



## Agency Happenings

### Two Ohio CAAs Chosen for Bridging Health and Human Services Pilot Project

The Community Action Partnership has partnered with the Corporation for National and Community Service – a federal agency that engages more than 5 million Americans in service through its core programs of Senior Core, AmeriCorps, and the Social Innovation Fund – to create a pilot project called Bridging Health and Human Services. The goal of the project is to increase awareness and link uninsured Americans to affordable healthcare through the Affordable Care Act. Eight Community Action Agencies throughout the country were chosen for this pilot project, including two Ohio agencies – the Community Action Partnership of the Greater Dayton Area (CAP Dayton) and IMPACT Community Action in Franklin County.

The project will utilize AmeriCorps VISTAs (Volunteers In Service To America) to coordinate the projects at each CAA. The VISTAs will train and utilize volunteers through the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), who will become Certified Application Counselors (CACs), as part of their outreach efforts. VISTAs have been selected for each participating agency and are working to organize the programs.

“CAP Greater Dayton hopes to help people make informed decisions about the ACA. While the ACA has constantly been in the news and public discussion since even before it was passed into law, many people, especially many of those that we serve in our programs, do not understand how the law will impact them,” said Tim Donnellan, president and CEO of CAP Dayton. “Consumers will need to understand new programs, take advantage of consumer protections and find their way through the health insurance system to locate the most affordable coverage that meets their needs. The primary goal of this project is to create systems and resources to identify, educate, and assist underserved populations in navigating the health insurance system and to help them find the most appropriate health coverage that meets their needs.”

At CAP Dayton, their VISTA, Michelle Nelson, is designing an outreach program and will coordinate the training of the volunteers and track their progress. Deborah Ferguson, CAP Dayton’s director of outreach and social services, explained that tracking will be an important component. “We want to follow up with people, not just sign them up. We want to see if they actually get insurance, if they utilize it, if they have a primary care doctor.” She said they will be applying for funding to hire a volunteer coordinator to work with the VISTA and coordinate assigning the volunteers. In addition to targeting their clients, CAP Dayton has established a good relationship with local media and is working with a consortium in Montgomery County that includes the healthcare industry, other nonprofits and social workers who are interested in increasing awareness of the insurance Marketplace. The consortium is working to coordinate their efforts and has planned a “Collaborating for Care” kick-off event on October 1st. “We want to make sure we are not duplicating our efforts or wasting resources,” Ferguson said.

At IMPACT, their VISTA Caitlynn Carr, is gathering research and developing training materials for the RSVP volunteers explained Regina Clemons, emergency assistance director for IMPACT. Carr is putting together a survey and is going to conduct focus groups with participants in IMPACT’s computer literacy and workforce programs. She will then conduct outreach with IMPACT’s partners that they utilize with other programs, such as HEAP (Home Energy Assistance Program). “We want to branch out through them,” Clemons said. They also have a mobile medical unit and want to reach people utilizing that service who don’t have insurance. “Right now we are focusing on preparing because we are in a bit of a holding pattern,” Clemons explained. “The RSVP’s will not get funding until November. Then the volunteers will come on board. We are preparing so that once we have the volunteers, will be off to

## Agency Happenings

the races. We are developing training materials and building a foundation so the volunteers will have a base to reach out.”

“Like Medicare and Medicaid in the ‘60s, we are part of something historical. There is a lot of excitement and enthusiasm. We need to work together to make sure we get it right,” Ferguson concluded. “I am glad to be a part of a community effort, and honored and privileged to be one of eight agencies chosen. We want to make sure we do a good job.” Shanda Hayes with IMPACT agreed stating, “All of those involved are thrilled at the opportunity to put our thumbprint on this project and to leave a legacy that will touch the community we serve in a meaningful and lasting capacity. We look forward to cultivating lasting partnerships with various community agencies and making this initiative a success in its own right.”



*AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers at a recent training session. Ohio VISTAs Caitlynn Carr and Michelle Nelson are pictured in the center of the front row.*