



Christian Community Action, Inc.

168 Davenport Avenue New Haven, CT 06519
Phone: (203) 777-7848 | Fax: (203) 777-7923 | Email: cca@ccahelping.org

W I N T E R 2 0 0 8

Breaking News: Truck Acquisition Puts CCA "On The Road Again"

CCA is back "truckin," thanks to the help of two generous donors, plus friends at Crest Auto Mall in Woodbridge!

For more than a year, the agency has had to rent a vehicle or rely on the kindness of someone who already had one to carry out tasks such as our weekly pick up of Food Pantry supplies from the Connecticut Food Bank or of furniture donations from kind supporters. As of February 1st, however, the agency was "heading out on the highway" once again, with its own vehicle, a 2002 GMC Savana Special, with a 14-foot storage box and only 43,000 miles on the odometer.

The new truck replaces a 1974 vintage box truck that CCA purchased 4 years ago, The 30-year old vehicle, with an indeterminate amount of miles of wear and tear (the odometer broke at the 125,000 mark, before we acquired the

vehicle), served the agency well for the four years we had it, but finally "gave up the ghost," last year.

CCA is very grateful to our two benefactors, both of whom wished to remain anonymous, for making the purchase of our new vehicle possible. We also wish to thank Crest Auto Mall, its president, Richard Fitzpatrick and senior salesman Dan Santos, Jr. for their help in facilitating this transaction. Persons wishing to donate used furniture to CCA, for use in our apartments or in the new homes of families moving out from our facilities, should call 777-7848 to schedule a pickup.

Now that CCA once again has its own truck, the agency will no longer have to rent a vehicle for food drive and donated furniture pick-ups and food basket deliveries at Thanksgiving and other times of the year.



CCA STAFFER JUAN MARQUEZ PROUDLY SHOWS OFF THE AGENCY'S NEW GMC TRUCK, WHICH WILL ALLOW CCA TO RESUME PICKUPS OF DONATED FURNITURE AND FOOD SUPPLIES.



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Sponsors Sought for Adopt-An-Apartment Program

Is your church, business or civic group looking a project where it can get involved in work that can make a difference in one family's life? If so, CCA's Adopt An Apartment program might be a perfect match for you.

Designed to give the sponsoring organization direct experience with homelessness, the program focuses on the upkeep of the 17 apartments of CCA's Hillside Family Shelter. As members of an Adopt-An-Apartment sponsor group, individuals help maintain the units either through their own volunteer labors or via financial support.

Assistance can range from painting walls to providing household items to supporting special family events. Levels of participation can be customized to reflect the individual groups involved.

Currently, a diverse group of seven churches, one civic group and one individual are CCA Adopt-An-Apartment sponsors. They are: Christian Tabernacle Baptist Church, (Hamden); Church of Saint Rita (Hamden); Dennis Brown (Milford); Episcopal Church of St. Paul and St. James (New Haven); First Congregational Church of Madison; National Association of Negro Business & Professional Women; Shalom United

Church of Christ (New Haven) and Spring Glen United Church of Christ (Hamden).

For more information on this program, call Lillian Marquez, CCA Director of Emergency Family Services, at (203) 777-7173.

CCA Staffer To Retire

Sofie Turner, a case manager with CCA for nearly 20 years, recently announced her plans to retire. She will be honored at a special celebration on Thursday, March 20, at 4 p.m. to which all her friends are invited. For details / RSVP, call 777-7848.

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Session Targets Child Welfare

CA's Mothers for Justice empowerment group recently sponsored an informational session on child welfare reform and improving communication between parents and the state Department of Children and Families (DCF).

The session, funded through a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, featured speakers from the New York City-based Child Welfare Organizing Project (CWOP). This organization is dedicated to improving child welfare policies and services in New York through increased and meaningful involvement by parents involved in the system.

About 40 persons, most of whom have had personal experience dealing with DCF, attended the session. Based on what they heard, those in attendance agreed to work on the following goals during 2008:

- To provide peer advocate training for interested parents;

- To develop a parents' bill of rights and rights' handbook;
- To continue to monitor the policies and procedures of DCF, and
- To ensure there is appropriate parent representation on a DCF community advisory board.

To learn more about this grassroots effort, contact CCA's Advocacy and Education Project Director Merryl Eaton at 777-6072.



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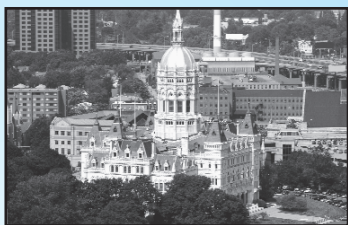


Institute Examines Public Policy Formation

CA's Advocacy and Education Project recently completed its annual Public Policy Institute. Public policy refers to the decisions and actions taken by government that are intended to address a public problem or issue. The Institute is designed to educate participants on how the system works and how they can influence the process.

The topics covered in the four-session program were how legislation is created and passed; how to organize around an issue, effective public speaking and lobbying for your cause. Also featured this year was a guided tour of the State Capitol in Hartford.

Among the speakers the 12 participants heard from were State Representative Bill



Dyson, D-94 and Kate Robinson of Betty Gallo & Associates, a Hartford-based lobbying firm that specializes in helping nonprofit organizations.

"The Institute was a real eye-opener," one participant noted. "I learned that if you have a powerful message to give, know the right person to whom it should be delivered and the right time to deliver it, you can make a difference. You don't have to just throw up your hands and give up."

CAA vs. CCA - What a difference a letter can make!

Christian Community Action (CCA) and Community Action Agency (CAA) of Greater New Haven are two organizations that are often confused with each other,

Founded by Christian laypersons and clergy in 1967, CCA's mission is to provide housing, food and other support to families that are homeless and to encourage them in their efforts to regain self sufficiency. It also seeks to work with these families to change the systems that perpetuate poverty and injustice. Its annual budget is \$1.4 million and its main offices are located at 168 Davenport Avenue, New Haven.

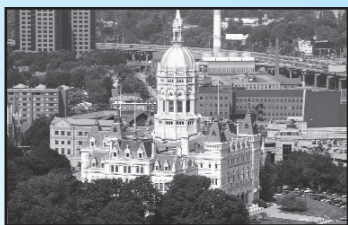
CAA, for its part, is the largest (\$13 million annual budget) nonprofit social services/ anti-poverty agency in the New Haven region. CAA's programs focus on such areas as weatherization, energy assistance, elderly nutrition (Meals on Wheels) and senior services. It is headquartered at 781 Whalley Avenue, New Haven.

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I remember the first time I met "Claudia." I remember how she kept saying over and over, as she sat in my office with her 11-month-daughter on her lap, "I never ever thought I would ever be homeless; I just never thought it would happen to me."

Since she was 18, "Claudia" had always supported herself. Now 29, she had recently lost her job with a major retailer. She was also no longer with the father of her child, who also was out of work and in denial regarding his addiction to drugs.

For a few months, as she looked for a new job, she was able to stay with friends. Now, however, she had nowhere else to turn and had been referred to CCA by the Connecticut Department of Social Services. As I interviewed her, it was clear

to me that "Claudia" was a determined person who was clearly motivated to do whatever it would take to turn her situation around. Shortly after the interview, I was able to find her a part-time job as a cashier. While finding good day care for her daughter was a challenge (as it is for nearly all the single mothers with whom CCA works), together, we were able to find a provider. I was also able to connect "Claudia" and her daughter with a local transitional housing program, which was able to find her an apartment where she could stay for up to two years, while she worked to get back on her feet.

Today, "Claudia" has a good job with a national surgical supply company (an area in which she had worked in the past), is

earning a good salary, has her own apartment and is looking forward to her future. In what little free time she has, she has become an advocate, letting local legislators know what they need to do to help others overcome homelessness and unemployment (high on her list: child care support).

"I've learned that, with a few unexpected changes in one's life, anyone can become homeless," she told me recently. "I've also learned that anyone can overcome this situation if they are strong enough and have the help of agencies like CCA."

Sophia Rivera
CCA Case Manager

Ronald McDonald Helps Stepping Stone

Ronald McDonald House Charities of Connecticut and Western Massachusetts recently awarded a \$10,000 grant to CCA's Stepping Stone Transitional Housing Program. The grant will be used to purchase and install playground equipment for the children whose families participate in the program and also to support the program's after-school program.

"We are extremely grateful to Ronald McDonald House Charities for providing us with this support," said Stepping Stone Director Judith Rich. "Thanks to this grant, we can now look forward to having the playground ready for our kids, once the weather begins to warm up in the spring"

Stepping Stone, which is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, is CCA's comprehensive transitional housing program. Previously homeless families can stay in one of the program's 18 apartments for

up to two years, while the adults are working on their own personal improvement plans, which are designed to lead to independence and self-sufficiency. These plans can include attending classes on parenting and family budgeting, enrolling in courses in local colleges and vocational programs and finding employment.

A total of 78 percent of Stepping Stone participants who complete the program move on to permanent housing, compared to 61.5 percent nationally.



Christian Community Action

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March and April To Focus on Food Collection

Once again, we are approaching that time of year when the "green giants" can become "greenbacks" for agencies like CCA.

For the fourth year in a row, this March and April, CCA again will be participating in the nationwide \$1-million Alan Shawn Feinstein Foundation Anti-Hunger Campaign.

As part of this effort, all cash and nonperishable food donations made to CCA during these months will be eligible for a financial match from the Rhode Island-based Alan Shawn Feinstein Foundation, based on a formula that compares what CCA raises with what is raised by similar agencies across the country.

As part of this formula, every food item collected will be valued at \$1 in terms of the match. Cash donations actually are worth more than their face value, since, on average, each \$1 donated results in the purchase of two or more cans of food.

The bottom line: the more food items / cash donations made to CCA during this two month period, the greater the

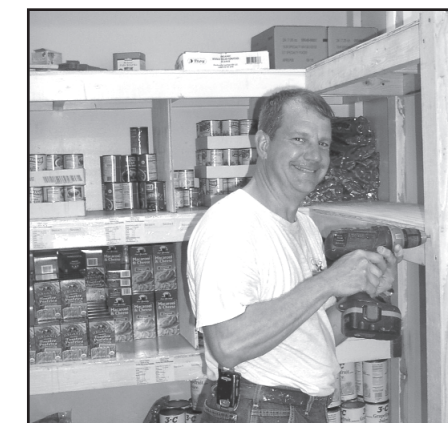
match CCA will receive from the Feinstein Foundation.

In 2007, CCA raised almost \$49,000 in cash and food donations as part of this campaign. The 2008 goal is \$55,000.

"To reach our goal, we welcome individual donations and the support of businesses, churches, schools and others who can sponsor or are sponsoring canned food drives during March and April," noted CCA Executive Director Rev. Bonita Grubbs. "We can even arrange for pick-ups, thus eliminating the need for the sponsoring organization to bring the food to us."

CCA's food pantry program is currently serving on a monthly basis an average of 750 families, persons with disabilities and seniors who are low-income. This number is up about 50 percent from where it was a year ago.

"We are clearly seeing more working-class families who are coming to us because, with higher gasoline, food, rent, utilities and other expenses, they are finding it impossible to feed themselves without help," Rev. Grubbs



CCA'S FOOD PANTRY UNDERWENT REMODELING LAST FALL, THANKS TO DAVE MCPHAIL OF HAMDEN, ABOVE, AND HIS COMPANY, *CONSIDER IT DONE, LLC*

said. "Given where the economy seems to be headed in 2008, we expect to see those numbers grow even higher."

Food drives can run for whatever periods work best for the sponsoring organization. Organizations interested in partnering in this campaign can call the CCA Development Office at (203) 777-7848 x112.

People of Goodwill Step Up for People Who Are Poor

Thanks to dozens of churches, hundreds of individuals, and numerous businesses, schools, and civic organizations, CCA was able to make Thanksgiving and Christmas 2007 more a time of hope rather than of despair for families in New Haven struggling to make ends meet.

For Thanksgiving, for example, CCA was able to provide turkeys and all the fixings needed for a home-cooked holiday meal to 1,400 families, persons with disabilities and seniors who are low income. This was nearly 100 more holiday baskets than was distributed

in 2006, perhaps reflecting local economic trends in areas such as unemployment, gasoline, food, rent and utility costs.

Besides its individual and group supporters, CCA is also very grateful for the assistance it received from The Connecticut Food Bank, which provided 1,100 of the turkeys that the agency distributed, as well as much of the canned food items. Turkeys and nonperishable food were also collected and donated by churches, businesses and schools throughout the region.

The 35 families and, more specifically, the young children and teenagers residing in CCA's Hillside Family Shelter

and its Stepping Stone Transitional Housing Program during the Christmas holidays were also the focus of many generous gifts, including toys, clothing and gift cards.

Meriting special mention are CCA's Adopt-An-Apartment sponsors (see accompanying article in this issue) including Dennis Brown of Milford; Christian Tabernacle Baptist Church, Hamden; Church of Saint Rita, Hamden; Episcopal Church of St. Paul and St. James, New Haven; First Congregational Church of Madison; First Congregational Church of Guilford; The National Association of Negro Business and

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From the Executive Director

Rev. Bonita Grubbs

“When we started, we were providing the proverbial fish to people, helping in emergencies. When I came to CCA (in 1988), CCA was ready to expand into *teaching* people to fish. Our Stepping Stone Transitional Housing Program was the concrete way of supporting people as they fished for themselves. All along, we tried to change the quality of the water people fished in through advocacy.”

I shared these words with individuals who attended our 40th birthday celebration in February 2007. They reflect the three levels of involvement we have in the lives of those we serve.

Yes, we are engaged in giving fish to people, both through our Food Pantry and emergency assistance programs. We offer diapers through the New Haven Diaper Bank, for example, fuel assistance, information and referral and turkeys with all the fixings needed for a home cooked meal at Thanksgiving.

Also, yes, we are engaged in teaching people how to fish. Through our Stepping Stone program, much emphasis is placed on increasing skills and hope to break the cycle of homelessness. I am pleased, too, to say that our Program for Internships, Vocational Opportunities and Training (PIVOT) is being reinvigorated, due to the receipt of a new grant, to assist families both at Stepping Stone and our Hillside



Family Shelter in their efforts to locate a good job and/or to further their education.

Hardest of all, though, is changing the quality of the water to allow us and those we serve to live in an unpolluted environment. That is where our Advocacy and Education Project and the Mothers for Justice group come into the picture. We have had a long commitment to social justice, coalition building and including the voices of people at the grassroots level in speaking out on issues of housing, poverty and economic and community development.

As we enter into our 41st year, we face many challenges to maintain all that we do and to expand where we can. The water continues to be polluted due to neglect, complicity, greed, disregard and, sometimes, ignorance. The feeding is compromised by lack of funds and expanding need. The teaching people how to fish is made more difficult due to the fear that people have about making positive changes in their lives—the evil you know may sometimes appear better, after all, than a future you don't know—and in the doors to opportunity that are more closed than open.

Despite all of this, we still intend to remain involved, as much as our time, energy and finances allow, in “water pollution control.” Our goal: to clean up the waters that surround us so that they are no longer polluted and people's lives can flourish. It is this goal, our hope and the support that we receive from so many, that keeps us going forward.

Continued from Page 1

People of Goodwill Step Up for People Who Are Poor

Professional Women; Shalom United Church of Christ and Spring Glen United Church of Christ.

Among the groups helping our Stepping Stone families (and supporting our Thanksgiving effort as well) were: **A. Sakis Industries, LLC; CD Universe; Community NETwork African American Telecommunications Professionals of AT&T, Connecticut Chapter; First Congregational Church of Bethany; First Unitarian Universalist Society; Frank Mengert of IT Solutions of Connecticut; Guilford Youth Services; Proliance International, Inc.; Sein Plumbing and WPLR-FM Radio.**

While space does not permit us to list every individual who helped us during the Thanksgiving and Christmas season, we also would like to acknowledge the following businesses, churches, civic groups and schools for their help:

A-1 Toyota; Adoni Spiritual Formation Center; Advanced Behavioral Health, Middletown; Alpha Club, Auto Technical Services, LLC; Bethesda Lutheran Church; Cama, Inc.; Beulah Land Development Corporation; Charm's Security Hardware, Inc.; Cheshire Lutheran Church; Cheshire United Methodist Church and Carmody & Torrance, LLP.

Compassionate Community Services, Bethany; Connecticut Forum, Hartford; Dava, Inc., and Emanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church, New Haven.

First Baptist Church, Branford; First Baptist Church, New Haven; FBI, New Haven Office; First Church of Christ, New Haven; First Church of Christ, Congregational, Redding; First Church of Christ, Woodbridge; First Congregational Church of Cheshire; First Congregational Church, Guilford;



AMONG THOSE HELPING TO KEEP CCA'S FOOD PANTRY WELL-STOCKED DURING THE THANKSGIVING / CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS WAS THE NEW HAVEN FBI OFFICE, HERE REPRESENTED BY SPECIAL AGENT RON OFFUTT, CENTER AND FINANCIAL ANALYST ELIZABETH MCCARTNEY, RIGHT, SHOWN WITH CCA STAFFER JUAN MARQUEZ.

First Presbyterian Church, New Haven; Gateway Community College; Grace Baptist Church, Milford, and Grace and Saint Peter's Episcopal Church School, Hamden.

High Meadows facility (Hamden), Connecticut Department of Children and Families; Holy Trinity Church of God in Christ, New Haven; Hospital of Saint Raphael; Pearce Real Estate; Interact Club, High School in the Community; J.A.P. Community Outreach; Knights of Columbus, Supreme Headquarters; Ladies Home Missionary Society, First United Church of Christ, New Haven; LAUNCH, West Haven; Love Center Deliverance Ministries and Lutheran Church of Madison.

Messianic Synagogue Simchat Yisrael; Milford Young Women's Club. Montowese Baptist Church, North Haven; Mount Laurel Zone, Lutheran Women's Missionary League; New Haven Judicial District, Office of the Public Defender; New Haven G.A.23, Office of the Public Defender; New Haven Police Victim Services; North Haven Congregational Church; North Pole Enterprises; Operating Engineers, Local 478 and Our Lady of

Victory Roman Catholic Church, West Haven. Notre Dame High School, West Haven; Pfizer New Haven CRU; Quinnipiac University Community Action Project; Resurrection Lutheran Church, New Haven; Sacred Heart Academy; Saint Aedan's School, New Haven and Saint Andrew's Episcopal Church, Madison.

Saint George's Roman Catholic Church, Guilford; Stone Academy, Hamden; Trinity Church on the Green, New Haven; Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, New Haven; United Methodist Women of West Haven; United Presbyterian Church of Milford; United Shoreline Federal Credit Union; University of New Haven Community Service Office; Walgreens; Wal-Mart and Yale-New Haven Hospital.

Yale School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry, Substance Abuse Treatment Research and Yale University – Center for Language Study / Office of International Affairs / Procurement Office.

Capitol Steps To Return in 2008

Did you miss CCA's highly successful Capitol Steps show in 2007? Well, now you have a chance to enjoy their unique brand of musical political satire just before the presidential elections this fall.

“We are bringing this talented troupe back to New Haven in October 2008 for an encore performance,” noted CCA Executive Director Rev. Bonita Grubbs. “We have repeatedly been told by those who attended the show last October that they would come back. We have also been encouraged by the number of people who were unable to come to the last show, but would love to see The Steps this year.”

The show is scheduled for Thursday, October 16 at The Shubert Theater in New Haven.

The 2007 show was attended by more than 900 people and raised a net \$50,000 to support CCA's work. The show can be seen on Citizens TV channel 26 in Hamden, New Haven and West Haven on Thursday evenings at 9 p.m.



Car Sales Steer Donations to CCA

In the market for a new or pre-owned car? Consider purchasing one from either A-1 Toyota on Amity Road in New Haven or Crest Auto Mall, also on Amity Road, but in Woodbridge, and, if you do, you will earn a donation for CCA.

Under an arrangement CCA has with both dealerships, the purchase of a pre-owned car will earn CCA a \$100 donation, while the purchase of a new car will earn the agency a \$50 gift.

For details on this arrangement and whom to contact at each dealership about it, call the CCA Development Department at (203) 777-7848 x 112.