

NEK-CAP News

Spring Edition ~ March 2015

Serving Atchison, Brown, Doniphan, Jackson, Jefferson, Jewell, Leavenworth, Marshall, Mitchell, Nemaha, Osborne, Pottawatomie, Republic, Riley, Smith, and Washington Counties.



From the Executive Director's Desk

Submitted by Jeanette Collier, Executive Director

I wish all of you a happy spring. As the grasses turn green, birds return to sing, and flowers bloom may we be refreshed in the signs of these new beginnings!

However, amid all of this beauty, there are still signs of significant darkness surrounding the safety net programs so important to low-income families and individuals we serve. Policy makers at the state and Congressional level continue to attack SNAP (food stamps); TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families); child care subsidies; CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program); WIC (Women, Infant and Children Supplemental Food Program); Medicaid expansion; Early Childhood Education Programs; K-12 school funding; and the EITC (Earned Income Tax Credit). This list is not all inclusive but clearly demonstrates a flawed determination to balance budgets on the backs of the most vulnerable living in our state and society as a whole. I urge each of you to take every opportunity to educate your friends, neighbors, legislators, administrative leaders, and Congressmen on the critical role of each of these programs. Not only are they key to improving the lives of those living in poverty, they are economic engines across all communities.

I would like to thank the Konza United Way, Atchison United Way, and Greater

Topeka United Way for their funding of NEK-CAP, Inc. safety net programs in Marshall, Pottawatomie, Atchison, and Jackson Counties.

United Ways and their donors are important partners in our efforts to address the causes and conditions of poverty at the most basic levels.

I would also like to thank the Kansas Food Bank and Harvesters for our new Filling the Gap Summer Feeding Program in Jewell, Republic, Washington, Mitchell, Osborne, and Smith Counties. Through a shared mission, dedicated community volunteers and a needs driven use of Community Services Block Grant funds we will be able to safeguard against summer hunger for youth identified at the greatest risk. Please refer to Jet Sperflage, Integrated Services Program Manager, article on page four of this newsletter.

During the past three months, I have served as the Interim Head Start Director. It has been an enlightening experience and has provided me with a more comprehensive understanding of the essential need for quality, comprehensive preschool education, coordinated family-driven services, and economic opportunities for low-income children and their families. I welcome your thoughts on how we together can achieve these goals and produce the most positive outcomes for all children.

NEK-CAP's Mission

We provide comprehensive education and social services to low-income community members through collaborative partnerships focused on promoting family development, empowerment, and economic security.

The Promise of Community Action

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



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Comments/Questions: please contact Linda Grier, Integrated Services Office Manager. lgrier@nekcap.org

Reinvent Horton – South Brown County Center Gets a Facelift

Over the past year, Horton citizens have been actively involved in breathing new life to their community by improving and re-vitalizing Horton’s business district. One such project included the Head Start/Integrated Service Center located at the armory. As seen on the Reinvent Horton Facebook page, volunteers were busily refurbishing and repainting the walls of the gym floor. Over the past few years, the center has needed a facelift, especially a fresh coat of paint on the gym walls. The space at the armory is shared with other organizations throughout the each day and is clearly the hub for lots of activities. Staff members appreciated the work completed by the volunteers and the positive comments which were made about the importance of the Head Start Program/Community Services in their community.



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Serving the counties of:
Atchison, Brown,
Doniphan, Jackson,
Jefferson, Jewell,
Leavenworth, Marshall,
Mitchell, Nemaha,
Osborne, Pottawatomie,
Republic, Riley, Smith
and Washington

services vary per county

Achievements ~ Accomplishments ~ Successes

Submitted by staff members

I have two homeless women I’m working with and both of them have gotten jobs just two days after being in the program. Both have goals of saving enough money to have a backup plan and both are starting their savings account when they get there first pay check. I am very proud of them in that they wanted to do this without me talking to them about the importance of having a financial plan in place. *Submitted by Soni Moranz, JA County Family Development Advocate*

I began working with a grandmother in August. Her daughter died in January, and she now was taking care of her three year old grandson. She did not have guardianship/custody of him, didn’t know how to get it, was renting a bedroom from a friend of hers, had no job, no resources, and was in a bad place emotionally and mentally. She came to me in August to enroll her grandson in Head Start and to reach out for support. I was able to get her referred successfully to DCCCA Family Services and she and her grandson have also begun going to therapy together

and individually. She was granted guardianship of her grandson, and we were able to get her and her grandson applied for disability benefits. She got a job, and in just shy of three months, she was promoted to a managerial position. She has done absolutely everything I have asked of her and worked hard to get to the better place she is in now. She has had some set-backs, but takes it all in stride. Last week, she and her grandson got moved into their own house. I nominated her for the Cruiser Car Club Christmas award, and she was selected! I got the certificate today and am very excited to give her the award. This grandmother has pulled herself and her grandson from a deep hole of debt and sadness. She has grown so much and I am so very proud of her. *Submitted by Chelsea Harrington, LV County Family Development Advocate*



Comments/Questions: please contact Linda Grier, Integrated Services Office Manager. lgrier@nekcap.org

Achievements ~ Accomplishments ~ Successes

Submitted by staff members

Some moments in the NEK-CAP history timeline:

- 1974 ~ The Child & Adult Food Program began
- 1974 ~ The Community Services Act began in December
- 1977 ~ Ms. Annie Johnson was hired as the fourth Executive Director on May 1, 1977
- 1986 ~ The Administrative Offices of NEK-CAP moved to its current location in rural Hiawatha
- 1988 ~ Secured National Head Start Grant to expand into Leavenworth County
- 1991 ~ NEK-CAP was expanded to include Jefferson, Marshall, and Pottawatomie Counties
- 1992 ~ Head Start Family Services Demonstration Project

NEK-CAP, Inc.'s Vision:

One by one
all families and communities
become self-reliant.

*NEK-CAP, Inc. is an equal
opportunity provider
and employer.*



Special handprint sign made by the kids

Rebecca was one of the first clients that I had when I started working for the EHS program 15 years ago. When I first started in the home, she had 3 children and was married to a husband that physically and mentally abused her. She had a 10th grade education, not much job experience and no driver's license. She had her first child when she was 16. Being a new home visitor, I offered her what knowledge and resources I had. Several years later Rebecca returned to the area. When she saw me she stated that I really helped her by providing her with resources and encouraging words even though she wasn't ready for them at the time. She said she used them after moving to Leavenworth to divorce her husband. She enrolled in the program again. She had a new husband and five more children. She enrolled the younger two children in EHS. She had still not gained a diploma, driver's license or job experience. We began working on several skills. She knew that she had knowledge about how to raise kids and wasn't sure if the program is what she really needed. We quickly fell into a relationship that worked for her family. I was able to help her with some of the issues the older children had, as well as reassuring her of what the younger children were doing developmentally was age appropriate. Mom was able to verbalize her strengths and weaknesses, but was unable to get motivated to make any of them happen. Mom never finished high school and decided she wanted to set that example for her children, even though her oldest child was going to graduate himself. She enrolled in GED classes and with lots of support from several agencies, was able to receive her GED last year. She then became more confident. She began questioning why some of the things in her life were happening and how she could change them. She then became pregnant. She became frustrated during the pregnancy because she was sick most of the time. She has always been very religious and has been taught to be a good wife and the husband is to make all the decisions. She began to question some of the decisions her husband was making and what little effort he was really putting forth in the family. When the baby was 3 weeks old, the all children were removed and placed in foster care due to a report against her husband. On the day before the children were removed, Dad had taken a job driving a truck over the road. Mom was left alone. I contacted the foster care agency and was able to arrange weekly visits with the baby and Mom so that Mom could stay in the program. She really started to gain self-esteem when having to go

through the steps on her own to get her children back. Mom always had a fear of talking to men. Her landlord was male and she was terrified to talk to him about repairs that needed to be done to the home. We went together and she was able to talk to him with me standing by her side. She then started doing things on her own. She realized, with the help of several people around her, that she was the only one working to get the children back home. She then discovered some disturbing information about her husband. She was relying on his income to support her to get her children back. She then decided she would go ahead and get a restraining order and move forward with a divorce. On the home visit that week, we filled out applications online. By the end of the week she received employment at McDonald's and started working the following week. She then started studying the driver's manual. She has strong connections with her church family and someone was willing to give her a car if she was willing to get her license. There is also a church member that is a professional driving instructor and he has offered to teach her how to drive. She had an opportunity to get her children back in December and decided she was not financially stable yet and it would be best to wait. All of the children came home in January. On one of our last visits, I was able to take her to the courthouse and she was able to pass the test and has a driver's permit. She is currently looking for employment that will offer her more hours so that she can gain financially independence and secure child care. A local lawyer helped her get her husband's tax forms. The lawyer said with her tax return he would pay on a hospital bill she was being sued for and forgive the rest of the debt to stop any garnishment she would be facing, talk with the landlord and work out a deal to pay the rent for a year, and is providing his services for free to get the divorce. She is really starting to move forward and thanks me every chance she gets. She has always told me that just having someone to believe in her has made a big difference in her life. The last visit we had the family presented me with a painting they had made to show me their appreciation. Every member had used their handprint to write We Love You. Mom wanted to make sure I knew the oldest son had even made a special trip from Leavenworth to be able to have his handprint on the sign. She said that I helped each of her family members and they would be forever grateful. *Submitted by Bekki Parsons, EHS Home Visitation Coordinator (former AT County Child & Family Advocate)*

Filling the Gap Summer Youth Food Program

Submitted by Jet Sperflage, Integrated Services Specialist

In the past year, NEK-CAP, Inc. has acquired Jewell, Mitchell, Osborne, Republic, Smith and Washington Counties to serve with Community Service Block Grant funds. After our completion of the Community Needs Assessment and with the help of Kansas Food Bank, NEK-CAP, Inc. found the following:

- ☛ Jewell County – 19.6% of children in the county are food insecure equating to 110 children. There is no formal food program in Jewell County, however 56% of the students in the school district qualify for free and reduced meals.
- ☛ Osborne County – 22.8% of the children are food insecure equating to 180 children. There is no formal summer food program in Osborne County. The does have two school districts, currently the Kansas Food Bank serves 14 children with the Food 4 Kids weekend backpack program in Natoma. 60% of the children in the district qualify of free and reduced meals.
- ☛ Mitchell County – 18.9% of the children in the county are food insecure equating to 250 children. There is no formal summer food program in Mitchell County; however one of the churches does privately fund meals. 42% of the children in the school district receive free/reduced lunches.
- ☛ Republic County – 24.4% of children in the county are food secure equating to 240 children. The Republic Community Resource Council operates the USDA Summer Food Service Program. On an average 45-50 children were served a day and it runs in conjunction with the Summer Recreation Program. Children are bussed in, do activities,

have lunch and end with an activity and operates the months of June and July. 56% of the children qualify for free and reduced meals.

- ☛ Smith County – 23.7% of the children in the county are food insecure equating to 170 children. The school system does run the USDA Summer Food Service Program. The school serves about 50 children a day plus an additional 10-15 parent. 47% of the children qualify for free and reduced meals.
- ☛ Washington County – 19.7% of the children in the county are food insecure equating to 260 children. Currently, the school system does not run the USDA Summer Food Service Program. Approximately 43% of the children qualify for free and reduced meals.

In the average household, the food bill increases by approximately \$300 dollars a month in the summer when children are not in school. So, families are faced with difficult decision, like do I buy food or pay the water bill? According to Feeding America, proper nutrition is critical to a child's development. Not having enough of the right kinds of food can have serious implications for a child's physical and mental health, academic achievement and future economic prosperity.

NEK-CAP, Inc. will partner with Kansas Food Bank and Harvesters to provide over 10,000 meals to approximately 185 children this summer in Jewell, Mitchell, Osborne, Republic, Smith and Washington Counties. In the counties without Summer Food Service Programs we will be providing 10 shelf stable meals for five (5) days a week and for the counties with the program we will be providing four (4) shelf stable meals for the weekend.



Example of the nutritional food pack



Part of the group who attended the Filling the Gap Meeting in Mankato on March 17, 2015

We'd love to hear from YOU!!

If your life has been impacted by NEK-CAP in any way and you'd like to share your story with us, we'd love to hear from you!

Feel free to use your names or submit your story anonymously. We would love to share your stories in our upcoming newsletters and/or on our facebook page, to help celebrate fifty (50) years of Community Action!!

Please email your stories to Linda Grier at lgrier@nekcapp.org.