

ACTION INC

A Private, Non-profit Community Organization serving Cape Ann and Ipswich

Action...Not Words

The Newsletter of Action, Inc. * Gloucester, Massachusetts * Spring 2003

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National Demonstration for Energy Conservation

Action Energy has been awarded two national demonstration grants to expand services to energy program participants. Only five grants were awarded nationally through both the federal department of Health and Human Services and the Ford Foundation respectively.

The federal government has enlisted Action and its partner in Boston, Action for Boston Community Development, to provide budget counseling and case management to households on fuel assistance in order to help them become more self-sufficient.

The Ford Foundation also awarded a grant to both groups and Mass Affordable Housing Association, (MAHA), to assist in leveraging energy related home repair funds.

Both three year models will be evaluated with the goal of providing more efficient assistance to vulnerable residents during these trying times.



Elder Homecare Saves Taxpayer Dollars

State Home Care funds are the best “bang for the buck” around. Senior citizens eligible for state assistance must meet several criteria in order to be eligible. Age (services are available to people over 60), AND...require help with at least 6 ADL's (assistance with daily living), i.e. bathing, dressing, toileting, medication reminder, shopping, cleaning, laundry, meal prep, etc., AND... income may not exceed \$19,560 for a single person / \$27,105 for 2 person household.

Most of the 30,000 senior homecare clients statewide receive 3 hours of homemaking/personal care per week at a cost of approximately \$3200 per year. Some of this money is recouped, however, because there is a sliding fee for services for all homecare recipients except for those elders whose incomes are under \$8,000; they receive free help. Elders whose incomes are at the highest levels are required to co/pay \$105 per month, \$1260 per year.

So what does 3 hours of Homecare provide a senior citizen today? If homemaking

chores are the most needed, it usually consists of one 3-hour visit with cleaning, laundry and shopping being done. If personal care is most needed, services are usually 2 to 3 times a week assisting an elder with bathing and a modest amount of homemaking. Weekly help goes a long way in prolonging elder independence.

Many clients never go into nursing homes because of this limited assistance and of course, with help from families.

For those elders who are the frailest of the frail however, several new programs have been added. Foster Care, Managed Care and Community Choices provide additional hours and days of service, up to 7 days a week and 21 hours per week.

Most of these clients are pre-screened for a nursing home and are on Medicaid. The cost of a Nursing Home is approximately \$60,000 per year. The cost of 21 hours of Homecare Service a week is approximately \$26,000 per year. Keeping elders who only need limited daily services at home not only saves the Commonwealth money but also improves the quality of life for that elder. *Gerry Ann Brown is Director of Action Homecare (978) 283-2700.*



A Safety Net for Our Children

James, age 17, was first arrested at thirteen, had served hard time and after his release last spring, was expelled from high school due to violent behavior. He was on probation and caught in a downward spiral.

At the beginning of last summer, James moved to Essex with a foster family because he decided he needed to dramatically change his life. With the help of his foster mother, James enrolled in the Compass Youth Program.

He took Nutrition, Health and Wellness at Compass over the summer and enrolled in the fall session of Life-skills where he consistently met the high standards of involvement and attendance that he set for himself during summer course work.



“The Compass Program has been a godsend in our effort to provide a safety net for our children.” -

*Dr. Joe Sullivan,
Principal
Gloucester High School*

He decided to work towards his diploma and joined the Compass-Gloucester High School Satellite Program.

James' determination to succeed, combined with the efforts of his foster family, DSS, and the Compass Youth Program bore tremendous fruit in a relatively short time. James set educational and employment goals with his Case Manager, goals he took very seriously and achieved regularly. James proved that he could focus on long-term goals and work toward them steadily, while delaying instant gratification. With staff support he passed the MCAS, took his driver's test, attended the Satellite Program regularly, and proved to be an excellent peer mentor.

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Community Member Joins Action Board

My dad was from a Gloucester fishing family. His dad (my grandfather), Angus, died while fishing the Grand Banks on the Gloucester fishing schooner Judique. He is buried in Saint John's, Nova Scotia. His name is listed on a plaque in front of the Man at the Wheel.

Angus would not allow any of his sons to go to sea, so the sons moved on to the big city to seek their fortunes. My uncles moved to Lynn, and most worked in shoe factories. My dad was fortunate, he worked at the instrument works at the General Electric Company. My dad's affection for Gloucester never waned. Growing up, no summer was complete without a trip to Stage Fort Park and dinner either at the Gloucester House or at Callahan's in Essex.

I served in the US Army and graduated from Northeastern University. For thirty years I marketed and sold miniature bearings in Waltham. In 1988 I retired, and my wife Cindy (a native of Essex) and I moved to Essex and began Essex's first Bed and Breakfast Inn. We converted an 1830 house on Main Street which we operated for 10 years. Both Cindy and I volunteer at the Essex Shipbuilding Museum. She is active in the Unitarian Church in Essex and I remain active in the Coast Guard Auxiliary and volunteer at the Rose Baker Senior Center.

I am thrilled by the way Action has addressed many community problems. I am pleased to have the opportunity to be a part of this problem solving team. I thank those who recommended me for membership on the board and also thank the Essex Selectmen who confirmed my nomination. I pledge my best efforts on behalf of Action. *Bob Cameron*



Angus Cameron, Bob Cameron's grandfather is remembered on the fishermen's memorial plaque.

Compass Youth Program

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With the help of Compass, James was hired to be a peer mentor at the Willowood Youth Center, where he knew he would gain valuable experience in the social service field.

After tremendous effort, combined with the help of a caring foster family and the Compass Youth Program staff, James achieved his primary goal and was officially taken off of probation this March. He is scheduled to graduate high school this spring and plans to enroll at Bay State's Criminal Justice program in the fall. According to Gloucester High School Principal Dr. Joseph Sullivan, "The Compass Program has been a godsend in our effort to provide a safety net for our children."



State Senator Bruce Tarr and Homecare Director Gerry Ann Brown helped with Project Uplift, holiday giving fundraiser this winter at Woodman's

Good News in an Otherwise Difficult Winter Season

The Action Emergency Homeless Shelter experienced a winter of escalated need and reduced funding. Last fall all shelters serving single placement individuals suffered a 15.5% state budget cut and elimination of all additional winter beds. Some shelters cut their census proportionate to the income loss. Less beds, a fragile economy and a colder than usual winter resulted in more people seeking our services. On many nights we were seeing a minimum of twenty-six men and women in line, and on any given night as many as thirty people were searching for a place to stay. The Action Shelter capacity is twenty beds. It looked like we would have a winter of "no room at the inn" for those seeking shelter from the elements.

Through the efforts of two concerned citizens, Fatima Heath and Phyllis Cefalo, the issue was brought before Mayor John Bell. Hearing the vastness of the problem, Mayor Bell took his own decisive action, signing an emergency order allowing us to increase our census and subsequently provide a bed to all those in need.

Arrangements were made to utilize emergency funds from the city to defray cost.

As a result, no homeless individual has had to spend a night in the cold. On the occasions that there were more people than we could handle even with the emergency order, the Gloucester Police have sheltered people on their site as part of a developed contingency plan.



On the second night of being able to handle an increased number, Shelter staff member Jim Noble

decided to check the area in search of those who were not aware of our new capabilities. In his search a regular Guest was discovered sleeping under a bush on Main Street. Jim welcomed this individual to the Shelter, provided him with a hot meal and a place to sleep. Considering a wind chill factor of below zero on this evening, a combination of community activism and quick thinking may have saved a life—Good news in an otherwise difficult winter season.

New Skills for a New Economy

This is the second year for Action's Adult Basic Education Class which continues to be a positive experience for all involved. The ABE class was started in the fall of 2001 after surveys revealed that 5,000 adults in Gloucester do not have a high school diploma. The purpose of the class is to help students acquire the skills needed for today's entry-level workplace. Students are taught basic math, reading, and writing as well as critical thinking, teamwork, communication skills and computer skills.



Moses Silva Hernandez, Adult Basic Education student and Bill Rochford, Executive Director

But the class is about much more than simply acquiring skills. Many of the students

have painful memories from prior classroom experiences. The ABE class provides an opportunity for them to re-enter the classroom but this time they receive support and encouragement. By interacting with one another, students are able to realize they are not alone in their struggles.

Robert came to the class after several years of employment at Le Page's. When the factory closed down, he decided to attend the class

while he sought employment. Although in his 50's, Robert still felt traumatized by his childhood classroom experiences. Suffering from an undiagnosed learning disability, he was placed in a special needs class where he received no education at all, instead his hours in school were spent doing craft projects.

After being taunted and bullied for years, he finally dropped out of school at age 16. Robert was able to teach himself to read and went on to have a long and stable employment history. It took a lot of courage for Robert to enter the classroom again, but he has consistently attended class for the past two years. His grades have

steadily improved and he seems somewhat amazed by his own progress. He particularly enjoys using the computer which, he says, he couldn't even turn on before beginning the class. Each month Robert helps the class with a craft project and his enthusiasm has been an inspiration for students and teachers alike. Robert recently landed a full-time job but he plans on continuing the class and working towards his ultimate goal - getting his GED.

A Laboratory for Innovative Solutions to Local Needs

Over the last three years, Community Action of Cape Ann and Ipswich has made significant steps toward our top priority: training unemployed individuals to gain the skills necessary to be economically self-sufficient. We established **Compass**, a new education, training and employment program for at-risk youth. In response to the low level of basic skills of transitional workers leaving the fishing industry and manufacturing jobs, Action established **Adult Basic Education, English for Speakers of Other Languages, GED**, and expanded certified **computer training** programs. We created a **College Scholarship** program. Over the last three years we have produced greater results, from placing 40-50 people in jobs each year to placing 165 people in jobs last year. We expanded our employment, education and training capacity from 120 students a year to over 300.

As Action has done throughout its 38 year history, we continued to respond to local needs with innovative solutions. When the only recourse for low-income Cape Ann residents to obtain free family legal aid had to close its doors due to lack of funding, Action coordinated community resources to keep **Cape Ann Family Law Assistance** running with an AmeriCorps*VISTA volunteer lawyer. Action now has a full time lawyer and social worker, and helps over 140 low income women and men address divorce, custody, child support, visitation and paternity issues that would otherwise remain unresolved.

Action is a laboratory for unique, necessary and cost-efficient solutions to local needs. Last year Dr. Cynthia Bjorlie approached Action to help her start **Adult Foster Care**, a service that places relatively independent disabled adults in family homes instead of institutions. This service saves the taxpayer the much higher cost of full time care. Through Action, community solutions are determined by local stakeholders, not by bureaucrats in Boston or Washington.

We are now in the first year of a new three-year plan. Our top priorities for helping people in poverty are **#1 Self-Sufficiency, #2 Emergency Services, #3 Support for Vulnerable Populations, and #4 Housing.**

Quality Employment Services & Training

Quality Employment Services and Training (QUEST) is here at Action with the opportunity not only to provide much needed assistance to individuals and families struggling to overcome disabilities, but with the opportunity to expand our service base throughout Essex County and enhance our ability to network with a broader base of providers committed to our Mission. Housing, supportive services and job training will assist those in need to stabilize and determine their own future success.

QUEST is a product of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), designed to provide dollars for property acquisition, rental subsidy and supportive services. The duration of the commitment is three years, and Action, Inc. is among a sparse twelve providers nationally

to be awarded this particular grant. As designed, the program will sustain itself long term under the stewardship of Action.

QUEST will serve 40 people per year. Twenty units of affordable housing will be provided throughout Essex County. All participants will be eligible for job training and placement as a vehicle for eventual self-sufficiency.

"We are now able to put all the pieces of housing, supportive services, job training and placement puzzle together," said Bill Rochford, Action's Executive Director. "This program is what was always needed if we are serious about changing people's lives. It is what Community Action is all about." For more information contact Ralph Johnson (978) 283-7874.



OUR MISSION is to open to everyone the opportunity for education and training, the opportunity to work, and the opportunity to live in decency and dignity. Action helps individuals and families in poverty achieve economic security and family stability. Action provides access to opportunities through advocacy, a wide range of program service resources, and education and training to assist people in the process of self help.

ACTION has been Cape Ann's first and only designated anti-poverty agency since 1965. We develop, conduct and administer programs with the maximum feasible participation of the community, including elected officials, private sector representatives and especially low-income

residents. We mobilize resources, public and private, to better the conditions under which people live, learn and work.

CHARITY NAVIGATOR recently gave Action a 4-star ranking (out of four stars) for organizational efficiency, capacity and fiscal management.

CONTACTING ACTION

Action Energy Programs.....283-2131 or call	Energy toll free.....(800) 696-9276
Adult Foster Care.....281-2612	Homecare.....283-2700
Compass Youth Program.....281-9682	Homeless Shelter.....283-4125
Employment/Training.....281-7402(3)	Housing Advocacy.....283-7874
Family Law Assistance.....283-7874	MHFA Home Loans.....283-7874

Local Needs cont. from page 3

Each of our emergency programs that provide assistance to households in crisis will demonstrate that emergency aid *together with advocacy and case management* will help the household move toward self sufficiency - and away from repeated public assistance. Employment, training and education programs continue to be our top priority for self-sufficiency. Two national demonstration programs (page one) will maximize help to beneficiaries of energy affordability programs.

We will always have vulnerable elderly and disabled neighbors that will need our help. Eight percent of the Cape Ann population diagnosed with disabilities lives in poverty. In Gloucester, 11.2% of the elderly population lives in poverty (on less than \$8,890 per year), a 38% increase from 10 years ago. In this time of severe budget and Medicaid cuts, it is imperative that **Elder Homecare**, and Adult Foster Care continue to provide services and pay care givers living wages. **QUEST** is a new national demonstration project that will provide housing and support for the most vulnerable among us.



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Action, Incorporated

Helping People on Cape
Ann since 1965

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