

# ACTION INC

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

Action . . . Not Words

The Newsletter of Action, Inc. • Gloucester, Massachusetts • Summer 2002

## insideaction

Family Law .....	2
Employment & Training .....	2
ESOL .....	3
Gordon College Connection .....	4
Action: An Overview .....	4
Contributing to Action .....	4

## Helping the Disabled Live Independently

A few years ago Dr. Cynthia Bjorlie read a newspaper article about an Adult Foster Care program in New York that placed disabled adults in need of only moderate care in homes instead of in institutions. Researching the program, she learned that there are similar programs across Massachusetts through the Department of Medical Assistance.

Placing relatively independent disabled adults in family homes instead of an institution helps the individual remain a part of the community, gives the family a small income as well as the satisfaction of helping another person remain independent, and saves the taxpayer the much higher cost of full time care.

Seeing that the program could benefit all sides, Dr. Bjorlie began an Adult Foster Care program on Cape Ann through Action, Inc.

“As a primary care physician, I have seen many times the loss of independence and privacy that a person experiences when moved to a nursing home. This program not only keeps functional people in the community, it also provides an income for the caregiver and saves the taxpayer the considerable expense of a nursing home.” Since starting the program last fall, Dr. Bjorlie has placed seven disabled adults in foster care homes. *Material from the Gloucester Daily Times used in this article.*



Gloucester Daily Times Photo  
Steven and Helen Amalia of Magnolia serve lunch to Steve Fox, a slightly mentally disabled 33-year old. The Amalias care for Fox through the Adult Foster Care program.

## Fighting the Battle Against Homelessness

You don't have to remind Erin and her teenage son Kenny that there's a housing crisis—they've lived through it.

It began with a fire in the inner-city triple-decker where they'd lived for eight years. Erin is a single mother, a Gloucester native and a hard worker. Kenny [all names in this article have been changed] is like most teenagers and enjoys being with friends. The fire, which made them homeless, virtually wiped out the life they had of work, friends, family and school. Even though they retained their Section 8 certificate, due to the acute shortage of affordable apartments and the fact that the Section 8 rent allowance couldn't keep up with the escalating rental market, Erin and Kenny bounced between friends and family for months. At one

point they were living in their car. Staying in a state-funded shelter was out of the question, because Kenny wanted to continue school in Gloucester. Not even an advertisement placed by Action in several North Shore newspapers brought an offer of housing.

Finally, after combing Essex County for months, they located an apartment complex near Haverhill that would accept Section 8. Moving there meant that Erin would have to commute sixty miles back and forth to work each day and Kenny would have to change schools.

On top of that, the complex wasn't safe. Their apartment was broken into once and they could never leave their clothes in the washer or dryers in the laundry room. *Continued on next page*



## Utility / Federal Energy Efficiency Programs Grow and Prosper

Keyspan, the natural gas distributor for much of Massachusetts, has agreed to a new five-year contract with Action Energy that will serve over 5,000 low-income homes with energy efficiency and weatherization programs.

Action Energy is also completing negotiations with National Grid for a five-year renewal of its commitment to administer energy efficiency programs for over 30,000 low-income customers of Massachusetts Electric Co. living statewide.

The weatherization program is funded by the U.S. Department of Energy. A recent increase in weatherization funding will allow Action Energy to increase the number of homes served by 50% in the 2002 fiscal year. The president has proposed an additional 40% increase in the 2003 fiscal year.



*Weatherization makes energy more affordable to low-income households, saving a household anywhere from 20%-40% of their annual energy usage.*

*-- Elliott Jacobson*

The fuel assistance program, however, that Action Energy administers for Cape Ann and Ipswich faces a less hopeful future. Additional federal funding and state involvement are needed for this assistance to continue to meet the need.

At the same time that Action Energy was seeing a 10% increase in applications, federal funding for fuel assistance during the 2002 fiscal year was cut by 40%. This would have spelled disaster for many households were it not for last winter's unusually warm weather.

*This article was written by Elliott Jacobson, Director of the Action Energy Affordability Programs*

## Legal Project Helps Families Move Forward

Jeanne Brennan has been on the job as an AmeriCorps\*VISTA sponsored attorney at Action for six months. In this short time she has provided free legal advice to over eighty indigent clients to help resolve family law matters including divorce, custody, paternity, child support and visitation. 84% of these clients are from Gloucester, and 79% are women.

In addition, the Pro Se Divorce Clinics, led by volunteer Gloucester lawyers, are helping a dozen people obtain a divorce. Without this assistance, households that struggle to balance energy, housing, nutrition and medical expenses would have a hard time affording family legal costs. The City of Gloucester Community Development Block Grant and Neighborhood Legal Services of Lynn help make this project possible.



Jeanne Brennan, AmeriCorps\*VISTA volunteer is working full time at Action

Gloucester Daily Times Photo

## Homelessness

*Continued from previous page*

With Action's help they kept trying to return home. And the pressure was on because the complex had changed hands and the new owners were reluctant to renew Erin's Section 8 lease because they could get a higher rent for her unit on the open market.

By chance, the agency learned of a young couple that had recently purchased a multi-family building in the heart of Gloucester, whose rents they wanted to keep affordable. They would live in it themselves and were open to taking Section 8. One unit remained and they offered it to Erin. With the help of the Gloucester Housing Authority, the unit was quickly ready for occupancy. Funds through Action helped with the security deposit. After nearly two years of living in limbo, Erin and Kenny were home again. But there are dozens of families on Cape Ann like Erin and Kenny who aren't so lucky.

*This article was written by Peter Anastas, Director of the Action Housing and Advocacy Program*

**LEGISLATIVE UPDATE** As of this writing, the President's 2003 budget has been approved by the House of Representatives and must now be passed through the Senate. Discretionary spending, which includes all social-services grant funds as well as money for defense and homeland security, has increased 9%. Nearly the entire increase goes to defense and security, with an average of 1% increase for other programs.

An \$80 million cut has been proposed for the Community Services Block Grant (Action is the designated grantee for Cape Ann and Ipswich), and a \$300 million cut for LIHEAP (fuel assistance).

The high priority of emergency and security programs will make it difficult for LIHEAP and CSBG to regain their 2001 funding levels. Under the House-passed budget, and the funding requirements for the war on terrorism, there is simply not enough spending flexibility to meet all the domestic spending needs. This means there will be less funds for fuel assistance and overall less access to social services. Please stay in touch with your legislators and let them know how the social services safety net has helped you, your family.

*Information from the National Community Action Foundation was used in this article.*

## Workforce Investment Board funds Adult Ed

Joe is a 45-year old man who lives at Moore's way, a transitional sober house. Joe is a high school dropout who enrolled in the Adult Basic Education Class with the hope that he can increase his reading and math skills enough to fulfill his dream opening his own takeout restaurant. The class isn't always easy for Joe, but he enjoys the support from the teacher and his fellow students, and he has been able to recognize that he is not the only one to feel anxiety about being in a classroom even after all these years. He even delighted his fellow students one night by bringing in homemade pizzas fresh from the oven.

In addition to attending the class, Joe is working with Patty Bongiorno, Action's Job Developer to secure a job and is being helped with finding his own apartment by Lisa Hartnett, Action's Case Manager. He hopes that he can utilize the Entrepreneurship Program and one day, in the not too distant future, open his own restaurant.

The Adult Basic Education program at Action is funded by the Southern Essex Workforce Investment Board. It is part of the first federally funded open enrollment adult basic education program in Gloucester in decades. According to 2000 census data, fourteen percent of adults in Gloucester do not have a high school diploma.



Constance McNulty (top right) teaches Adult Basic Education at Action's Employment and Training Center.

## Need Care at Home for an Elderly Parent?



Gloucester Daily Times Photo

Housekeeping  
Shopping  
Bathing  
Dressing  
Companionship  
Respite

call **Action Homecare**  
**978-283-2700**

## Gloucester's New Immigrants

The Department of Housing and Community Development awarded Action \$10,000 to expand its *English for Speakers of Other Languages Program (ESOL)*.

A community meeting between Action and Gloucester's growing Brazilian and Spanish-speaking community last December led Action to develop this series of ESOL classes, funded by local businesses and other major donors to Action.



The first class of students from Brazil, Latin America and Korea

The DHCD grant has doubled the size of the English program to thirty-five students. Classes meet evenings at Action's Compass Youth Program in Brown's Mall, downtown Gloucester. Each group of students has two classes per week in language skills and is taught by Elizabeth Williams, Action's ESOL coordinator. The third evening is spent learning computer skills.

The other major donors to the program include the Forest Foundation, the First National Bank of Ipswich, Cape Ann Savings Bank, Citizens Bank, Gloucester Bank & Trust Co. (now BankNorth Massachusetts), Gloucester Co-operative Bank, Ryan Associates Inc., and Varian Semiconductor Equipment Associates Inc.

## Former LePages Employees Find Jobs

Two graduates of Action's Career Literacy and Computer Readiness program are going on to advanced training to help get better jobs, under a federal government program for people laid off when companies move outside the United States.

David Hunter and Deanna Perry were let go last year when LePage's Inc. moved operations from Gloucester to Canada.

David, 52, was a maintenance engineer. He had worked at LePage's 13 years. Deanna, 25, was there two years. She began in production and later worked in the office, doing human resources, payroll, and other management-related jobs.

Deanna will take computer networking courses given by Boston University. David will study refrigeration, heating, ventilation, and air conditioning technology, at The Peterson School in Woburn. The federal program pays their tuition.

Both say Action has put them on the track to better jobs. They praise the help they got from Ronna Resnick, director of Action's Employment & Training program at Brown's Mall in Gloucester, and Patti Natti, the computer class instructor.

As David said about Ronna: "Anybody who needs help, she's there." Deanna and David, along with another classmate, George Babcock, also passed the A-Plus curriculum for computer systems management.

## Gordon College Graduate Makes Connections for Compass Program

Diana Marginean was a senior in Gordon College's social work program last spring when she completed her practicum at Action. She worked full time for the planning director, organizing the start up of the Family Law Assistance Project, researching grants and drafting proposals for a variety of projects.



Diana Marginean

Through her networking she contacted Oliver Parker, an executive with the north shore biotech company Millipore. She presented Parker with

the multi-faceted Compass Youth Program, the needs of the youth and the program's goals. Marginean's work resulted in an invitation to submit a proposal to the Millipore Foundation. The Foundation awarded the Compass Youth Program a \$6,000 grant to help youth pursue their GED.

Originally from a farming family in Romania, Marginean is now a graduate student at Brandeis University's Heller School program for Sustainable International Development.

## Volunteers in Action



(Left to right) Nancy Mitchell, Jeanne McCloughlin, Christie Lowe, Mary Cluffo

The ladies of Gloucester's elderly housing developments put in hundreds of volunteer hours for Action annually. Here, they are pictured at work at Sheedy Park, helping prepare the mailing for Action's 2002 Community Needs Assessment.

**Action: An Overview  
Innovative Programs, and Efficient Use of Funds**

Action helps the low-income and working poor on Cape Ann and Ipswich achieve economic security and family stability in many unique ways.

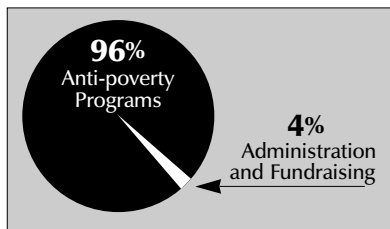
**INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS** As a private, 501(c)3, charitable and locally run organization, Action has the flexibility to design programs that address needs specific to individuals and to Cape Ann.

**EMERGENCY RESPONSE** Action responds quickly when a family or individual is in crisis to avoid costly, long-term problems.

**COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTIONS** Action provides services that address the full range of family needs, from youth and adult employment and training, to housing and job placement, to services for seniors and the frail elderly.

**OUTREACH TO THOUSANDS OF MASS RESIDENTS** Action serves over 5,000 individuals in over 3,000 households on Cape Ann and Ipswich annually. In addition, Action's energy affordability programs also serve more than 10,000 households statewide.

**EFFICIENCY**  
Ninety-six cents of every dollar Action spends goes directly to program services. Only 4% is spent on administration and fundraising.



**About Action, Inc.**

**Mission:** Action, Inc. 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.

As Cape Ann's first and only designated anti-poverty agency, we involve the community, including elected public officials, private sector representatives, and especially low-income residents, in assessing local needs and addressing the causes and conditions of poverty.

**How you can help:** There are many ways to support Action through your gifts. Unrestricted gifts to the agency provide an important and flexible resource that can be used to respond to broad organizational needs. With a restricted or designated gift, on the other hand, you can direct your support to a specific program or project. Gifts to Action are tax-deductible.

*For further information please write or call:*  
William C. Rochford, Executive Director  
Action, Inc. 24 Elm St. Gloucester, MA 01930  
(978) 283-7874 Fax (978) 283-0523

**CONTACTING ACTION**

Action Energy Programs .....	281-3900	Homecare.....	283-2700
Compass Youth Program .....	281-9682	Homeless Shelter .....	283-4125
Employment/Training ..	281-7402 or 7403	Housing Advocacy.....	283-7874
Family Law Assistance .....	283-7874	MHFA Home Loans.....	283-7874

**ACTION**

The Newsletter of  
Action, Incorporated

*Helping People on  
Cape Ann since 1965*

Action, Inc.  
24 Elm Street  
Gloucester, MA 01930  
[www.actioninc.org](http://www.actioninc.org)  
Tel. (978) 283-7874  
Fax.(978) 283-0523

Action, Inc.  
Board of Directors  
Executive Committee  
Tone Kenney (Chairperson)  
Linda Giamanco  
Sheila J. Irvin  
Gretchen Wood  
Loretta Peres

*Newsletter Editor*  
Chanda Millett  
*Newsletter Design*  
Michael Ronan Graphics

PRSRT STD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
Gloucester, MA  
Permit #219