

NEK-CAP News

Fall Edition ~ December 2015

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



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.

From the Executive Director's Desk

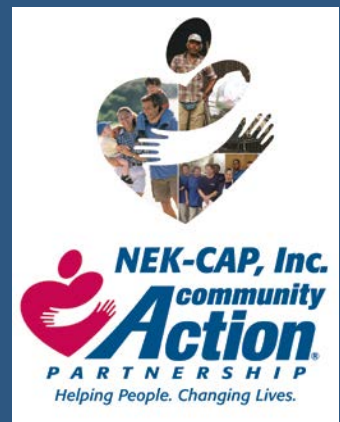
Submitted by Jeanette Collier, Executive Director

As I reflect on the close of NEK-CAP, Inc.'s 50th year of service, there are worthy principles, which I would like to share, that have guided the organization throughout its history. First and foremost, NEK-CAP, Inc. has been supported by passionate and committed staff, Head Start Policy Council members, the Multi-County Board of Directors and other volunteers.

The organization has been guided by a spirit of innovation, collaboration and responsiveness when faced with adversity. Opportunities for collaborative partnerships have abounded and have been utilized to

build community. Through the networking, diplomacy and advocacy of key organizational leaders, stakeholders have multiplied; policy has been influenced; and championing of the organization's work has been cultivated. The net result is that NEK-CAP, Inc. has been recognized at the local, state and national levels for its dedication to ending the causes and conditions of poverty throughout northeast and north central Kansas.

On behalf of the thousands served through NEK-CAP, Inc. over the past 50 years, I thank you for your assistance and wish you a safe and joyful holiday season!!



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2015 Annual Agency Meeting

Submitted by Linda Grier, Integrated Services Office Manager

We wrapped up our 50th Anniversary of Community Action, with our annual NEK-CAP, Inc. Agency Meeting. Our staff gathered together on Friday, November 6th at the Evangel United Methodist Church conference room in Holton to celebrate our achievements and continue our commitment to fighting poverty.

Staff were welcomed by our Executive Director, Jeanette Collier followed by the Presentation of Colors from Don Askren and Hal Cochren with the Holton VFW, as our own Tawyna Farrell, Atchison County Asst. Teacher sang The Star Spangled Banner. After reciting of our Community Action Promise and Introduction of Board of Directors, Policy Council Members and Staff in attendance, the meeting was officially underway.

Opening speaker for this year's meeting was Gary Brunk, KACAP Executive Director, Topeka, presenting *An Economy That Works for All*. Followed by presentation of *Current Realities of Kansas Budget, Major Tax Policy Change 2012-Present and the Impact on the EITC (Earned Income Tax Credit)*, from Dr. Tate Madden with the Kansas Center for Economic Growth, Topeka. Additional speakers were Jackson Swearer, Interfaith Housing Services, Junction City, informing staff of *CASH-Creating Assets, Savings & Hope*; and updated from Mark Kempf, our 401k Representative from Citizens Bank & Trust, Maryville, MO.

We enjoyed a delicious lunch catered by The Corn Crib, Corning and had some fun at the Selfie Station. After lunch it was time to get up and moving with *A Promise to High Five*, by Tawny Stottlemire, Executive Director, Community Action Inc., Topeka. We closed the afternoon with the

acknowledgment of tenure awards for staff. Receiving awards for Five (5) years were Jeanette Collier, Executive Director; Holly Gantt, Family Development Advocate; Stefanie Gardner, Center Manager; Jason Gibson, Assistant Director Fiscal Operations; Rhonda Mitchell, Child and Family Advocate; Amy Plankinton, Assistant Teacher; Martha Van Dyke, Family Development Advocate; and Brandi Wesley, Child and Family Advocate. Receiving awards for Fifteen (15) years were Linda Grier, Integrated Services Office Manager and Barbara Harman, Teacher.

NEK-CAP, Inc. is committed to our mission of providing comprehensive education and social services to low-income community members through collaborative partnerships focused on promoting family development, empowerment, and economic security.



Staff wrote one word describing Community Action on a puzzle pieces and decorated them.



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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



(LtoR) Presenter Gary Brunk; staff engaging with Tawny Stottlemire; and some fun at the Selfie Station ~ visit our agency facebook page to see more.

Achievements ~ Accomplishments ~ Successes

Submitted by NEK-CAP, Inc. staff members



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.*



I have a mommy I enrolled into the program in July 2015. When performing the Family Development Partnership, she said she didn't have a driver's license. Now this mommy is in her mid-thirties, so I talked to her about what stops her from getting it. She said she had tried to get it in Lawrence several times but couldn't pass. So I suggested she try getting it in Atchison, there is less traffic and more of a home-town feel, like the small town she lives in. The next time I ask her about it she felt the written exam would keep her from being successful. So I sent her a link to practice the written exam. She practiced a couple of weeks and today after our visit she told me she was going to Atchison to take her written exam and driving test. I just got a text that said "I did it Rhonda". I'm so excited she will now have a freedom that she didn't have before, I was so happy to be a part of empowering this mom to achieve a new skill. *Submitted by Rhonda Mitchell, Child & Family Advocate, Jefferson County*

I had a gentleman who had just got out of prison searching for housing. Our SHP (Supportive Housing) Program can help people coming out of prison so this was an option for him, and we had available funding. He found a place that met the rent guidelines of the program shortly after we completed the application and he was approved. Because he had just gotten out of prison he had nothing. He was in a place within two weeks, he had a full time job working construction out of town, and was carpooling to get there. He also was able to obtain transportation quickly to help him get to and from work (he worked out a deal where he would pay \$100/week for four weeks to pay off this vehicle). He was on our program for eight months and has made a significant transition! He had worked the entire time he was in our program, but was able to get hired on at his old job and is making really, really good money now. One of his goals was to buy a house for cheap and flip it to move into at the end of this program, and he achieved this goal. He graduated from the program because he didn't qualify since he is making too much money, so we set a date where he would be responsible to pay his rent. When that date came, he was moving into his house that he had been working on fixing up while he was staying in the other house. The house was almost completely ready when our program ended, he has bought and sold multiple cars in the last several months to obtain more reliable transportation, and now has a work

truck he gets to drive to and from work. He has worked very hard to improve his situation, and has done an incredible job doing so! I am very proud of him! He is definitely a success story! *Submitted by Kara Soph, Family Development Advocate, Atchison County*

I am working with a family of 10, two parents and eight children. Dad was laid off from a really good paying job and mom is attending college, she's in her senior year. While updating her goals she said she is taking her finals and getting ready to start her practicum in social work here in Atchison. She will graduate in May. Meanwhile dad has a job doesn't pay as much but they are getting by. The end of the years of college is going to pay off in so many ways for the family after graduation. *Submitted by Soni Moranz, Family Development Advocate, Atchison County*

I have a young, single mom on my caseload that didn't have a job and her car broke down on her. Right before her daughter's first birthday, this mom found a job and began working. Also, she got a minivan through Hiawatha Ford so that she didn't have to walk anymore. This was very exciting for this mom since she wanted to make her daughter's first birthday party a special one. While mom was telling me all the good news during our visit, her daughter stood up and took 6 steps across the floor for the very first time! Mom was so overwhelmed with excitement; she began to cry tears of joy! This warmed my heart. *Submitted by Jessica Mendez, Child & Family Advocate, Brown County*

On October 27th, NEK-CAP Jackson County Head Start hosted a Fun, Food & Fitness event. The National Guard Armory in Holton generously donated the space for this event. Excluding staff, we had 70 individuals participate in the event. Representatives from Jackson County Health Department, KanCare, Meadowlark Extension and Kansas Appleseed were present to provide information to families in attendance. Several healthy snacks were provided with information on how healthy snacks do not cost more than unhealthy snacks, sugar content of common beverages and nutrition information. Those attending also enjoyed activities like bowling, bean bag toss, and hula hooping. The event was a great success. *Submitted by Kori Anderson, Family Development Advocate, Jackson County*

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

Achievements ~ Accomplishments ~ Successes

Submitted by NEK-CAP, Inc. staff members

NEK-CAP, Inc. staff in Jackson County have been working to improve communications and outreach to Spanish speaking families within our community. Center staff have been working closely with staff at the EUM Church to assure our services are reaching individuals who may not speak English. With the help of bilingual staff at the church, as well as current and past parents, we have been able to assure we have a vast resource of translation services available to us. We recently began using a phone application called iTranslate to make communications with these families more successful and assure they are able to independently access our services. As a result of the success we have had with this application in the office over the past few months, we will now be using this application on one of our bus phones to improve communications between the teachers and parents on a daily basis. We would like to thank all those within the community who assist in helping with translation for families we work with.
Submitted by Kori Anderson, Family Development Advocate, Jackson County

This is a different success story but I wanted to share it with everyone. I have a client that was born with Hypoplastic Left Heart Syndrome. In the spring this year, he got Fifth Disease and by the summer it had made his heart a lot worse. He spent the summer in and out of Children's Mercy and was told that he would have to get a heart transplant. The family was told the surgery would be in St. Louis so they might have to move there to get everything done and ready for his new heart. He got really sick and they flew him to the hospital in St. Louis last month. The hospital was able to get his port back in place and he was better so they let him come home. During that visit, they were able to get all the tests and everything for his surgery so the family would not have to move there.

After that visit he was put on the list for a new heart. They received a call that a heart was available on Thanksgiving weekend but due to the icy weather he was not able to be flown to St. Louis for his heart and had to go back on the waiting list. The family was told it could take days to months to receive a call for a heart and they received a call within a week of being put on the list so you can imagine their disappointment when they were not able to fly out to St. Louis for his new heart. I kept encouraging mom to remain positive and that her little boy was very strong.

Last Wednesday (Dec. 2nd) they received another call and the family flew to St. Louis. They started the surgery Thursday morning and it was a nine hour surgery. She left me a message late when the surgery was over and said the doctors told her he did really good and that everything looked great. Mom called me again on Monday afternoon and said he was doing so good that they might release him Wednesday (Dec. 9th) and let him stay at the hotel with his family. If he still keeps doing good then they should be able to come home the end of this month. He is an amazing little boy and a fighter. Mom also told me that he would need another heart when he is about 12 years old. He will outgrow this one and have to get a bigger one.



The hospital is going to try to help the family out with Christmas since they will be living in a hotel during that time. Mom is there with her husband, mother in law, and her two other children. I will be anxiously waiting to see him when he is back in Leavenworth!
Submitted by Julie Brunner, Child & Family Advocate, Leavenworth County

On December 1st, NEK-CAP Jackson County Head Start provided a Winter Car Safety event. Local businesses generously donated items for each family to create a winter safety kit for their vehicles. These kits included blankets, flashlights, tire gauges, ice scrapers, gloves, basic first aid items and many other items which may be useful in an emergency. Matt Wilson from Wilson Direct and Scott Foster from Foster Ford provided families with valuable information on how to keep their vehicles safe year round.
Submitted by Kori Anderson, Family Development Advocate, Jackson County

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

What your child
learns before age 5
is the key to
success!

Enroll your child
now in
NEK-CAP
Head Start!!

Applications always
accepted!



At our last Atchison County parent meeting, one of our mom's (Alyssa) stepped up to the plate to run the parent meeting. She was able to explain to parents what they needed to know. It is nice to see parents participating and working together for the good of the organization. We had 11 people at the parent committee meeting.
Submitted by Pam Wilburn, Child & Family Advocate, Atchison County



Get to Know Our Staff

Submitted by Jason Gibson, Phyllis Shaefer & Connie Wymer

Jason Gibson ~ Hola, I am the Assistant Fiscal Officer. My duties include a wide range accounting support for the agency, the agency's 401k administration, and changing the water cooler bottles. For the last two years my duties included being the unofficial interim CFO. It was very challenging, and I am grateful to everyone for all the support I received.

I grew up on a farm in Greeley County, Kansas and attended school in Tribune, Kansas. Greeley County is on the Kansas-Colorado state line. In 2003 I received my BBA from Fort Hays State University with an emphasis in Finance, and in 2010 began working for NEK-CAP, Inc. While in college I met my wife, who is from Sabetha. She also attended FHSU and is currently the K-8 Art teacher for Doniphan West. We live on a small farm and have three kids, two dogs, four cats, and Rachel has three horses.

Phyllis Shaefer ~ I'm Phyllis Shaefer, Housing Manager for Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS), Supportive Housing Program (SHP) and Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG). All three of these programs operate on the philosophy of providing rental assistance for participants that are working on goals of self-improvement. My employment with NEK-CAP, Inc. started in 1979. Initially I was hired as an Alcohol/Drug Abuse Counselor Trainee. Later in 1979 I was hired as secretary in the Weatherization Assistance Program. I continued in the Weatherization Program until 2013 when NEK-CAP, Inc. made the decision to no longer administer that program. At that time, I was offered the position in Housing. When I started employment at NEK-CAP, Inc., I was a single mom with three young children. I met my husband Jack while working here. I now have seven grandchildren and one great-grandchild. I really enjoy being a grandma. I've always had a

great love for animals. I am President of the Brown Co. Humane Society and am currently managing a newly opened animal shelter here in Hiawatha. Working at NEK-CAP, Inc. is a very rewarding experience and I feel fortunate that I have been able to spend so many years with the agency. There have been so many family success stories and it makes me very proud to have been able to be a small part of giving families a little help to allow those stories to happen.

Connie Wymer ~ Hi, I am the Accountant -Donations. Yes, I have had a recent title change. This position inputs most of the Accounts Payables (bills) and inputs/tracks all of the In-Kind donations and volunteer hours for the agency, as well as filing and keeping track of contracts, phones, Wal-Mart cards, and processing the mail and accepting packages/deliveries. And let's not forget that all important "other duties as assigned". I started working for NEK-CAP in 1991 as a CWEP worker, and from there moved into Head Start Secretary position. While with the agency, I have worked mainly in Head Start and the Admin Department. A few of the biggest tasks that I have been a part of has been to help set up the current client filing system; helped develop the agency's first web site, and learned In-Kind rules and regulations. In 2006, I moved to Kansas City, where I had the privilege to work for EOF, and was responsible for data entry (except for health) into ChildPlus for the whole Head Start department until 2009. In 2009, I returned to NEK-CAP to work in my current position.

I have lived in Brown County all but 13 years of my life. I have three children, and six grandchildren come February. I am a loyal Royals and Chiefs fan. I am an avid book reader, preferring books over television, and I finished my first knitting project - a baby blanket.



Jason Gibson



Phyllis Shaefer



Connie Wymer



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