. As a result of R's participation in job training, employment was obtained as a PT Maintenance Helper.

A young lady in her 20s began working for the community center in her early teens after the death of her mother. T learned basic office skills and assisted in the daily operations of the community center. T graduated from high school but was not able to attend college because she had to work to take care of herself. Because of CSBG, T worked and took a few classes in bookkeeping to increase her skills. The more education and experience T achieves the closer she becomes to reaching her ultimate goal of self-sufficiency in the near future.

★E is a single man in this 60's with no family support system. With no income, he was evicted. He had problems with alcohol and participated at the local chemical dependencies clinic. He had health problems, poor nutrition, and was concerned he would fall back into drinking. LDSS referred him to the CAA homeless assistance program where he enrolled in the homeless shelter operated by this CAA. Staff worked closely with him in establishing goals and action steps, becoming involved in social and mental health counseling, and assisted with filing for Social Security. As a result, E found and maintains a small efficiency apartment and continues to live independently. The homeless assistance program and the shelter are not adequately funded and could not exist without the direct support of CSBG funding.

X, a single female, came to CAP for community service. After completion of the required application, it was apparent X could not read. CAP enrolled her in the Adult Literacy Program and found a tutor. X was ecstatic at her progress, she aspired to be a cashier. She was tutored in basic math; X has exceeded her wildest dreams and has worked her way from cashier to manager of a local fast food chain. Without CSBG funding, X would never been able to realize her goals.

P is a 27-year-old single mother of three: 8-months, 2-years and 9-years-old, and who relocated after leaving a domestic violence situation. She has no car, and walks or takes public transportation. P has no family or friends and, no support network in the area. The transition was hard, but she knows it is in the best interest of her family. P has an apartment, but is in jeopardy of eviction because she is unemployed and cannot collect Unemployment Insurance. P was referred to our CSBG-funded community program, from CAA Food Pantry. Our Community Liaison through this program assisted in accessing interview clothing from our Clothing Closet. She applied for employment around the city and arranged interviews. The Community Liaison and P discussed her housing, employment, and child care. P is a very determined young woman who had successfully completed an accounting degree through a business college and plans to work in this profession, with the understanding that she may have to start at an entry level. Staff provided P with a list of job openings at CAA and referred her to various companies with job openings. P felt better about her situation after her referral and was thankful for the assistance, guidance and referrals.

Agency provides Resident Services, partially funded by CSBG, to senior, handicapped and disabled tenants at its 519-unit apartment building. A bilingual resident services coordinator assisted one immigrant tenant, Ms. R., with obtaining resident alien status – green card – in a relatively brief three months. In addition, the coordinator helped Ms. R to obtain training that enabled her to begin employment in September 2005, and also assisted her with applying to the college, where Ms. R. will begin classes in January 2006.

Last fall, a single mother came to the office for utility assistance, prior to the start of HEAP. She was living on her school loans, and refunds provided from her last semester in school. Since she had a household with 5 children living at home, she desperately needed this assistance to avoid utility shut off. It helped her through the heating season and she also applied for HEAP benefits later on. By then it was almost time for her graduation. She now has regular employment with the local school district. However, with her credentials and employment, we believe she will no longer need our help. Since she first came for assistance, she has become more self-sufficient and has so far not applied for HEAP benefits.

M & R contacted CAA in crisis over housing. The couple was relocating and temporarily living with family but could stay only briefly. Not from the area, they were not sure what was available, so they came in on a Friday afternoon to meet with a crisis worker. The crisis worker made a brief needs assessment and gave them phone numbers and information about agencies to contact. Over the next few weeks they had many phone contacts and discovered some other challenges. The couple had no transportation to look for housing. In our city, public transportation is limited and not having any type of transportation or access too, is very difficult. Also, M had a minor criminal history and past substance abuse issue (part of the reason for the relocation to get a 'fresh start'). M lined things up: he had a job here waiting for him, kept in contact with his parole officer and was scheduled to begin outpatient treatment. R also was willing and eager to work, but again, transportation was a major obstacle in her line of work as a home health aide. After the initial contact, the couple took the information provided, made numerous contacts and over the weekend worked hard on finding an apartment. The worker connected them with LDSS and local outreach help to aid with the start up costs in securing housing. This required some advocating for the family at LDSS, as they were trying to put responsibility on the previous county of residence. Within 2 weeks the couple moved into an their own apartment of with the help of LDSS and outreach assistance, in addition to their financial contribution. Our worker helped with some furnishings for their apartment through cooperation with a local operation that delivers second hand furniture items to needy families, and our Crisis Network. During a later food pantry visit M said he is looking into a better job and they are saving money to purchase a low cost used automobile so R can return to work. They repeatedly expressed their gratitude for help and positive support – but their willingness to work hard for their own goals was the truly critical part of their success.

★A CAA Counselor from our Crisis Network met with a young couple on a number of occasions during the past 2 months to work on budgeting. Both individuals were working but looking for jobs with additional hours and better wages. Our counselor provided information about such programs as Food Stamps and HEAP, and helped prepare applications for, and schedule appointments with LDSS.

The couple began working with a Job Coach from CAA career program, and with a CAA referral began to access the DOL One-Stop Center. CAA provided use of its telephones, fax and postage machine to assist with their search for new employment. They were engaged in a self-sufficiency action plan with CAA and everything appeared to be fine until they came in one day very upset with a 3-day notice from their landlord. The crisis Counselor immediately sought assistance of the CAA Homelessness program Coordinator. The couple told us they had made numerous attempts to contact the landlord about plumbing problems; but when he didn't return their calls, they decided to withhold rent. Our Coordinator learned that the couple were good tenants and didn't have problems with the landlord previously. She knew this landlord, having worked with him on a few cases. The tenant agreed to meet at CAA with the landlord in an attempt to resolve the situation. The landlord agreed to make the necessary repairs, the tenants paid the past due rent, and agreed to meet with CAA once a month or on an 'as needed basis' for case management services.

Mom and 3 children came to CAA to pick up a holiday food basket. During the interview we learned that she had recently moved and needed furniture. We had a couch and desk that she was looking for and arranged for delivery. A week later a bed was donated and we called Mom to see if she could use that too: she could. In the spring Mom had gotten sick and needed prescription assistance. We filled her prescriptions with our CSBG beneficiary account. She came in a few months later and said she now had a second job and wanted to pay back the money for the medications. That rarely happens. She is now doing well and continues to keep her 2 jobs and provides for her growing children.

A member of our community in her mid-teens, attended school for a number of years in a city environment. She returned home with a strong interest to learn about the ecology of the country environment. CSBG made funds available to establish a summer program for our community's youth. Part of the program was a workshop on understanding our marine environment. As a result of the workshop identified some specimens of both marine plants and animals. The hope of the community is for her and other youth to gain an understanding of how fragile our environment is and to bring about an interest in marine biology and eventually attend college for further study.

Directed by the CSBG funded Director of Employment and Training, a DOL-funded veterans employment program has the goal of assisting veterans with multiple employment barriers in obtaining career-oriented employment at a liveable wage. One customer was enrolled in this program in April, 2005, self-citing the following employment barriers: age, lack of education, transportation, lack of credentials, poor work history, low reading skills, history of substance use/abuse, public assistance recipient, lack of job seeking skills, lack of knowledge of current job market, and lack of marketable skills. His goal was to obtain a certificate and become employed as a Certified Nurse Aide. Through this program, he completed a career development certificate curriculum, which included activities in career plan development, job search strategies, 'soft-skill' development, and employer expectations. Customer was also co-enrolled in CAA-operated Literacy Volunteers of America. Upon completion of the career development certificate curriculum, program staff assisted customer in obtaining a CNA Trainee position at a local skilled nursing facility at slightly above minimum wage. As a CNA trainee, customer was to receive state approved training leading to the state credential test for CNA. Program funds were used to reimburse the employer 50% of the training wages, and to purchase the necessary work uniforms and supplies. In early July, 2005, customer passed the state credential test for CNA on the first attempt and was promoted to a regular wage, which was several dollars more than minimum. The employer cited a high level of motivation, determination, and self-confidence on the part of the client, particularly in overcoming learning disabilities. The employer also reported being impressed by customer reliability and willingness to cover extra shifts as requested. Customer was also asked to join the advisory board for our program and assist in the selection of a new program coordinator. Customer feedback in this process was instrumental in the selection of the current coordinator. In late August, 2005, customer was forced to resign and return to his state of origin, to aid an ailing parent. The employer appreciated the notice of resignation, and currently classifies the individual as 'Eligible for rehire'. Upon returning home, customer quickly obtained employment as a Nurse Aide at a local healthcare organization. Furthermore, customer used developed skills to provide in-home personal care for the ailing parent.

A man came to CAA for assistance. The home consisted of multi-generational members of the same family. Their electric power had been shut off more than a year prior and the family home was up for tax sale/auction. Our staff worked with the Office For the Aging, LDSS and the utility company to have their power returned and the taxes paid. The man started volunteering at our agency and ultimately found employment.

Mr. F, a drug user since age 14, is currently enrolled in our family development program. Through CSBG funds, family development staff established the following goals: alcoholic anonymous meetings, employment, and education. Mr. F is currently enrolled in alcoholics anonymous meetings twice a week, currently working and attending college at night to peruse his long term goals. Our family development staff continues to work with Mr. F offering guidance and support.

A man and woman with 6 children came to CAA with a number of problems, including homelessness and unemployment. They did not receive social services for various reasons. After assessment, CAA staff initiated services to help them get on their feet financially. They were accompanied to LDSS. Because of a language barrier, agency staff served as translator, and also provided advocacy with the social service worker. After securing basic food stamps, Medicaid, and assurance of the first month rent paid by LDSS, the family was temporarily housed in a motel. During the next few months, CAA assisted them in locating permanent housing, which they found. They continued to come to the agency Career Center on numerous occasions to find employment. Their employment status improved: the man found basic work at a local business and the woman found entry level work in the medical field. We helped them obtain clothing from the CAA Thrift Store and supplemental food from the CAA food pantry. They are self-sufficient and have health insurance.

Recently discharged from the military, the X's returned to their hometown, but as a result of several financial mishaps, they had no funds and no place to live. They applied for temporary assistance at LDSS, who then referred them to CAA for housing assistance. CAA provided temporary emergency housing and emergency food. They were enrolled in CAA-sponsored Section 8 Rental Assistance.

With their voucher, they found more permanent housing. Both X's have found employment and recently purchased a vehicle. Additionally, they were referred to the family planning clinic for cancer screenings and birth control options.

CAA staff from 2 programs: weatherization assistance/referral, and emergency services, both funded at least partially by CSBG, helped an elderly couple access services necessary for them to remain in their home safely. Both retired, with social security their only source of income, the rapidly rising energy costs were a heavy burden. The husband used to keep up with house repairs, but now he found even the smallest project very challenging and risky to his health. Asking for "outside" assistance was very difficult. When the crew arrived to perform the energy audit, it was immediately apparent the couple's needs went well beyond the scope of weatherization. The roof needed serious renovation/replacement: many of the trailer's white ceiling tiles prominently displayed brownish gray reminders of rainstorms. Several had even fallen indoors. Ignoring this problem would only allow the house to slowly rot. Emergency services staff was alerted that they might need persuasion and help in accessing HEAP benefits – through the County – and could also use nutritious food from CAA emergency food pantry, as neither of them can drive. They later received both food and HEAP. Weatherization and emergency services staff visited, and meshed programs and services to help this couple remain safely and comfortably in their home: this included a new roof via weatherization and other sources, interior repairs from another local agency, HEAP benefits and additional materials costs. Two days after the new roof was finished, despite nearly 3 inches of rain and widespread flooding, the house remained dry.

The Employment and Training department within our agency serves a number of dislocated workers throughout the year. We have seen a large number of employers downsizing or closing completely after many years of existence in our area. When this takes place, individuals often find themselves short on cash, and sometimes food is the last item purchased. The food pantry which is funded partially by CSBG, provided services to these individuals as the agency staff becomes aware of need.

G came to our agency seeking to participate in our community food buying club, and then used Food Stamps for his purchases. After a general description of our services, G was very interested in the objective of the food club program and immediately volunteered to assist with distribution of orders on delivery day. G volunteered on several occasions in the Outreach Office, which created a foundation of comfortable interaction and trust which he told us is very rare for him. This time G allowed CSBG staff to counsel and advise him on setting goals for his future with his son. However, careful steps were taken while speaking with G as he sometimes seemed very defensive about his current situation (which caused G and his son to seek shelter with G's mother and her new husband). One of G's prevailing problems, along with housing, was loss of income. He was in litigation with this employer.

Management charged G with performing while impaired. G would not tell the outreach worker any more than that. Our CSBG employee suggested that he go to DOL and canvas for a new job. He took the advice and signed up for workshops which would make his skills more marketable. G completed job training and obtained employment, however, during this time domestic problems arose causing him to leave his mother's home; he became homeless and stressed. G has high blood pressure; but decided to leave his son in the care of his mother until he could find housing for both of them. G finally found a relative he could stay with, unfortunately, it was not in the same county, which posed more problems, as his job was located in his former county. During this time, CSBG employee suggested G to go to LDSS for TANF, which would get him closer to his goal of affordable housing. We provided housing lists. Determined to stay as close to the family goals we had outlined initially, G continued to seek employment in the area. Staff gave him a lead which ultimately proved to be successful. He was hired by a local restaurant franchise which placed him in their management program. All seemed well; however, more domestic problems arose and he became homeless again. This time his brother alleged alcohol abuse. G disputed that he has a problem, however, because of his current homelessness, LDSS mandated an evaluation and placed him in an adult residence. The evaluation proved the allegations to be a sham, but G agreed to receive mental health services for his stress. Additionally, in spite of all of the above he still continues to attend management classes and seek affordable housing for himself and his son.

★Four months ago, CG arrived at the CAA with an eviction and utility company disconnection notice. She worked 25 miles away from her home, but owned a van that required \$800 in repairs to make it functional. Because of lack of reliable transportation, she missed significant time at work and was in danger of being fired. CG required a new car, but was using all of her resources to prevent homelessness for her family. Her daughter had recently died and she established legal custody of her grandchildren. However, because of the financial situation, she questioned whether she could afford to keep them. CAA paid her rent arrears, which provided the financial support she desperately needed. CG was referred to Wheels to Work and purchased a late model car for less than it would have cost her to repair her old car, and its value was much higher than the amount she paid. With reliable transportation, CG has become more self-sufficient. She is employed full-time, pays her bills on time, and managed to open a savings account. Thanks to her grant from the CAA, CG had the resources to purchase a new car. Her self-confidence and esteem were restored.

In January, 2005, one of our Family Development Advocates began working with a woman who recently found herself homeless as a result of abuse, and after dissolution of a 35 year marriage. Although she made the first and most important step to improve her situation, she was afraid to be on her own and lacked even the most basic self-sufficiency skills. Totally without transportation, she was moving among the homes of family and friends, and was frantic because she was running out of options. Because of Family Development – funded exclusively by CSBG – our Advocate met with her at a relative’s home, and found the woman waiting outside. The Advocate immediately helped this woman to formulate basic goals important to her independence. These included obtaining: 1) a self-supporting job; 2) safe and reliable transportation; and 3) clean and affordable housing. Over the course of 4 months, and with help of our Advocate, this woman participated in job skills training, budgeting classes, and conducted an apartment search. By the end of April, she obtained a job as a CNA and saved enough money to put toward a security deposit and first month’s rent on an apartment, close to public transportation. Today, this woman is totally self-sufficient, and is not only successfully working within a personal budget, but also saving toward the purchase of her first car. She is very happy with her new home, new job, and new life made possible through CSBG dollars .

★ Approximately 3 years ago, Mrs. W came to our CAP: she was unemployed, was threatened with eviction, had 3 children and little food in the house. Through Family Development staff, Mrs. W developed short-and long-term plans that would enable her to become self-sufficient. Immediate issues though, had to be addressed. The first priority was emergency food, and then, she registered for the bi-monthly food distribution at CAP. The next priority was rental assistance. Through coordination of services, staff used a bridge fund to pay rent arrears. The next part of the family development plan was for Mrs. W to secure employment. Although her long range plans included pursuing a career in day care and becoming a homeowner, it was urgent that she secure gainful employment in order to keep her rent current and support her family. Staff, again through coordination with community agencies, worked with Mrs. W on finding a job, which she did. Within the year, Mrs. W was ready to pursue her long range plans. With CAP support, Mrs W researched and identified agencies that provided day care training and certification. She enrolled and successfully completed her training. In addition, staff helped Mrs. W to enroll in First Time Homebuyers’ classes. Staff continued to work with Mrs. W: 3 years later, Mrs. W runs her own day care center and is a homeowner. CSBG contributed to this success in supporting the Family Development program.

A family came to the agency in need of housing: they were about to be homeless. The size of the family drove the need for a 4-bedroom house or rental unit, but such units are extremely difficult to find in rural areas, unless it is a whole house. Community Action provided this family with a 4-bedroom house through its ‘permanent’ homelessness program. Families are allowed to remain in these permanent shelters for up to 36 months. Included in the lease is the requirement that they participate in the Family Development Program with the specific final goal being homeownership. This family avoided homelessness, and received Section 8 assistance by moving into this permanent shelter. During the second year of their occupancy in this home, the head of the household improved her employment skills and subsequently found a job which will sustain her family. She participated in the homebuyer education classes provided at Community Action and is presently in the process of buying her first home. Funding through CSBG makes the holistic approach possible. This family continues to move through the programs designed to help it become self-sufficient, with the final goal - homeownership, and household income sufficient to meet their needs without need for public assistance.

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**End Goal 1 Personal Accounts**

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**Goal 6****Low-Income People, Especially Vulnerable Populations, Achieve their Potential by Strengthening Family and Other Supportive Systems**

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In April 2005, our city experienced a rash of unexplained fires that affected over 35 families. Many were low income families, were displaced, and forced to move into hotels and local shelters. CSBG staff contacted the local Red Cross, which provided information about the families. Hotels and shelters were then contacted and we provided information about our CAA, and especially our furniture program. One family was a single mom with 5 children whose story appeared on the local TV news. Everything the family owned was destroyed in the fire. There was not one piece of furniture. At the same time, the 11-year old ran into the street and was hit by an automobile, breaking his leg. He was transported by ambulance to the hospital. CSBG staff contacted the news reporter and arranged to meet the family. Staff immediately noticed the child with the injured leg, and that it was propped up on a makeshift pillow, as they had no furniture. Within a couple of hours CSBG staff came together and delivered living room furniture and beds. We also made a special donation of a recliner chair so that the child with the injured leg could rest comfortably. While meeting with the family, staff assessed some other immediate needs. The family relies on LDSS for financial assistance and were waiting for benefits to be issued. The family had limited amounts of food. CSBG staff visited a local food pantry and brought bags of food back to the family. As a special treat, CSBG staff received a donation from a local pizza shop and the family enjoyed fresh pizza and refreshments. Staff offered mom access to our outreach office to search for employment and to work with staff on obtaining other items lost in the fire. Mom and children are all adjusting.

★Victims of a house fire, a single disabled father and his young son, were referred to the CAP by the local American Red Cross Chapter for assistance. Temporarily living in a motel, the father was eager to find permanent housing, but also needed food and clothing assistance. A family development plan was completed and referrals were made to LDSS for emergency services such as Food Stamps and clothing vouchers. In the meanwhile, CAP provided food and clothing through its food pantry and clothes closet. The CAP housing program is assisting the family with purchasing a used mobile home and drilling a well for safe drinking water. Although this family is still receiving assistance from the community they are stable and well on their way to becoming self-sufficient.

Extended rains caused severe flooding in many residential neighborhoods, especially in low-lying areas. With some roads completely washed away and both rivers threatening to overflow their banks, a state of emergency was declared by the Governor. As the rivers began overflowing their banks, mostly in very low-income areas, CAA informed the community about items needed immediately: mattresses, bedding, food, and clothing. A local chain store that was about to begin replacing mattresses at a local motel near the most devastated area contacted CAA, offering to give the mattresses to flood victims; but they needed to be picked up. CAA, the County, and Red Cross worked together to identify those in need, and develop a delivery system—using volunteers. The media were tapped again to inform people about the mattress give away, and where to get them. All 100 mattresses were distributed to low-income flood victims in two days. [edited version]

Mr. B, a teenager, was referred to the CAA through the county Probation Department, after his mother petitioned for Mr. B to be adjudicated a Person in Need of Supervision [PINS] because of his acting out, and angry emotional outbursts at home. This young man was also having problems with his grades, not completing his homework, and as a result, he was failing 3 subjects. Mr. B was enrolled in the CAA youth placement prevention program, where a family development worker helped him to explore his anger and abusive behaviors through use of an anger management workbook. This book also helped Mr. B to evaluate his emotions and prevent emotional outbursts. CAA helped Mr. B to set goals to complete his homework and other school assignments and to improve his grades, and coached and supported him during that process. As a result of his work with CAA, Mr. B has brought his grades up, making honor roll this quarter. He has also won the school's award for 'most improved student'. Mr. B's mother reports that his behaviors at home have improved significantly; he is now off probation. His success was made possible through CSBG support of CAA partnerships with the probation department and the schools, and the support of the youth placement prevention program.

Ms. S first came to the agency when she was 17 and pregnant, after her parents kicked her out. She wanted to live with the father of her baby and raise their child together, but neither had a steady income or a place to live. Agency staff assisted them with securing an apartment and Ms. S's boyfriend quickly found employment to help with expenses. Because Ms. S was living on her own for the first time and knew little about budgeting or healthy meal planning, she was enrolled in an agency program which guided her and also provided needed kitchen items for her new home. Transportation continued to be a barrier for this young couple, so this spring Ms. S enrolled in our program for assistance in purchasing a vehicle. They purchased their first car this summer, which made them more independent as a family. When unforeseen expenses put the family in danger of eviction, Ms. S worked with her case manager to establish a payment plan with the landlord to stay in their apartment. Throughout their financial crisis, the couple were assisted with food baskets and clothing to supplement their income. After delivering a healthy baby, Ms. S decided to stay home for several months to care for her, while her boyfriend continued working. During this time, Ms. S attended CAA Teen Support for peer support and educational materials on raising a healthy child. However, Ms. S realized she needed to be employed to keep the family afloat. In order to make herself more employable, she worked hard and received her GED. After living together for a year and a half, the couple married. Today their daughter is being raised in a loving and supportive 2-parent home. Ms. S is currently applying for jobs and plans to enroll in college this fall. Family stability was obtained through CSBG funded programming and staff.

Ms. A, a disabled woman, returned to her home state and her family after her marriage fell apart. She was assisted by a kind relative who referred her to subsidized rental housing. Ms. A cared for several of her teenage children. After a few years of renting an apartment and receiving rental subsidy, the agency worked with another community group to join forces in assisting Ms. A. It was agreed that both groups would provide construction funds for a new home to Ms. A and family. The home built was a 2-bedroom unit with a full basement. Ms. A provided her own inherited land. Our agency contributed significant funds, along with the partnering agency. By working in close relationship with another group, they also contributed to the family stability.

In 2003, a 17-year old female, who was a parent of a newborn and in her senior year in high school, was referred to CAA, LDSS and CPS to work with a self-sufficiency facilitator on setting attainable goals leading to family stability. While participating in the self-sufficiency facilitation program, she was referred to and attended Financial Literacy classes and became successful in managing her finances. The young mother became a tenant in CAA transitional housing and then began setting goals with the self-sufficiency facilitator to obtain employment. The customer became employed and maintained employment for 8 months. During her initial employment, she began working on the goal of obtaining a car which she did realize through linkages with various agencies and lending institutions. In December of 2004, she was ready to locate permanent housing [long before the 3-year maximum time limit in transitional housing], which she did. After the move she decided that she wanted to obtain a job with more hours and higher wages. She was successful in obtaining a job at a local bank with an hourly rate increase and an increase in total number of hours worked per week. The customer is doing well after graduating from high school, finding employment and then upgrading employment providing viable wages to support herself and her son, who is enrolled in Early Head Start. She also successfully started a savings account, and recently purchased her second vehicle providing for safe and reliable transportation.

X entered the CAA alcoholism & drug rehabilitation program, diagnosed with dependence on many types of drugs, including hallucinogens, and at the time was on 3-year probation. X was also homeless, and presented with withdrawal symptoms. X was referred to Detox by the case manager and upon release from Detox, was placed in an inpatient setting for a 28-day stay, which was successful. Upon discharge from inpatient services, the program referred X to a halfway house to participate in a less intensive outpatient treatment program, 4 days per week, 3 hours per day. X received group counseling and received other educational services such as HIV information, nutrition, parenting, daily living skills, work readiness, and relapse prevention. Her attendance was excellent. By obtaining increased insight and knowledge of addiction, X progressed through stages of change. X remained in the program for 8 months. At completion, X established and is now maintaining a sober lifestyle. X obtained an apartment, reconciled with family, and has become gainfully employed while attending an area community college.

☆The Friendship Program of RSVP pairs senior volunteers with lonely or home bound seniors. The volunteers, or 'Friends' call on the seniors either by phone or in person at least once a week. A woman called to request that her mother be paired with a Friend. In the past year, Mom had lost her husband, her sister, and her son, and was rapidly losing her eyesight to macular degeneration. Her daughter said Mom was giving up. We quickly paired Mom with a Friend, and the two hit it off immediately. The Friend started visiting weekly, then twice weekly, and then almost daily. Mom and Friend discovered they enjoyed the same activities, the same music, movies, and food. Mom, who was on the verge of giving up and might have had to move in with her daughter, was now happy and enjoying life again. Mom is still living independently in her own apartment and Mom and her Friend are busy eating out in restaurants, playing bingo and shopping together.

Mr. W came to our CAA with his case manager from another local agency. He receives SSI and a small weekly paycheck from part-time employment. He needed assistance with plumbing repairs. He had been without running water for over 9 months, carrying water from neighbors for cooking and cleaning. He had little or no access to bathing facilities. With financial assistance from the referring agency and CAA, Mr. W's water storage tank was replaced, and he was also referred to other community resources such as utility company energy program and Weatherization. Mr. W now has hot and cold running water.

A family of 4 was living in an apartment that was made affordable by the CAA rental assistance program. Even with both parents working, it was difficult to make ends meet. When the father left without warning, the mom wasn't sure how she would be able to afford the rent. She contacted CAA and learned that her subsidy would be increased to reflect the change in the family income.

The apartment remained affordable to this mom and her children. CAA staff also provided information about other supports and services available to this family.

One summer Friday afternoon, a 22-year old mother called the WIC program, crying. She had delivered a baby boy that Tuesday at the local hospital, came home on Thursday, and the baby had not nursed since late afternoon Thursday. WIC staff explained how to express some milk to make it easier for the baby start nursing. WIC staff called her back to check on her progress, she was still crying and was unsuccessful in feeding her infant. WIC suggested she come into the office for more assistance. Unfortunately she had no transportation and lived in a rural community outside of the city. Staff called and arranged to use the church normally used for WIC clinic in that community and drove 15 miles to meet her there. The mother was given a breast pump and shown how to use it. She relieved some of the pressure and her very sleepy baby began to nurse. This mother was reassured and given tips for waking the baby to nurse, and tips for getting him begin effectively. WIC staff drove the mother home and gave her a cell phone number for more assistance over the weekend. The young mother called several times over the weekend with questions and concerns.

WIC staff introduced the young mother to a local La Leche leader who provided additional assistance and visited the mother at home. WIC staff and the La Leche League leader stayed in close contact with the mother who was new to the area, knew only her husband, and had no support system in the community. They provided her with information on programs and events in the area and provided support and encouragement. Over the next few weeks, both the La Leche and WIC staff were in close contact with the mother to check on her progress. The baby was nursing well and gained over a pound by 3 weeks, and doubled his birth weight by 3 months. The mother showed tremendous growth, she is happy and confident in her abilities. She is volunteering at the local library and is interested in helping other young mothers learn to nurse.

☆ A couple in their 80s was taken to court by their landlord who claimed that they owed \$30,000 in rent. The local CSBG-funded agency researched the problem and determined that the Section 8 share of the rent had not been paid for several years. The agency spoke to the owner, who agreed not to pursue the court case while we tried to resolve the issue. Agency staff demonstrated to Section 8 that their portion of the rent was delinquent and they paid the landlord in full. Due to the housing advocacy services provided by the agency, the couple was not evicted and continued to live independently in their home.

Mrs. Y came to CAA as a domestic violence victim. Her husband was incarcerated as a result of the violence, and she and her 4 children were living in poverty. Mrs. Y had a history of failing to maintain employment, partly due to unreliable child care. However she also had a history of failing to follow through to retain needed benefits and services such as child care subsidies, Welfare, Medicaid, WIC, and Head Start. These failings often left the family without income and facing chronic emergencies. Family Development staff worked with Mrs. Y to establish a calendar for time management, and a plan of action was laid out at each home visit, with a 'to do list' such as appointments reminders, phone numbers. Mrs. Y was assisted in developing more effective communication skills with service providers. Since she had no vehicle, initially, staff provided her with transportation to appointments. Recognizing her lack of transportation, Mrs. Y was assisted in locating a job – and child care – within walking distance of her home. Vital services, including TANF, are in place without serious lapses or sanctions. Mrs. Y has also been reconnected with a preventive caseworker from LDSS to obtain child care for non-employment appointments, including doctor appointments, as well as drug and alcohol counseling. Family Development is 100% funded by CSBG.

The W family came to CAA for assistance when Mr. W, the primary wage earner, was assaulted and seriously injured. Mrs. W has cognitive difficulties and learning challenges. Additionally, Mr. W had carried out the largest share of child care and housekeeping for their three children, aged 7, 4, and 2. Mr. W was in rehab for several months and family suffered financially as well as emotionally. Mrs. W began working with Family Development to identify family goals and resources. A facility that could accommodate Mrs. W's learning challenges was identified and Mrs. W set out to obtain her CNA training. In addition to seeking continuing education opportunities, Mrs. W applied for TANF benefits. She applied for and obtained Food Stamps and participated in the Food Co-op to provide adequate nutrition for the family. Mr. W returned home. He receives SSD benefits for himself and the children. Mrs. W obtained employment at a local nursing care facility. Mrs. W and children have health insurance through her employment and Mr. W receives Medicare benefits. By developing a healthy interdependence with the community and accessing services available to her and her family, Mrs. W has become stronger and more capable than she ever imagined. The family is no longer completely dependent on Social Services.

A low-income female head of household with a teenage daughter and 4 grandchildren were given 30 days to leave their home, due to pending sale. Because she had a Section 8 rental subsidy, she had difficulty finding a unit that was affordable and met Section 8 standards. With only a few days left to move and the possibility of losing her housing allotment, she came to the CAA for help in locating housing that would provide enough room for her family, was affordable, and would pass all inspections. CAA rented her a single family home with 4 bedrooms, and which passed all inspections and met her time frame for moving.

☆A homeless couple was living in their vehicle when they came to our outreach center looking for food. The young woman was pregnant. They were upset, the weather was cold, they were out of money, had no blankets and were low on gas. The Center Coordinator contacted a local church who arranged a temporary place. Food was supplied through our food pantry until they found an apartment a few days later. LDSS paid for first month's rent and CAA helped supply household items to get them started. The Center Coordinator arranged WIC enrollment to ensure adequate nutrition for mother and unborn child. Settled into their new home, they could safely start a life as a family.

★Ms. T, a young single mom with a one year old, came to our outreach site looking for assistance with housing. At the time she was living with her father, an alcoholic who was making the living situation impossible. The verbal abuse was more than she could handle, especially with a child in the home. Ms. T feared for her child's health and safety. A greater fear was that Child Protective Services would be called in and her child would be removed from the home. We knew it was time to remove both from their current situation and find them their own place. We placed her on our Housing list; but the one year wait was an obstacle. We found an apartment and covered the security deposit, leaving the first month rent for Ms. T. Presently Ms. T is working towards her GED, has obtained her driver's license and is looking forward to raising her son in a healthy, happy atmosphere. She has moved up on the housing assistance list, and with their help will find it much easier to cover her housing expense. She understands the 'work' she has ahead of her, but she is on the right road.

An elderly woman in her 60s applied for assistance for her septic system which had rotted. She lives in a remote area where temperatures often dip below zero during the winter. A home visit and assessment determined other emergency needs: her current heating system and hot water heater needed replacement. There was very little attic and wall insulation, and no CO or smoke detectors in her home. Her 25-year old refrigerator was held shut with duct tape. Her income fell below the 30% of the county median income; so, purchases to replace these items were more than she could afford. CAA staff, supported by CSBG funding, assisted this senior citizen to remain in her home. With the new septic and heating system, hot water tank, home insulation, CO and smoke detectors, and a new refrigerator, she regained her dignity and ability to survive. The improvements contributed significantly to stability. She accepted our staff referrals to other community services and continues to be self-sufficient.

A single woman, who first stayed in our Domestic Violence Shelter 11 years ago and later attended the non-residential counseling group, recently rejoined the group. After she moved out of the shelter, she attended college part time, received a business degree, and is now gainfully employed. During group she explained that the shelter had been a lifesaver, it not only put a roof over her head, food on the table, and clothing on her back but gave her, and her children, a chance to begin a new life, free from abuse and drug trafficking. She talked freely about her children and the impact the domestic violence had on them, the counseling they received, and the paths they chose. The oldest child is currently in jail for selling drugs; the middle child has started to attend a very prominent university and her youngest is in the last year of high school and doing ok. This woman also talked about how after being on her own for 6 years, she began a new relationship. She explained why she felt the need to come back to group: to reflect on her life and this relationship. After attending, she could identify that her current relationship was healthy and had a future. She no longer felt it was necessary to attend this group.

Through case management in a CAA housing program, this man worked towards family reunification and building relationship and communication skills through counseling and intensive case management. Client regained the trust of his family and are in family counseling and involved in sober family activities. The client has obtained a full time job and retained his position for 6 months and continues to volunteer in the food pantry when he can.

★W is a married, middle-aged man, whose life challenges cause him to appear to be much older than his chronological age. W has an ailing wife and a young teenage son. W is very proud of his small family and will immediately tell new intake workers that his wife had an illness that would typically have prevented her from having children, and despite a high-risk pregnancy they have a healthy son. W has developmental disabilities which prevent him from holding a job. His income from disability sources is insufficient to meet his family needs. W does not drive, so he walks around our community every day to meet these needs. It is clear that W ensures the well being of his family before himself when one sees his thin coat and worn shoes. His disability aside, W works hard at achieving a sense of self-sufficiency the family.

W came to our Family Center, a program supported by CSBG funding, for emergency food assistance. The intake worker assisted W with emergency food, ensured that he was getting Food Stamps, and reviewed his need for additional assistance. The intake worker gave W his food package and reminded him that the pantry, as well as other Family Center services, was available to him for future visits if he felt the need for further assistance.

W thanked the intake worker and went on his way, but he remembered the intake worker's words and returned on several occasions for further assistance. At a team meeting the intake worker commented that W always wore the same thin coat and that his sneakers appeared to be very worn. The weather can be very severe in our part of the country so the intake worker was concerned about W's health. Staff discussed ways of securing a donation of clothing specifically for W. A donor provided boots, a coat, a hat, and gloves. The intake worker (a trained Family Development worker) had by now developed a relationship with W and ensured that the clothing secured for W would fit him. She gave the clothing to W while preserving his pride. In the springtime, the donor provided new sneakers and socks. Again, W graciously accepted the donation. Although securing a donation of clothing may appear to be small factor in the process of self-sufficiency, it was a meaningful step in W's development. W has returned many times for various services for himself and his family. Occasionally, he proudly donates canned foods to the pantry.

Ms. X recently became a single parent, and though employed, she did not have reliable transportation for work. This presented a real problem in keeping her job, and consequently, her self-reliance, especially with 2 small children. The situation was compounded because she lived in a very rural area, with no public transportation available. As one of our many services, CAA offers Wheels to Work, and Ms. X was eligible for the program. After meeting all prerequisites, she took ownership of a used vehicle. She also received car seats through the CAA child Passenger Safety Program, to transport her 2 children. CAA learned that Ms. X wanted to pursue undergraduate studies; however she lacked a computer to take courses online, which was the only realistic option, given her already-full schedule. An individual who works at CAA learned of this situation, and offered to donate a used notebook computer to Ms. X. The agency helped to prepare the computer for transfer to Ms. X with software updates, to ensure it would be of good use to Ms. X. CSBG funding was instrumental in all of these endeavors to assist Ms. X in maintaining economic and family stability.

★ Members of our rural community rallied around this family and sought our assistance when other resources were unavailable and insufficient. A family of 8: Mom, Dad and 6 children, were in crisis. Both parents worked full-time to support their large family, and were quite successful at doing so. Mom was the main bread winner earning a healthy salary, while Dad worked equally as hard but earned minimum wage. Without warning, Mom lost her job due to a legal formality through no fault of her own. When their landlord heard of the family's troubles and was expecting the worst, he gave them no room for compromise on their rent. While Mom struggled to get her job back, she began looking for alternative housing and found that there was no place in the community that could house 8 people. The family was facing what they thought was their only option: moving out of the community, uprooting the children, and trying to pick up the pieces elsewhere. Our agency paid their rent for one month, during which time Mom applied for and received temporary public assistance. With their living situation not at crisis level, Mom focused on her employment issues and successfully resolved them. The children continue to thrive in the only home they have ever known, surrounded by a community that cares. CSBG funds made it possible to work closely with this family as they sought to provide a stable environment for themselves and their children.

★ A single mother of two in her early 20s moved to our area from out of state to be near family. Since arrival, she struggled with hardships that sadly, resulted in her incarceration and loss of child custody. Services formerly used were not available because of her court involvement, and she had 'aged out' of programs for teens. Our CAP provided a 2-bedroom transitional apartment and wrapped family support services around this vulnerable family. In partnership with the county mental health clinic, other private agencies, volunteers, and preventive services of LDSS, a plan was formulated to provide opportunities for this young mother. She was reunited with her children and the family is stable. Through our CAP Family Action program, we provided intensive home-based programs to help her identify strengths, set goals and achieve the skills needed to provide a safe and nurturing long-term home for her young children. Family Action's support from CSBG makes possible these journeys from despair to self-sufficiency.

An unemployed single individual was referred by LDSS, diagnosed with alcohol dependency, in remission for one year. This individual has 2 children: a teenager, and a young adult, now deceased. This was the individual's 3<sup>rd</sup> attempt at treatment: the first two were unsuccessful. This individual had developed clean time after the death of the older child and needed education on the disease of chemical addiction. The program developed a workable support system, obtained a sponsor, put several strategies in place to prevent relapse for the individual to obtain employment. This individual was admitted to the chemical dependency clinic and followed the various phases, successfully abstaining from alcohol and substance abuse for 6 months, where the individual developed soft and hard job skills. Although this customer completed high school, they never held a job. This individual progressed through phases of the treatment plan and found employment with the help of tools put in place with counselor. This individual successfully completed treatment and is working 36 hours a week, with no report of relapse.

Through the support and resources provided by CAA, a family of 6 – then 7 – made great strides. Parents and children were living in an unsafe and unsanitary housing, including exposed lead at unacceptable levels: staff assisted family in securing safe and clean rental housing. The mother was unemployed, and was referred to the CAA Employment Center where she received assistance with development of her résumé . She then worked with the career counselor/job developer to identify appropriate job placements and to schedule interviews, resulting in employment by a local business. During the year, she gave birth to a baby girl, the 7<sup>th</sup> person in this family. Healthy Start staff made provisions for food, baby supplies and clothing for the newborn. The mother has another child enrolled in CAA Head Start, which is assisting mother/child to make sure child receives age-appropriate immunizations, needed medical/dental care, hearing and vision screenings and an early screening inventory to assess educational level. Another child received services through our free summer soccer camp, which focused on leadership skills, virtues and soccer fundamentals in a safe and fun environment. The mother also attends parent meetings at Head Start, and participated in workshops hosted by Healthy Start such as Nutrition and Obesity; chronic Diseases. Mom is recommended as one of two parents from the Head Start Center to participate in FDC. Because of support received, she expressed an interest in becoming an active member of the Healthy Start Consortium, which coordinates efforts of consumers and providers to effect changes in the lives of families and the community. The agency provides this support because CSBG supports its management and planning functions. CAA continues to provide supportive resources and services to this family.

★The M family was referred to our CAA from a local church. Mrs. M had two school-aged children. Mr. M left the household, with no financial support other than Mrs. M's unemployment insurance benefits. Mrs. M was behind two mortgage payments: the bank was threatening foreclosure. CAA staff contacted the mortgage company to see what could be done to avoid foreclosure. CAA paid one month's mortgage and worked with a local faith-based organization to keep the escrow payments current. Mrs. M was then able to redistribute the other payment over time. The mortgage company agreed to refinance the mortgage to a lower payment after a fair amount of advocacy by CAA staff. CAA staff is currently working with Mrs. M in hopes of securing employment. Mrs. M created an updated résumé and CAA staff linked her to the one-stop employment center for access to the job bank. CAA advocated for Mrs. M with local utility companies and established affordable payment options. CAA will continue to provide food to the family as is necessary to maintain stability.

Recently, a family became homeless as a result of inability to pay their own portion of rent after applying the subsidy. The family consisted of 2 children under two, the natural mother in her late teens, and a family friend, an older female adult. With child protective involved and questions of continued services without a stable home environment, CAA family Resource Center staff assisted with emergency housing through LDSS. Then working with area landlords, the Center supplied a partial security deposit using CSBG funds to assure housing, resulting in stable housing. The Center later assisted this family in achieving a custody award to the older adult woman for benefits from the county and an increase in their food budget through increased food stamps. The center assisted through mediation and counseling to obtain a myriad of services to begin the self-sufficiency the family needed. A referral to Early Head Start provided services to both children and assistance to the older female, now in the mother role.

A family of five relocated due to domestic violence. Initially placed in the Domestic Violence Shelter, the family was referred to our CAA. The family had no place to live, the children were not enrolled in school, and the mother had no means of support. The family was placed in the CAA homeless intervention program for housing assistance. CAA referred the family to local landlords and assisted in applying for housing at various housing authorities. CAA staff assisted in completing an application for TANF and helped the family comply with all the requirements needed for the case to open. The children were immediately enrolled in the CAA Tutorial Program, and then in the local school district. The children began attending school and participating in the lunch program. Since the holidays were near and the family had a very limited income, they were given the opportunity to participate in a local project where each child was given \$100 to spend on clothing and a toy. Jackets, boots and warm clothing were purchased for the children through this program. Through CAA advocacy and intervention and family determination, they now have safe housing, the children have good attendance in school, and the family attends weekly group meetings with the Domestic Violence Program. The mother obtained employment and is also enrolled in the local community college, working toward her college degree.

★ Ms. X, a disabled single parent with limited resources, was facing utility service termination, following unanticipated medical expense, and unable to maintain a prior payment agreement with the utility company. As a result, the company demanded payment in full. To prevent the shutoff, Ms. X went to LDSS seeking assistance, but it was denied because she did not have a current lease.

Through CAA outreach efforts DSS was familiar with our agency and referred Ms. X to us for guidance. During the interview process at CAA Ms. X claimed she could not afford to renew her lease as the rent would be increased by \$200. She continued to reside in the apartment on a month-to-month basis. We also learned that Ms. X suffers from an inoperable brain tumor which prevents her from holding a job. However, based on prior work history, she receives SSD and also occasional child support through the court system. Upon further investigation regarding her medical condition, it was revealed that Ms. X is required to use an oxygen related apparatus which runs on electricity.

The first step after the interview was to contact the consumer advocate of the utility company and explain Ms. X's medical condition and the critical need for electricity. Time was granted by the utility company, allowing Ms. X to have her physician complete and return the proper form to the utility company. It is now a part of her file with the utility company that a medical apparatus is in the home. The next step was to schedule an appointment with the Social Security Administration. Ms.

X was not aware that her minor children were entitled to benefits under the Social Security Disabilities Act. With CAA follow up, Ms. X signed her new lease. She was informed by Social Security that her children are indeed entitled to retroactive benefits. Ms. X's housing situation will now be affordable. Legal Services was also contacted by CAA to intervene on Ms. X's behalf for child support. They agreed to do so. CAA has helped Ms. X with her utilities by placing her into an energy assistance program administered by both the utility company and community based organizations. CAA partnering and outreach efforts with other organizations have allowed Ms. X and her children to achieve an improved standard of living. Ms. X can now maintain her current utility and phone bills. The time CAA staff spent advocating for this client would not have been possible without CSBG funding.

MC came to CAA for help with rent in March of 2005: homeless, jobless and battling alcoholism, he lost custody of his children. Community Action was willing to help, but before entering emergency housing, MC was placed in a detox center. MC in the past had entered detox centers and halfway houses but was never able to escape the hold that alcohol had on him, drinking at least one liter every day. In May, MC came back to CAA, homeless again. He desperately wanted to be alcohol-free so he could get his children back. CAA called many agencies in 2 counties for help. These agencies knew MC and told staff that he had burned all his bridges; even the detox center would not take this man anymore. One agency felt this man would 'drink himself to death', and another agency advised that Medicaid had spent enough money over the years paying for his treatments. Our case manager wanted to try to alleviate this situation rather than sit back and just feel sorry. A detox center in another city was contacted: they would take him. MC was very willing to go for help in hopes of reuniting his family. But in July he was homeless again, and came for help, again. Staff were concerned with his health: he appeared jaundiced, very nervous, swollen, slurred speech, had poor personal hygiene and was hungry. MC did not want to go to a hospital; he said he was sanctioned from DSS and lost his Medicaid. MC needed his medicine because he was also Bipolar. Staff began phoning to find a detox center that would take him – this was difficult because he had no insurance. One place had an opening, but not for 5 days. CAA supplied MC with emergency lodging for the night and told him to come back at 8:30 in the morning for assistance. MC came back the next morning in worse shape than the day before. Hardly recognizable, he was swollen and shaking considerably. This became an emergency. After conversation, he agreed to have the ambulance come take him to a Center in a nearby city. A few months later in October 2005, MC came in for help with food. He looked healthy, groomed, great color on his face, smiling, no trouble conversing. He reported that he had hit his lowest ever the last time he came for help and thanked CAA for saving his life. MC now has been clean for 3 months, has a job, an apartment and has his kids back.

★ Five years ago, B, 90, became involved at the agency senior community meal site. Her husband was recently deceased; she was lonely and depressed, had minimal community supports, was isolated and could benefit from interaction with other seniors at the site. Over 5 years, B developed friendships and support from other seniors at the meal site. This past summer, her health deteriorated; she could no longer make it to the meal site. Instead of placement into a long-term care facility, B became involved in the agency home-delivered meals program, which has allowed her to continue to live independently and maintain self-sufficiency and nutritional health. She hopes to be soon well enough to return to the senior meal site and her friends. In the meantime, she has the support of home delivered meals, the volunteers who deliver them, and a network of friends who provide support to allow her to maintain her independence.

T is a single mother of five who works full time to care for her children, but has had a very hard time trying to tend to their needs. T had her first child at a very early age and did not complete her high school education. Due to her lack of formal education, T earns very little and depends on the community center and the food pantry. Through interaction and support of the community center staff T enrolled in a GED Program and plans to attend the local community college in the spring.

K came to our program due to domestic violence by the father of her 2 daughters. Her older daughter, A, age 13, resided with the father and her other daughter, age 11 resides with K. The older daughter disclosed that her father is physically and verbally abusive both she and her sister. K went to Family Court on her own without an advocate and applied for emergency custody and was denied. K came to the CAA that day and an advocate assisted with completing a family offense petition, which was filed the next day. The Judge ordered an order of protection with no visitation, and temporary custody of A, the older daughter, to K. The Judge also ordered an investigation ordering LDSS to look into the allegations of abuse, and appointed a law guardian for the children. The children are now safe and our agency's domestic violence program is providing counseling for K and both children. The agency is also providing advocacy for the pending Family Court matters.

Y, a gentlemen who spoke very little English, was desperately in need of a kidney transplant. CAP assisted with translation, appointments and transportation to medical facilities. CAP Family Worker helped the family understand all the details. When a matching donor could not be found CAP was there to support his sister's decision to donate her kidney. The transplant surgery was successful. The family is now stabilized because the medical crisis was resolved and members can resume their lives. CSBG funds and the Family Development philosophy empowered our Family Workers view all situations in a different light and see that nothing is impossible.

A 23-year old customer came to a CSBG funded program. She and her 18-month old daughter had just fled Domestic Violence. This customer moved to our city with the clothes on her back, leaving everything that she knew and owned behind. She stayed with her cousin for 2 weeks but then needed to locate stable housing. She also needed clothing, food, and employment to become self-reliant. Self-motivated, and with assistance of her family worker, the customer created a safer and more secure life for her and her daughter. Since enrolling in the program, the customer was referred to LDSS and successfully obtained daycare assistance for her daughter, found an apartment, and a job. Although this is just the beginning, the customer made steady progress.

The Domestic Violence Program that is partially funded by CSBG placed Ms. S, a new mother, in its Safe Dwelling, after her abuser made the accusation that the newborn was not his. Ms. S remained in the safe dwelling for over 2 months while the baby, who weighed just 2 pounds at birth, grew to a completely healthy 8 pounds with much care and assistance. Ms. S since moved to another agency program for transitional housing and supportive services. She obtained full-time employment and continues to attend domestic violence support group meetings.

Last fall, a single mother came to the office for utility assistance, prior to the start of HEAP availability. She was living on her school loans and refunds provided from her last semester in school. Since she had a household with 5 children, she desperately needed this assistance to avoid utility shut off. This assistance helped her through the heating season and she also applied for HEAP benefits later on. By then it was almost time for her graduation. She has gone on regular employment with the local school district. We are sure we will be able to provide her with assistance once again this year if she needs it. Since this time of assistance, she has become more self-sufficient and has so far not applied for HEAP benefits.

M is a 41-year old mother of 4 who relocated as a result of domestic violence by her physically abusive husband. Her oldest is 22 years old and married, her youngest is 3 years old. She came here not knowing anyone and with only what she could carry in a bag for herself and the 3-year old. Her other three girls live on their own in their former state. She moved into the domestic violence shelter when she came here and started her search for a better life. CAA first assisted her with applying to the program which helps parents to obtain an inexpensive vehicle. She qualified and was given a car which allowed her to find a job and look for housing. Our Family Development worker assisted. Together, she and M found an apartment through community listings and Section 8, and furnished it as well. She was also assisted with job hunting, using internet, and contacted the Chamber of Commerce. Within a short time M moved out of the shelter and into her own place with her daughter. The worker also assisted M in getting her daughter into Head Start. With all of this help, M networked and found a better paying job, allowing mother and daughter to live without public assistance. We helped a little at Christmas but M did everything else. She is determined to make it and have a better life for her and her daughter. She still remains in contact with her other three daughters and recently became a grandmother. She is thankful for the help.

A married couple in their late 50's from the rural area of the county could not meet their basic needs. His income was SSI, her income was part-time employment at a big-box store but her hours were reduced due in part to illness. Winter was right around the corner and they lacked the money for fuel oil delivery. Working with a Crisis Counselor, CAA learned that the couple had not been prioritizing their debt consolidation. Food, heat and medical treatment needs were not being met but credit card payments were. CAA accessed money from its emergency fund towards an oil delivery. The couple, proud and reluctant to 'go on welfare' paid one-third of the cost. They are working cooperatively with CAA; they have applied for food stamps, next month they will apply for HEAP and have been referred to VITA, as they appear to be eligible for the (EITC) Earned Income Tax Credit. Most importantly, this shy couple, not looking for a hand-out – but rather a hand-up – have set life-skills goals for themselves.

☆A grandparent contacted our staff ... to inquire about the risk of a grandchild losing insurance coverage because of an unpaid premium. The grandchild was already enrolled in the statewide health insurance program. Our office contacted an insurance representative who had the child's health insurance premium waived. Due to family circumstances, the child's policy was extended, allowing the grandparents time to reapply as the guardians. Paperwork was completed and the health plan was put in place to prevent a lapse in the coverage. The grandparents told us they had developmental concerns for their grandchild. After referral to Head Start and case management services through Family Development, the child is now enrolled in Head Start and the family is making successes in small steps through supportive services.

Mr. Q was on disability due to an injury. He always had an interest working on crafts and the natural environment. He would volunteer his time and some of his crafts to the community and the local museum for display. His knowledge of the bays and especially shellfish was known throughout the community. While on disability he would continue his research at his home and at the local library. CSBG funding has allowed him to work part-time putting his knowledge to work. He now has hopes of using a facility owned by the community to educate our youth in the marine environment. He has been networking with other marine facilities and encouraging youth to take part in workshops designed for those seeking employment in the marine field.

Family J has three children: 2 school age, and a 2-year old at home. Mom is dealing with chronic mental health issues and Dad, whose primary language is not English, has a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade education. He is in process of becoming a naturalized citizen. Their home was not up to code and doesn't meet family needs. Dad has held some farming jobs but has difficulty obtaining employment due to his immigrant status, and lacks access to health care. The family car not does not work. Mom was referred by local mental health services to assist with parenting and family self-sufficiency. The family achieved many goals by partnering with the Family Development program which is supported by CSBG at our CAA. The Family Development Worker provided support, information, resources, and referrals to assist in achieving their goals. Dad and Mom worked with their children and demonstrated increased knowledge and understanding of child development and growth through childhood stages, as well as communication, and discipline, and implemented the knowledge to promote positive behavior changes. The family development worker supported the family with a plan to help with household tasks. Staff also made referrals to local programs for child safety seats, bicycles to increase family wellness and to provide activities for family time, health care needs, a computer, assistance with SSI, housing, energy, transportation, employment, literacy, legal assistance and education. The family has improved its self-sufficiency. As a result of a referral by family development to the local health office, Dad made an appointment and received a physical and shots needed for his new job. He was worried that he could not get health care. Dad is also getting assistance with his immigration status. Mom followed through with SSI process and attended an interview with support from family development. The family has recently moved to a home on a farm at which the Dad is working. Mom's goal to continue her education with help from family development, and completed and submitted a local community college application and fee waiver. She is scheduled to begin attending classes in the spring. Because of her Native Alaskan heritage, mom may be able to get educational assistance from the tribe if she can register with them, a goal she is pursuing with help from family development. Our Worker also connected the family with a community partner and they registered and insured the car. Ultimately the family is working on reaching its goals and is building trust with service providers with the assistance of the CAA, and through the use of CSBG funds.

A young couple came into our agency from out-of-state leaving their belongings behind and no place to stay. Our center provided them with food and a place to stay for the night. The next day, we assisted them in contacting a family member who allowed them to use their camper. CAA provided them with clothing and housewares. We assisted them in finding employment and eventually an apartment. They are now able to meet their needs.

Mrs. Z, a single parent of 2 school-age children, is enrolled in our family development program with the goals of obtaining affordable housing, completing her nurse's aid certification and achieving full-time employment. CAA Family Development staff, supported by CSBG funding, assisted Mrs. Z in obtaining affordable housing through the section 8, and with the enrollment process into a technical assistance training program, and offered on-going support. With assistance of family development staff, Mrs. Z obtained full-time employment as a nursing assistant and reached her goal of self-sufficiency. With CSBG funds, our family development program will continue to provide this family with on-going supportive services.

☆ After a 17-year old girl on our advocacy caseload gave birth to a baby, the child was removed from the home and placed in foster care because of the mother's drinking and drug problems. CAA staff began working to address the mother's problems. They attended supervised visitation with mother and baby. Their family development plan included the ultimate goal of reuniting mother and infant. After enrolling in and successfully completing rehabilitation for her addiction, mom learned basic parenting skills from the advocate, attended independent living training to improve her own self-sufficiency skills, and received parenting education. The advocate also worked with the young woman's father, who was willing to take the child into his home. After several months of work, the advocate, with social services support, went with the family into court: custody was granted to the baby's grandfather: the child is no longer in foster care. The young woman is no longer abusing drugs and alcohol. With family support, the young woman remains in school to finish her education. CAA staff are still working with this teen parent to foster her growth and development so she can eventually take full custody of the baby. CAA staff in this case identified resources and mapped out a plan to move toward complete family stability over time.

W, a single woman, and her 5 children, were referred from a victim's assistance program to CAA for housing. The family had no personal possessions except for the clothes on their backs. CAA found permanent housing, and staff located donations of furniture and clothing. Using CSBG funds, basic household goods, such as cleaning supplies, were provided. An age-eligible child was enrolled in Head Start and W obtained WIC services. The family is fully engaged in the community and feels safe for the first time in years. W volunteered when not child caring, assisting with clerical work. Later she found a job.

A single mother with two children was referred to CAP by the utility company because of payment arrears. CAP staff provided emergency HEAP services which paid most of the arrears and referred the customer to an energy program which paid the balance. During the HEAP application and interview process, the customer indicated she also is in arrears on her mortgage because of her low paying job and the inconsistency in child support payments. CAP referred the customer to a Fund which paid the arrears and provided financial consulting and analysis to determine if she could maintain the home. It was determined the home could be maintained with access to our food pantry on a weekly basis to supplement the food allowance.

The Family Resources Emergency Services Coordinator, whose position is funded by CSBG, worked with a grandmother who is by herself raising 3 grandchildren full time, on a very low, fixed income. After meeting, staff helped her to access immediate need for food from the CAA food pantry. Staff then helped her connect and assisted her through the bureaucratic maze for many of the applications/processes for many community services and programs so the family could become more stable: DSS-HEAP for their high fuel bill, utility company to help her budget utility bills; CAA weatherization -now on the waiting list; Food Stamps, real estate tax reduction for the elderly, WIC. In addition, because one of her grandchildren has disabilities, staff helped her connect and access appropriate education and medical testing, special education classes and therapy at a local children's agency. Staff also advised her to seek a court-appointed attorney so she could pursue adoption/permanent custody of her grandchildren, making application possible, as their legal custodian. With the Coordinator's help and legal services, she accomplished this daunting task. She also was advised (and followed through) to set up an escrow account for county and school taxes, paid monthly, to eliminate hard-to-come-up-with funds for large yearly bills.

N is a single mother who lived with her 8 children and her significant other, J, who is the biological father of 7 of the children. This family had been plagued with lead-exposure problems and it became a crisis when the lead count in the children was measured as unacceptable by the school. N contacted our office when she needed advice regarding removal of the lead. After our office made many investigative calls researching the proper procedure for lead removal, N finally concluded that it was better to seek lead-free housing. Additionally, during the ordeal with the lead issue, N and J were having domestic problems. After one incident J became so abusive to the children that he was removed from the home by CPS. The lead issue gave N the motivation to pick up and move. J refused to leave the house, as he was the primary owner on the deed, and threatened N if she took 'his' house away from him. N came to the office on several occasions for moral support, budget counseling, housing lists and advice, on the way to become more organized when going back and forth to Family Court with J over visitation, and his verbal abuse. She is a timid individual but determined to keep her family together in a relatively peaceful environment. Eventually, our leads helped N find adequate housing, and she started to work toward her self-sufficiency goals. N diligently sought gainful employment, became employed and maintained this employment close to the 90 day observation time. The employment opportunity provided full benefits and employee education/advancement program. N was very focused on independence and self-sufficiency, and to that end she consequently received three rapid promotions. N was informed that if needed, a referral for transfer to a sister store could be arranged following several incidents with harassment by J and J's family members at her job. After employment was secured, transportation became an issue. Initially, N rode a bicycle to work, however, she studied and passed a driver's permit test. This allowed N practice driving time and CAA encouraged N to take the 5 hour driving course as well. The advice was well taken and N not only took the mandatory course, but began to save some money for car insurance. CAA informed N that once she has a driver's license, an application for our Wheels to Work program can be processed. N became more self-confident and wants the best for her family. This office encouraged her to place her youngest child in Head Start, which she did. Educational goals for all the children are being met.

CSBG funds were used to strengthen the family stability of KC and her children. Unless she maintained suitable housing for her children, KC faced the real danger of losing her family. CSBG funds were used to pay her rent, which prevented this family from becoming homeless. Thanks to CSBG funds, KC had the opportunity to provide a stable environment for her family. Her three girls, ages 5-10, attend a local elementary school and are excelling. The children are happy, extroverted individuals who have an excellent relationship with their mother. KC told us her sister was placed in foster care when she was 7, so keeping her family together was extremely important. Now that the emergency was resolved, KC can focus on being the best mother possible. She reads to her daughters daily, takes them to the park, and shares a meal each night. KC takes an active role in her daughters' education, making sure all homework is completed on time. The two oldest participate in organized sports and KC exercises regularly. She provides nutritious foods for herself and her children. Thanks to CSBG funds, this family has regained its stability and continues to thrive.

[1]The father of 3 small children contacted the office for rent assistance to avoid eviction. The family was notified of eviction; staff assessed the matter, determined eligibility for services, and assured payment through CSBG funds. The family remained in its home; CAA assistance prevented this family from becoming homeless. [2]The office was contacted by a disabled individual who required assistance in preventing a health and safety matter within their home. This individual had non-operable hot water heater and no funds to replace it. Staff spoke with this individual, assessed the situation, determined eligibility and addressed this matter in a timely fashion. Staff members from two of the agency's departments worked together to assess the situation, purchase the hot water heater with CSBG funds and provided installation through other resources. Prevention of a health and safety matter took place and the individual was able to continue to reside in the home.

In February, we received a referral for a woman involved in domestic violence with a man who is the father of her only child, a school-age boy. Her son was removed from her custody and living with his grandmother. The boy was present during violent episodes in the home, and she had been unwilling to leave her abuser. The grandmother was in process of filing for permanent custody. In crisis, this woman felt that she wanted to flee and give up raising her son, regardless of the impact it might have on him. Thanks to support provided by CSBG, our Parenting Educator completed weekly home-visits during her time of crisis. The visits were intense and emotional, but mom began to make better choices for herself and her son. Through parenting skills, taught and practiced, information and videos on the impact of domestic violence on children and the counseling provided by our partnering agency, the woman began to fulfill the requirements placed on her by LDSS. This resulted in the mother and child reunion. As a direct result of our services, she stopped having any contact with the abuser, relies more on positive parenting skills and rebuilt relationships with her sister and other friends who are positive influences and on-going support for her. To date, this family is still doing well and continuing to use the parenting techniques and information she learned from our Parenting Educator.

☆In January of 2004, Ms. B came into CAP, distraught and feeling humiliated. She told us that her two children had been taken away by the Court system, until allegations of child abuse against her made by her aunt were investigated. Ms. B had heard about CAP from local residents and came in hoping that "someone" would help her. That someone was our Family Development Director. Over the next 8 months, staff and Ms. B met with CPS, lawyers, school personnel and together, went to all required court sessions. Ms. B's family development worker advocated for and assisted Ms. B through the very complicated and often frustrating legal and criminal systems. At the same time, staff engaged Ms. B in a CAP parenting skills workshop. Finally, in August, the courts determined that the child abuse charges were unfounded, in large part due to the advocacy efforts of CAP. That finding, along with Mrs. B's successful completion of the CAP parenting skills workshop, resulted in the court returning custody of the children to Ms. B.

A single mother of 8 received emergency funds through its volunteer-driven program to make essential repairs to her vehicle. While discussing her needs it was determined that she lacked sufficient food for her large family. This need was immediately met by our volunteer program, using food from CAA food pantry supplemented by food vouchers through Salvation Army. The savings realized by her family through the food supplies allowed her to catch up on her fuel bill; she was in danger of utility shut-off. The volunteers at CAA provided a full Thanksgiving meal and then a Christmas meal and gifts for all of her family. This moved her to become a volunteer herself, as she was able. While her focus was on keeping the children together, her landlord failed to pay the mortgage payments on the rental unit where she lived. Her family became homeless when the property was foreclosed. During the following year the father of the children petitioned the court for custody of the children – except for the one child with Down’s Syndrome. The father's petition stated that the children did not have stable living conditions. However he did not want to care for the child with Down’s Syndrome, further breaking apart the family unit. The CAA volunteer brought the family dilemma to the attention of housing program staff; and they assisted the family by providing rental assistance through Section 8. Then, the oldest child was killed in a car accident and the mother wound up in counseling through the county mental health program. During the counseling session she discovered that she had been a victim of domestic violence for several years while thinking that there was something wrong with her. The children were acting out in excessive anger and were having trouble in school.

In September she moved with her family into the large family housing development built by CAA in a village in the southern part of the county. The quality of the affordable housing had a tremendous impact. The school sent home notice that the children who were in counseling no longer needed it because of the new-found family stability conditions. The mother is looking forward to participating in the homebuyer education offered at CAA next year. The improvement in this household that began with voluntary care is now supported by CSBG funds. Access to housing opportunities which had always been there, now became reachable because the mom learned to trust. The family is not yet self-Sufficient, but it is on the right track.

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End Goal 6  
End Personal Narratives

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