



1964-2014

## Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies

50 Years

### OACAA News

#### Congratulations Best Practice Award Winners

On January 29, 2014, the Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies (OACAA) along with The Ohio State University's John Glenn School of Public Affairs, and funding from the Ohio Development Services Agency (ODSA), bestowed six Community Action Agencies with Best Practice Awards, with one agency receiving two awards.

OACAA, the John Glenn School and ODSA have developed the Best Practice Awards to honor innovative and effective Community Action Agency programs that measurably meet the needs of clients, families and communities by helping low-income people become more self-sufficient. The Best Practice Awards serve as a showcase for unique Community Action Agency efforts that make a measurable and life-changing difference. A panel of judges selected by the Glenn School evaluated each nomination independently and assigned points based on their assessment of each nomination.

The agencies receiving Best Practice Awards and their winning programs are as follows:

#### Cincinnati-Hamilton County Community Action Agency – Head Start/Early Head Start Learning Communities



Professional Learning Communities are collaborative peer support groups that advance the professional knowledge, skills, and practices of teachers, teacher assistants, primary care givers, and family and community

partnership staff. The groups meet monthly in regularly scheduled sessions with a structured framework, clear goals and objectives. The goal is job-embedded professional development leading to improved outcomes for children and families.

#### Community Action Organization of Scioto County – Business Resource Network



The Business Resource Network (BRN) is a collaborative and systematic process that connects businesses with a single point of contact in order to address challenges and opportunities. The

program is operated through Workforce Development Area #1 and utilizes the resources of multiple workforce, economic development and educational partners to provide aid to local businesses. During the process, employers receive a needs assessment and analysis and are given a proposal of services and support the BRN can offer to help them address a particular need or overcome a specific challenge. The business then decides how, when and if to proceed with any of the services, the center implements the services and continues to follow up as necessary.

#### Council for Economic Opportunities in Greater Cleveland – Ohio VETS Program



CEOGC is one of six Community Action Agencies to participate in OACAA's pilot project Ohio Vocation, Education, Training and Services (VETS). The project allowed agencies to design their own program that would help

veterans find meaningful employment at a living wage and

increase their self-sufficiency. CEOGC's program provided veterans with services that included case management, work skills assessments, resume development, interview techniques, introduction to computing, financial literacy, information and referral services, emergency benefits, job search and placement assistance, and free laptop computers to use to support their career and educational development. They also created a committee to work with other agencies to promote and expand the program.

### **Ohio Heartland Community Action Commission – Fatherhood Program**



The Fatherhood Program's mission is to promote economic stability, responsible parenting and healthy marriages. To implement the program, Ohio Heartland identified all of the agencies that provide services to unemployed or under employed individuals and all training programs in the area, researched appropriate training needed to reach a self-sustaining wage and employers seeking new hires, created job search materials and utilized resources available to provide a thorough intake and assessment process. The program includes an assessment and creation of an agreed upon plan, resume development, job lead and application assistance, career awareness classes, financial planning classes, 24/7 Dad curriculum, job search and retention classes, on-the-job-training opportunities, and a variety of supportive services.

Participants meet weekly to check their progress.

### **Supports to Encourage Low-income Families (SELF) – Getting Ahead Program**



The Getting Ahead program teaches participants living in poverty to understand and use the "hidden rules" of social class and learn methods to build self-sufficiency through the development of financial, social, and emotional resources to permanently leave poverty. This 18-week course curriculum assists clients living in poverty to evaluate their lives. During the two-hour workshops that meet weekly, participants learn important skills, develop a plan and also build a larger support group to implement their plan in their quest out of poverty.

### **WSOS Community Action Commission – Juvenile Offender Re-entry Initiative**



WSOS created a Juvenile Offender Re-entry Initiative that provides both at-risk and court-involved juveniles with assistance in re-entering their communities through their After School Program, which received a Best Practices Award last year. The program served 102 youth, providing individual case management, life skills, education, employment preparation, and community service projects that allowed the youth to understand the value of participating in the community where they live. The program had a recidivism rate of 16 percent, way below the national average of 48.7 percent, and resulted in more than 6,000 hours of community service.

### **WSOS Community Action Commission – Ohio VETS Program**

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and Services (VETS). The project allowed agencies to design their own program that would help veterans find meaningful employment at a living wage and increase their self-sufficiency. WSOS's program provided veterans with an intake assessment where their specific needs were determined, then based on that assessment, the veteran was provided with whatever assistance he/she needed such as rental assistance, educational skills, employment/certification training skills, utility assistance, job placement, getting a driver's license, car repairs, etc. Once the initial needs were met and a job was secured, the participant received case management to assist him/her with any other problems that arose and to ensure he/she stayed on the job for at least 90 days. Although the pilot

project has ended, because of the success of the program WSOS was able to secure another grant to provide similar services to veterans and their families in a nine-county area.

"These programs showcase outstanding achievements in Community Action," stated Philip E. Cole, Executive Director of OACAA. "They aid low-income people in becoming more self-sufficient and are practices that other CAAs can learn from. Congratulations to all of this year's winners."