CAI Northern Essex WIC Celebrates World Breastfeeding Week

The Community Action Inc. (CAI) Northern Essex WIC program participated in World Breastfeeding Week - August 1 to August 7 with a celebration for participants and local partners. Attendees enjoyed healthy foods and snacks that were prepared with WIC approved foods. Participants also had the chance to meet with WIC staff and breastfeeding peer counselors, Eva Cortez and Donna Connor.

CAI WIC Director, Hope Davenport said, “We had a wonderful day honoring and promoting breastfeeding as part of a larger world-wide effort of raising breastfeeding awareness. Breastfeeding is a great choice for both mom and baby and is a cost-effective option for families with low-incomes.”

Mt. Washington Alliance Offers Leadership Workshop to Local Residents

The Mt. Washington Alliance (MWA) congratulates their first class of summer graduates from the ‘Journey to Your Best Self’ 4-week Leadership/Self-care workshop - A collaboration by the Mt. Washington Alliance, YWCA Northeastern Massachusetts, and Emmaus, Inc. The MWA is a Community Action Inc. (CAI) initiative.

Workshops were hosted at the new MakeIT Haverhill collaborative workspace, located at 301 Washington Street in Haverhill. The four-week series included the following workshops: Self-esteem, Self-confidence, Self-reflection, Hygiene, Time-Management; Leadership Styles Part 1; Leadership Colors and Personalities Part 2 and Affirmations. The series concluded with a certificate and graduation ceremony for participants. In total sixteen local residents participated with nine attending all four weeks. MWA thanks local partners and CAI Head Start for providing childcare and assisting with curriculum.

MWA will continue to implement leadership workshops at their Neighbor Nights held on

Holiday Notice

CAI offices will be closed on Monday, October 14, in observance of the Columbus Day holiday.

Meeting Notice

CAI’s all-volunteer Board of Directors will hold a meeting on Wednesday, Sept. 25 and on Wednesday, Oct. 30, at the CAI Fox Center, 75 Elm St. in Haverhill. Presentations and Committee meetings will begin at 5:45 p.m. Board meeting begins no later than 7 p.m. Meetings are open to the general public. Please contact CAI’s AA/EO Mgr. in advance for information on physical accessibility and sign language interpreters, (978) 373-1971.
CAI Thanks Local Farm for Fresh Produce Donations

Herrick Farm in Rowley generously donated fresh produce to the CAI Amesbury Center throughout this past summer. Amesbury Center Coordinator, Julie DeMarco LaPorta said she wants to thank Kristen Herrick for providing hundreds of dollars worth of produce to local families in need. Ms. DeMarco LaPorta also volunteers at Herrick Farm on weekends.

The generous donations allowed the Amesbury Center to offer an indoor Farmers Market to clients daily from July through early October. The addition of fresh fruits and vegetables enhanced the nutrition value of pantry distributions that are normally limited to dried/frozen/canned goods. Healthy recipes were also offered to help families incorporate more vegetables into their meals at home.

Herrick Farm is a family owned and operated farm located just off Rt. 133 in Rowley. The farm offers fresh dairy, beef, poultry and vegetables. Their vegetable stand is open until Columbus Day, but they sell fresh dairy, grass fed beef and free range chicken year round at their farm stand on 77 Dodge Rd. Visit their website for fall hours https://www.herrickfarm.net

The Amesbury Center is located at 44 Friend Street in Amesbury. 978-388-2570.

CAI Amesbury Center Offers Access to Summer Reading

This summer, the CAI Amesbury Center provided children with free books thanks to the efforts of long-time volunteer Mary Higgins-Rokosz and book donations from the Children’s Orchard in Newburyport. “The summer reading program proved to be a big hit with families who frequent the center for food, clothing and WIC nutritional services”, said Julie DeMarco LaPorta, Amesbury center coordinator.

“In addition to creating the summer reading program, Mary works tirelessly year round to coordinate the children’s clothing program at the Amesbury Center. For years she has volunteered weekly to collect, sort and hang regular donations of clothing from the Children’s Orchard. Our deepest appreciation and many thanks to Mary and the Children’s Orchard in Newburyport for improving the lives of so many of our families and for bringing so much joy to the Amesbury Center” said Ms. DeMarco LaPorta.

The CAI Amesbury Center, located at 44 Friend Street in Amesbury, provides a clothing bank, food pantry, access to local resources and referrals for low-income residents in Amesbury and surrounding communities. Learn more, visit https://www.communityactioninc.org/programs/food/amesbury-center or call (978) 388-2570.

Breastfeeding Week - Continued from Page 1

Ms. Davenport thanks all who visited and said, “Events like this help to bring awareness to the work that we do, and how much more work we have to do, in supporting all our breastfeeding mothers. 80% of moms enrolled in our WIC program, start their babies on breastmilk. 34% of moms stick with breastfeeding for 3 months and 26% of moms are still breastfeeding at 6 months. WIC nutritionists and breastfeeding counselors work every day encouraging and supporting moms through their breastfeeding experience”.

To learn more about WIC and what the program offers for pregnant and breastfeeding moms, infants and children 0-5, please visit https://www.communityactioninc.org/programs/food/northern-essex-wic
Ana Jimenez started the CAI High School Equivalency Preparation Program in January 2017. After being out of school for a few years, entering the workforce and starting a family, she felt she should try to earn her diploma. Her brother inspired her after he had taken classes in Lawrence and obtained his GED.

Once Ms. Jimenez started classes at the CAI Adult Learning Center, she was surprised that the schoolwork was not as hard as she expected and remembered a lot of what she had learned in high school. She liked that the students and staff were friendly and helpful. Even so, she had two children, and at times, it was hard for her to balance work and home life with studying. However, she persisted and by July 2018, she had taken 4 of the 5 required tests and passed them all. Her last test to pass was Social Studies. Ms. Jimenez delayed taking the test, thinking that she should study and practice more. The CAI program advisor texted or called her each month to encourage her to take the test.

Finally, this past June, the advisor texted Ms. Jimenez to ask one more time, before the graduation event, whether she might take the test and obtain her diploma. She scheduled the test for the next day and passed it just in time to walk in two High School Equivalency graduations in Lawrence and Haverhill. She was relieved, happy, and excited.

Ms. Jimenez said that what helped her to pass the tests—especially the last one—was to “go to the library and concentrate in a quiet space.” It was too easy to get distracted and sidetracked by family, TV, and her phone if she was home. Her advise to new students, “Don’t give up! Even if you need to miss some classes, communicate with the school, and then make a plan to continue. Ask for help if you need it and if you can offer help to someone else, do that too. Take your time! Everyone has their own speed; some people prepare for the tests quickly, and others need more time. Just keep practicing and you’ll get there.”

Ms. Jimenez has been working for CVS for several years, starting as a cashier and then becoming trained as a pharmacy technician. Her goal is to become a nurse and plans to attend Northern Essex Community College to continue her studies. CAI congratulates Ms. Jimenez for passing her HiSET exams and wishes her the best of luck with her continued studies.

Maria Martinez, a Family Support Coordinator with CAI’s WIC program, completed the Department of Transitional Assistance workforce readiness program and was recognized with an award at a ceremony at the State House in Boston on June 26. DTA staff was impressed with Maria’s good grades, her quick job placement, and her ability to overcome barriers—including homelessness and lack of transportation.

Maria’s DTA advocate placed her in a Microsoft Office training program to gain office skills. Maria’s goal was to work with low-income families in social services programs like Community Action—an agency that had helped her tremendously. “You have to have goals,” Maria believes. Maria worked on her resume, cover letter and interviewing skills with her Advocate to prepare for her CAI interview. When Maria was offered the position with WIC, she said it was “the most exciting week of my life.”

Maria moved to America in 2006 from the Dominican Republic to work at a college summer program at Universal in Florida. She started a family in Orlando and established residency. While living in a shelter at Emmaus with her two children, she became a United States citizen.

Maria assists WIC families with accessing benefits and local resources and is able to refer clients to programs that WIC does not offer. She is bi-lingual and uses her Spanish language skills every day, helping families feel welcome and at ease. “Community Action was the first agency that provided me with child care, allowing me to earn my teaching certificate, allowing me to work in a day care center.” Maria is now able to assist others and give back. She hopes to earn her driver’s license this year and ultimately finish her college degree in social services.

3-Night First Time Homebuyer Workshop begins on Wednesday, September 18, 6-9 p.m. at the Presidential Gardens Community Room in Bradford, 140 Evergreen Drive. Register Online https://www.eventbrite.com/e/first-time-homebuyer-workshop-september-2019-registration-3183137851 or call (978) 373-1971.

Registration for Free ESOL and High School Equivalency Preparation Classes

ESOL - Sept. 17th, 10 a.m.–Noon
Waitlist registration for English for Speakers of Other Languages Classes will be held on Wednesday, September 18 at 10 a.m., 3 Washington Square, 3rd floor in Haverhill. Please plan to stay until noon. You will receive more information, a placement test and an interview. Questions, please call (978) 373-1971 ext. 244.

High School Equivalency Prep Classes

Sept. 17th, 10 a.m.–Noon
Registration for free High School Equivalency (HiSET/GED) Preparation Classes will be held on Tuesday, September 17 at 10 a.m., 3 Washington Square, 3rd floor in Haverhill. Please plan to stay until noon. You will receive more information, a placement test and an interview. Questions, please call (978) 373-1971 ext. 216.
Vacant Lot in Haverhill Transforms into Community Park on Grove Street

Last year the Mt. Washington Alliance (MWA) held its Quality of Life Summer Pitch Contest that encouraged local residents to pitch their ideas for improving the Mt. Washington neighborhood in Haverhill. Resident, Lynne Azevedo entered the contest with the idea of transforming a vacant lot on the corner of Grove Street and High Street into a thriving community park. Ms. Azevedo won third place and was awarded $1,500 to help make her vision become a reality.

Over the past year, with the help of local volunteers, MWA staff, city officials and contractors trash was removed, the grass was trimmed and soil poured to level the lot. In spring of this year, grass was maintained, additional trash was removed and the park design was discussed and established. This summer, the park has really started to take shape with the addition of a perimeter fence and a chain link fence reserved for a dog park area. The finishing touches will be added this September, including wood chips, a geometric dome and two benches donated by the City of Haverhill.

MWA Initiative Director Christine Soundara, on behalf of the Mt. Washington Alliance, thanks Ms. Azevedo for her vision and passion to see it through; Alice Mann who provided mentorship, MWA staff and volunteers, Andrew Herlihy, City of Haverhill Community and Economic Development director and the City of Haverhill who have supported and assisted with this project from the beginning.

The Mt. Washington Alliance brings together local community members to expand opportunity and improve living conditions in the Mt. Washington neighborhood of the City of Haverhill. With a Working Cities Challenge grant from the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston and strong local support from individuals and organizations, the Alliance works to provide access to services and resources in education, employment, housing, health, and other essential areas. The MWA is an initiative of Community Action Inc. Learn more about the alliance: https://mtwashingtonalliance.org

~

Neighbor Nights-
Continued from Page 1

Leadership Institute, who will share their stories of leadership and discuss leadership opportunities. Neighbor Nights offer a free dinner and childcare is provided by CAI Head Start. Translation is provided in English and Spanish. For more information or to RSVP call/text (978) 912-0897 or e-mail MWANeighborNights@gmail.com.

~

Our Programs serve the following Massachusetts cities and towns: Amesbury, Boxford, Georgetown, Groveland, Haverhill, Merrimac, Newbury, Newburyport, Rowley, Salisbury, and West Newbury. Some CAI programs also serve: Beverly, Essex, Gloucester, Hamilton, Ipswich, Lawrence, Manchester, Rockport, Topsfield and Wenham.

A Message for our Volunteers and Supporters: Thank you for your ongoing and much needed support. Your assistance allows us to continue to provide crucial services to our local communities.