Community Action, Inc. is a private, non-profit organization established in 1965 to address the causes and consequences of poverty in the Greater Haverhill, Amesbury and Newburyport area.

Community Action, Inc. (CAI) provides resources and opportunities for individuals, families and communities to overcome poverty.

Pictured above-top: Founding members of the Haverhill Community Action Commission, Inc. (HAVCAC)
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S MESSAGE

On January 8, 1964, almost 51 years ago, President Lyndon Johnson declared a “war on poverty” in America. A year later, 21 area residents launched the Haverhill Community Action Commission, Inc. (HAVCAC). Their primary purpose was “…to encourage and promote the improvement of community life in Haverhill, with special emphasis upon the initiation of programs in education, social service, youth employment and related fields.” They sought “to assist Haverhill’s deprived and disadvantaged residents to make their full contribution to the community.” They also sought to “…reveal the extent of poverty…and point the way to programs to attack and alleviate such poverty.”

Over the next two years, HAVCAC engaged with similar groups in Amesbury, Newburyport, Merrimac and Groveland. Together, they formed the North Essex Regional Community Action Commission which ultimately became Community Action, Inc.

Tho’ the war analogy was unfortunate, President Johnson got much of the character of the effort right. It will not be “…short or easy…” and “…no single weapon will suffice…” It must be a battle fought and won not in Washington, but “…in the field, in every private home, in every public office, from the courthouse to the White House.” He said for the attack to be effective, it must “…be organized at the state and local level and must be supported by state and local efforts.”

As a community, as a state and as a nation we have fallen short of President Johnson’s objective of “total victory” over poverty. There is an ongoing debate as to the success or failure of the “War on Poverty” effort over the past 50 years.

There are many reasons why poverty still exists in America today. Maybe, as many claim, the eradication of all poverty is not possible, but we can certainly create the conditions to help people realize a better life. Sargent Shriver, the first director of the Office of Economic Opportunity best described the mission of Community Action – “The simplest description of the War on Poverty is that it is a means of providing opportunities for a better life to any and all pursuers. It does not try to make men good… It does not try to give men what they want… It does not try to give false hopes… Instead the War on Poverty tries to provide the programs, services, advocacy and support for area residents to attain a better life.”

OVER THESE PAST 50 YEARS, CAI’S STAFF AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS HAVE BEEN PRIVILEGED TO:

- Help Presidential Gardens tenants secure and renovate their 200-unit neighborhood;
- Help start the region’s first and only homeless shelter;
- Help hundreds of families become first time home owners;
- Help turn the abandoned Fox School into a thriving Head Start/Family Day Care center;
- Help renovate the blighted lower Acre neighborhood in Haverhill;
- Help hundreds of homeless single individuals survive harsh weather and take their first steps towards a better life;
- Help hundreds of families and individuals ward off homelessness;
- Help start transitional housing for women and children;
- Help tens of thousands of families stay warm;
- Educate, care for and feed thousands of young children;
- Help hundreds of residents achieve their GED (now called HiSET) and hundreds more achieve nurse aide certification, machine tool training, college prep, Supported Work and their first professional job;
- Help consumers and taxpayers save hundreds of thousands of dollars and so much more.

Still there is much work left to be done. Today and in future years, the challenge for CAI is to direct our resources to the most effective and efficient programs that enable people to exit poverty through meaningful and productive work that can pay a decent wage. For those who are unable to work, we need to direct our resources to enable them to live with meaning, dignity and hope.

As President Johnson said, “The War on Poverty is not a struggle to simply support people, to make them dependent on the generosity of others. It is a struggle to give people a chance.” For the past 50 years and as long as CAI is needed, we will continue to advocate for our neighbors who are poor by offering programs and services that provide opportunities for a better life.

Sincerely,

John Cuneo, CAI Executive Director

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1967
- HAVCAC opens Neighborhood Youth Center at 509 Washington St. in Haverhill.

1968
- HAVCAC forms credit union in Amesbury to assist low-income residents.

1969
- HAVCAC’s Community Organizing program links with St. James Church to offer programs for Spanish-speaking residents.
This is a special time for Community Action, Inc. (CAI) as we look back over 50 years of the agency’s effort in the “War on Poverty” in the Greater Haverhill, Amesbury and Newburyport area. A key component to CAI’s mission of helping people out of poverty is the CAI Board of Directors. The board is a dedicated and committed cross section of community representatives who bring real life experiences and knowledge that is helpful in giving direction to the administrative and program staff.

Community Action, Inc. has provided strong programs to all age groups, from Early Head Start to adult education to energy programs. These programs help to improve clients’ quality of life, give hope for a more stable future and offer many paths out of poverty.

CAI staff continue to teach clients that they are valuable and worthy. Navigating systems for benefits such as food stamps and health insurance are frustrating and can be complicated even for a trained staff person. CAI staff work with individuals and families to navigate these systems successfully. This effort reminds me of the children’s book titled “The Little Engine That Could”.

We all know that funding can be fickle. CAI has found ways to stay positive and to move forward. Administrative staff and the Board of Directors continue to work towards consolidating space to reduce facility/overhead costs and to move programs to more workable and comfortable environments. Over the past few years, CAI has purchased the Fox School and, most recently, the Coombs Building in Washington Square in Haverhill.

As a board member, I take great pleasure in working with such a dedicated group that are loyal in their commitment of successfully reaching CAI’s goals of leading its clients to a greater sense of independence and self-sufficiency. CAI and the Board of Directors has set and met its goals thanks to the generosity and support of our funders, donors and communities.

In closing, I am happy to report that CAI and its Board of Directors continue to make a difference in the lives of our clients.

Sincerely,
Lucinda Nolet, CAI Board Chairperson
Kalister Green-Byrd, who was a member of the original Community Action, Inc. Board of Directors (initially called the Haverhill Community Action Commission) and served two terms on the board for more than 20 years, was awarded the agency’s “Life Time Achievement Award” during ceremonies at CAI’s 50th anniversary event in late 2015.

When Kalister became a board member in 1965 she was a young, single mother of seven children and recently divorced. She not only joined the board to help set policy and direction for the new anti-poverty agency but she also took advantage of the agency’s new programs that helped poor families improve their lives and become more self-sufficient.

“From the outset CAI’s mission was to provide opportunities for low-income people to help themselves. They provided jobs for youth, Head Start, parental training and skills training. And those needs still exist today,” said Kalister.

“Personally, I owe a lot to Community Action. They helped me get started by providing additional education and training for low-income parents.” Kalister took advantage of CAI programs. She set goals for herself and her family, worked hard and received a bachelor degree in early childhood education from Salem St. College. She then went on to receive a masters’ degree in education and became a teacher in the Haverhill Public School system.

Later Kalister took a position with the Massachusetts Department of Education. While working for the state, Kalister received a second masters’ degree in education administration.

With CAI’s help Kalister enjoyed a long, successful career in education. But she never forgot her roots. She gave back to CAI and her long service on CAI’s Board of Directors provided immeasurable help to the agency for over two decades.

“I am fortunate to be able to see the results of what we started many years ago in a small room on Merrimack Street. CAI has grown in many ways but it still meets its mission to provide services for people to help themselves and become productive citizens in their community,” Kalister explained.

“Community Action is necessary. It is needed. It provides a lighthouse for people in need.”

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**BOARDS OF DIRECTORS**

1973
- HAVCAC opens lead paint testing clinic for children.
- HAVCAC Board votes to support United Farm workers by participating in boycotting the purchase of non-union picked grapes and lettuce.

1974
- Dena Carbone is named the first woman executive director of HAVCAC.
- HAVCAC opens a recruiting, job development, training and placement center for young adults under the C.E.T.A. act.

1975
- HAVCAC opens first office in Amesbury at the former Ordway School.
- HAVCAC begins Energy program to purchase heating oil for low-income residents.
**Children & Family**

**HEAD START & EARLY HEAD START**

CAI Head Start is a federal program for preschool age children from low-income families. Children who attend Head Start participate in a variety of educational activities. They receive free developmental, behavioral, medical and dental care, have healthy meals and snacks and enjoy playing indoors and outdoors in a safe setting.

Head Start is the most successful, longest-running, national school readiness program in the United States. It provides comprehensive education, health, nutrition and parent involvement services to low-income children and their families. Nearly 25 million preschool aged children throughout the country have benefited from Head Start during the last 50 years.

CAI Head Start serves approximately 180 children per year and has two licensed centers – one in Haverhill and one in Newburyport. The program offers part-day/part-year and full-day/full-year programs. Limited transportation services are provided.

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**1976**

- HAVCAC changes name to Northern Essex Regional Community Action Commission (NERCAC) - Service area is expanded to include Georgetown, Boxford, W. Newbury, Newbury and Rowley.
- NERCAC begins Family Day Care program with Dept. of Public Welfare grant.
- Head Start opens two classrooms at Union Congregation Church in Amesbury.
- NERCAC starts WIC program serving 300 families in Newburyport, Amesbury, Rowley, W. Newbury and Newbury.

**1977**

- NERCAC hires first energy director to oversee weatherization and emergency oil distribution program.
- NERCAC start community gardens programs in Haverhill, Amesbury and Newburyport.
- NERCAC takes over Consumer Protection program.
Head Start Offers

Head Start teachers offer children positive and loving guidance, acceptance, individualization, and the opportunity to learn and experience success. Head Start children socialize with others, increase their vocabulary and language arts, solve math and science problems, improve their listening skills and have experiences that help them become self-confident and ready to enter kindergarten.

Eligibility

All children ages 3 and 4 are eligible for Head Start if their household income meets federal income guidelines or if they qualify for public assistance. Up to 10% of Head Start slots can be reserved for families who exceed income limits.

EARLY HEAD START

CAI Early Head Start serves 80 infants and toddlers and eight pregnant women. The Goldman Center on Hilldale Avenue in Haverhill has one infant classroom and one toddler classroom. The Fox Center on Elm Street in Haverhill has one toddler classroom. Our home-based program offers weekly home visits and a socialization group every other week. Early Head Start is family-centered infant and toddler care. The pregnant mothers program promotes healthy prenatal outcomes for pregnant women; enhances the development of very young children and promotes healthy family development.

Eligibility

Pregnant women and families with children less than 36 months old are eligible to apply for Early Head Start services. Applications are processed throughout the year and applicants are accepted as space permits. Families are eligible if they meet the Head Start/Early Head Start income guidelines and/or qualify for public assistance.

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<td>• NERCAC Board votes to change agency’s name to Community Action, Inc. (CAI).</td>
<td>• CAI’s annual budget doubles to $3 million. Agency adds 49 new positions to job/vocational program. • Salisbury is added to CAI’s service area. • Head Start program doubles in size.</td>
<td>• CAI adds Community Food and Nutrition program. • WIC caseload surpasses 1,500 in Greater Haverhill, Amesbury and Newburyport. • Over 700 residents attend CAI’s self-help weatherization workshops.</td>
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IMPACT & RESULTS

HEAD START

Total Funding: $1.8 Million
Total Staff: 45
- 180 preschool aged children attend Head Start classrooms annually
- 100% of children enrolled in Head Start received free developmental, behavioral, health, nutrition and dental screenings
- 98% of children had reliable and accessible health care
- Parents serve on Head Start Policy Council and Parent Center Committees
- Head Start uses the Creative Curriculum and Teaching Strategies GOLD for assessments
- Head Start maintains relationships with local public education personnel to help children and families make the transition to kindergarten

EARLY HEAD START

Total Funding: $1.3 Million
Total Staff: 17
- 80 infants and toddlers received center or home-based Early Head Start services
- 100% of the children received free developmental, behavioral, health, nutritional and dental screenings
- Parents serve on Head Start Policy Council and Parent Center Committee meetings
- Early Head Start uses the Creative Curriculum and Teaching Strategies GOLD for assessments
FAMILY DAY CARE

Family Day Care (FDC) is a community-based network of family childcare educators who offer care and education to children in home settings that are licensed by the Department of Early Education and Care (DECC). The purpose of CAI Family Day Care is to provide quality childcare services in a safe and nurturing environment and assist in the healthy development of each child.

CAI Family Day Care includes up to 40 subcontracted childcare educators in the lower Merrimack Valley. Family Day Care has stringent health, safety and quality of care standards above and beyond the DECC regulations.

FDC offers free, regular training to its educators, including CPR and First Aid, behavior management techniques, music and movement, creative curriculum ideas and nutrition for young children.

Family Day Care Eligibility

FDC is open to parents or guardians who work a minimum of 30 hours a week, who are income eligible and who have children aged 8 weeks to 12 years. Several programs are available. Family Day Care staff work with families to determine eligibility and find the placement that best meets their needs.

Family Day Care Transportation

The FDC transportation program provides daily, round-trip transportation for eligible children enrolled in CAI’s Family Day Care program. The program operates year round within Greater Haverhill.

1981
- Severe federal and state cutbacks result in loss of 25% of CAI funds and the lay-off of 30 staff.
- CAI leads demonstration to keep welfare offices open in Amesbury and Newburyport.
- Head Start closes Newburyport classroom and opens new classroom at the former Amesbury YMCA.

1982
- CAI introduces new agency logo.
- CAI offers free cheese/butter distributions in Haverhill, Amesbury and Newburyport.
- Employment & Training program offers first Supported Work program for welfare recipients.

1983
- Gerald Goldman is hired as CAI executive director.
- CAI submits proposal to fund homeless shelter in the City of Haverhill.
- CAI weatherizes 289 homes.
In 2012, Jeanny was pregnant, living in a shelter with her two children. Months before, the children's father was sentenced for a crime and sent to jail. Her family could no longer pay rent and soon became homeless. At the shelter, she realized she needed to find a job and stabilize her family. In 2013, Jeanny enrolled her 3-year-old and her newborn at Community Action’s Head Start and Early Head Start programs. Knowing that her children were in a safe, caring environment renewed her hope and gave her the opportunity to build a future.

Jeanny’s parent child advocate encouraged her to join the Head Start Policy Council. She appreciated that her contributions and time influenced decisions and policies that affect her children, their education and her family. Head Start staff invited her to take part in a transportation training program. Jeanny lacked self-confidence at first, but once the training started, she immediately showed a belief in herself, her new job and her family’s future. Soon, she was encouraged to apply for a position in the transportation department at Community Action. Starting as a long-term bus monitor, she was able to work with children and learn from her supervisor and the bus drivers. “I loved being a monitor,” she said. Jeanny asked lots of questions and soon was given the opportunity to train as a bus driver. Community Action started Jeanny in an intensive practical training program, where she learned about child safety and bus equipment.

Jeanny passed her CDL exam and was hired by Community Action full-time making a living wage. She applied for housing assistance and found support with the HomeBase program. After living in the shelter for a year, Jeanny decided to stay in Haverhill and moved her family into an apartment within walking distance to Head Start and her new job. She has stabilized her family and is able to pay rent on her own. “This is the perfect job. I am always with my kids. That is the most important thing,” she said. Jeanny is grateful for her new job and how helpful Community Action staff have been. Her children are thriving in school and looking forward to the holidays. Her son told her “this is going to be the best Christmas ever”.

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**50 YEARS OF MAKING A DIFFERENCE**

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**1984**

- CAI purchases three family home in Haverhill and launches housing program for low-income tenants.
- CAI’s Summer Youth Employment Program conducts city-wide survey to count the number of Hispanics living in Haverhill.
- CAI receives $16,000 from DPW to operate homeless shelter program at Haverhill YMCA.
- CAI begins Mediation program.

**1985**

- CAI organizes tenant association TIGHT – Tenants in Greater Haverhill Together – to fight escalating rents and condo conversions.
- CAI offers new teen parenting and pregnancy workshop to help teen parents finish high school.
FAMILY & COMMUNITY CONNECTION

The Family & Community Connection (FCC) is based on the belief that all members of the community share in the responsibility of raising happy, healthy children. FCC offers free and low cost programs that are child-centered and family-focused and offers adults the resources and support they need to be better parents.

Family & Community Connection Offers

- Playgroups for infants and toddlers, in collaboration with Pentucket Area Early Intervention. FCC also offers themed playgroups, which focus on areas such as art, science, music, nutrition, literacy and open playgroups for children through age 8 where caregivers are encouraged to socialize and connect with other parents.
- Help for parents to access better services and resources
- Support Groups for parents and caregivers raising children with emotional, behavioral or mental health special needs in collaboration with the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and Parent Advocacy League
- Help for parents to support their child’s educational development through participation in the Ages and Stages questionnaire

Eligibility

FCC is open to families of all incomes who have children up to age 8 and who live in Amesbury, Georgetown, Groveland, Haverhill, Merrimac, Newburyport and West Newbury.

1986
- CAI’s Employment & Training program links with area machine shops and opens Machine Tool Training Center.
- CAI forms new shelter organization – Emmaus – which opens first homeless shelter in Haverhill.
- CAI Amesbury office moves to the Town Hall Annex building.

1987
- Gov. Dukakis visits CAI’s new Literacy Center.
- Hamel Charitable Foundation awards CAI grant to provide AIDS education and prevention center.

1988
- CAI initiates Teen Pregnancy Coalition in effort to reduce escalating teen births in the region.
- CAI opens Homeless Drop-in Center, offering day programs and services for area homeless.
“Community Action believed in me when I didn’t believe in myself.”

These are the words of Gladys Melendez who once worked at CAI as a parent/child advocate with the Early Head Start program and currently serves as the project coordinator for the Presidential Gardens Neighborhood Association (PGNA).

Back in 1983 Gladys was a single mother, a high school drop-out and struggling to make ends meet.

“My family life at that time was certainly not what I wanted or how I dreamed my life was going to turn out. I was a teen parent with immense responsibilities. I had no self-esteem. I didn’t know where to turn.”

She enrolled her child in the Head Start program and slowly her life began to turn for the better.

Head Start staff worked to improve her entire family situation in addition to providing the comprehensive services for her son who was enrolled in the CAI preschool program, said Ms. Melendez. “The first thing the staff advocated was for me to finish my high school education.” It wasn’t easy. At that time, Ms. Melendez was a single mother with two children after separating from an abusive husband. “Trying to balance home life with high school equivalency studying was difficult.”

Ms. Melendez said “the CAI Education and Training staff were great; they really pushed me to limits I didn’t think I was capable of and they did it in a very supportive way… Most importantly, they didn’t let go”.

While attending classes in preparation for the GED tests, Education and Training staff secured a volunteer position for Ms. Melendez at CAI. She worked with Trudy Duchesneau, the CAI Consumer Protection Director at that time. Ms. Melendez said that performing the volunteer work started to give her confidence in herself.

While Ms. Melendez was preparing to take her GED test, the ET staff advocated for her to enroll in Northern Essex Community College’s paralegal program. She was accepted. In addition she passed the GED test.

Recently Ms. Melendez completed her bachelor’s degree at Springfield College. She has been employed at CAI for five years and her children are grown and doing well.

“I can’t say enough about Community Action,” said Ms. Melendez. “If there is one person who believes in this agency it is me. I am living proof that someone’s life can be turned around with the help and services CAI provides. They believed in me when no one else did.”

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**FAMILY & COMMUNITY CONNECTION**

**Total Funding:** $163,000

**Total Staff:** 1 Full-time, 3 Part-time, 15 Volunteers

- 800 annual playgroups for infants and toddlers
- 300 annual playgroups for preschoolers
- 5 annual educational workshops for parents
- 25 annual support groups for parents

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**IMPACT & RESULTS**

**1989**

- CAI receives Carlisle Foundation grant to create home-based child care and Head start program for homeless children in Salisbury.
- CAI builds two affordable homes for low-income first time home buyers on land donated by the City of Haverhill.

**1990**

- CAI is awarded federal grant to provide adult literacy classes at Alpha Industries in Woburn.
- CAI and the City of Haverhill Recreation program link to provide free outdoor concert series at GAR Park.
- CAI builds four homes for first time home buyers on donated, city-owned land in Haverhill.
- CAI, on behalf of the Mayor’s Drug Task Force, secures $1.2 million grant to promote drug prevention and develop youth programs.
• CAI receives $339,000 grant from the Dept. of Labor to provide job training and housing services for area homeless.
• Head Start moves to Friends Meeting House in Amesbury and opens new classroom at the Plains School in Salisbury.

1991

• CAI organizes first Hispanic Youth Committee as part of anti-drug use campaign.
• CAI forms First Time Home Buyer Association for Greater Haverhill low to moderate income residents.

1992

• CAI establishes Haverhill Neighborhoods, Inc. a Neighborworks funded non-profit to revitalize the blighted Acre neighborhood in Haverhill.
• Head Start receives expansion grant to open new center on Hilldale Avenue.

WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN (WIC) NUTRITION PROGRAM

The CAI Northern Essex WIC program provides nutrition, health education and other services free of charge to eligible families. WIC’s goal is to keep pregnant and breastfeeding women and children under age 5 healthy. Participants receive checks for milk, cheese, fruits and vegetables, 100% fruit juices, cereals, infant formula, peanut butter, carrots, tuna, dried beans and eggs.

The WIC Program collaborates with the U.S. Department of Food and Agriculture to provide WIC participants with coupons, redeemable at Farmers’ Markets, for fresh fruits and vegetables during the summer months.
WIC OFFERS
CAI Northern Essex WIC offers: personalized nutrition consultations; checks for healthy food; referrals to medical and dental care, health insurance, child care, housing and fuel assistance; immunization screenings; breastfeeding support; nutrition and health workshops, maintaining healthy weight, picky eaters, caring for a new baby and shopping on a budget.

Eligibility & Service Area

Pregnant & postpartum women and children under age 5 are eligible. WIC is for all kinds of families: married and single parents, working or not working. If you are a father, mother, grandparent, foster parent or other legal guardian of a child under 5, you can apply for your child. To participate in WIC you must:

• Live in Massachusetts
• Have a nutritional need (WIC staff can help determine this)
• Meet WIC - Income Guidelines
• If you currently receive TAFDC, Food Stamps or Standard Mass Health (Medicaid) you are automatically eligible for WIC. Find out if you are eligible by visiting www.mass.gov/wic

1993
• CAI reopens Newburyport Office after several years through support from Small Cities grant.
• CAI builds final 2 homes on donated City of Haverhill land – homes sell for $56,000 each.
• CAI introduces Common Ground and Project Step-by-Step, adult basic education programs for Spanish and English speaking residents.
• CAI faces a $400,000 operating loss – Many staff forced to take pay and pension cuts to keep agency solvent.

IMPACT & RESULTS
WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN (WIC) NUTRITION
Total Funding: $1.9 Million
Total Staff: 13 & 1 Volunteer

• WIC provides services to 4,769 individuals annually
• WIC Food dollars returned $1.4 million to local food retailers
• WIC reduced fetal deaths, infant mortality and low birth weight rates
• WIC significantly improved children’s diets
HAVERHILL OFFICE

The CAI Community Services Haverhill office provides support programs for residents of Haverhill, Boxford, Groveland, Georgetown and Rowley. CAI Emergency Services helps residents secure basic services with an emphasis on housing and homeless prevention.

In addition, tenant/landlord mediations, utility mediation, budget planning, and advocacy and information regarding tenants/landlord rights and responsibilities are offered. The Emergency Food and Shelter Program and other state and federal initiatives (when available) provide resources to prevent homelessness and utility shut-offs. Referrals are made to programs and opportunities within CAI and to outside agencies.

Emergency Services staff provide Haverhill Gazette Santa vouchers to Haverhill low-income families each December and organize a Thanksgiving food drive in Haverhill. A grant from the Essex County Women’s Foundation supports efforts to support homeless single mother households by helping them obtain training, assist with job searches and find housing.

AMESBURY CENTER

The CAI Amesbury Center works with low-income residents to secure basic resources such as shelter, food and clothing. The Emergency Food and Shelter Program and other state and federal initiatives (when available) provide resources to prevent homelessness and utility shut-offs.

Assistance is also provided to low-income families with budget planning and landlord/tenant rights and responsibilities. Referrals are made to programs and opportunities within CAI and to outside agencies.

Eligibility

The CAI Amesbury Center provides support programs for residents of Amesbury, Merrimac, Newburyport, Newbury, West Newbury, and Salisbury. Available services include: food pantry, clothing bank, WIC, heating assistance, homeless aid and emergency rent and utility assistance.

1994

- CAI launches anti-smoking campaign – No Butts About It.
- Haverhill Bar Association honors CAI’s high school mediation program - SCORE.

1995

- CAI offers final surplus food distribution to low-income residents. 13 year program eliminated following state and federal budget cuts.
- CAI helps tenants win federal approval and funding and the residents purchase Presidential Gardens, a 200 unit subsidized rental housing program - $6 million renovation project begins.
- Gerald Goldman, executive director for 12 years, loses battle with cancer and dies on Nov. 25.
A few years ago everything was going well for Mariela (Mary) Arias. Even though she was a single mom with four children, she was working full time and able to pay the rent for her own apartment in Lawrence.

Then her world changed. Her youngest son, David, who is nine years old, became too sick and had to leave school. David’s doctor told Mary that she had to leave her job and take care of her son and home school him. Mary’s employment was her only source of income so she asked for help from the Dept. of Transitional Assistance. But she only was eligible for about $400 a month in DTA assistance. She soon fell behind in her rent payments and was eventually evicted. Mary and her children were homeless.

DTA moved Arias and her family into the Best Western Hotel in Haverhill. The single hotel room served as her family’s shelter. Mary and her family were losing hope and life in the hotel room soon became very difficult. But there was a flicker of hope still alive for Mary. Megan used her contacts and soon Mary was offered a job at Lahey Behavioral Services.

“I love my job”, Mary said. “I get to work with families that are homeless and kids with little hope. I get to work with families who are in very similar situations that my family and I faced just a short time ago. My job is very rewarding and satisfying. I love to help others.”

After a few months of working, Mary moved out of the hotel and into an apartment in Haverhill. She is independent again.

“I talk about Community Action all the time with my clients,” Mary said. “Community Action was the only agency that helped me and my kids. They offered hope and they helped me turn my life around. If it wasn’t for Megan and CAI, I don’t know how we would have made it.”

Megan came to the hotel every week and set up different educational meetings for the homeless families. She talked about resources, employment, housing, resume writing and budgeting. She organized holiday parties for Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter. She tried to make our difficult living situation as comfortable as possible, especially for the kids,” Mary said.

In addition Megan provided case management services for the hotel’s homeless guests. The first thing Megan worked on was helping Mary get her driver’s license back. Then Megan worked on getting help for Mary’s son so she could return to work. With help from Megan, Mary’s future was turning in a positive direction.

Her youngest son was placed into a new alternative school, her license was renewed and soon Mary was able to secure a job as a bus driver with the City of Haverhill. But Mary wanted something more. She wanted to work with families who were homeless or faced with very difficult living situations. Megan used her
DROP-IN CENTER

The Drop-In Center, located at 16 Ashland Street in the basement of the Universalist Unitarian Church, is Haverhill’s only drop-in day program for homeless and indigent individuals. Those served at the Drop-In Center are aged, indigent, homeless and often at risk for substance abuse and HIV.

CAI Drop-In Center Offers

The CAI Drop-in Center provides a safe haven, offering year-round day shelter, referrals and assistance such as:

- Day Shelter - 8 a.m. to noon, Monday through Friday (except holidays)
- Food - The Drop-In Center has a bagged lunch on Monday (except holidays). A light breakfast is available Monday through Friday and a full breakfast is served Thursday
- Clothing
- Medical, counseling and referral services

Eligibility:

The CAI Drop-in Center is open to all. Some of the programs that clients are referred to have income eligibility and other qualification requirements.

1998

- 120 CAI staff go door to door in Haverhill, Amesbury and Newburyport offering health care information for children.
- CAI dedicates the opening of the Gerald Goldman Family Center, 230 Hilldale Ave., Haverhill following a major expansion and renovation project.
- CAI establishes Gerald Goldman Memorial Scholarship program for area high school and college students.
- CAI open before and after school day care program for students age 6 to 12 in Haverhill.
- CAI sponsors first “Make a Difference” award to honor, staff, participants, businesses and volunteers.
Everything was going well for Maureen McGee. She received a bachelor’s degree in philosophy from Wheaton College. She had been employed full-time as a research analyst for the House of Representatives at the State House in Boston. And she was living independently in an apartment in Charlestown.

But all of her success was soon to take a turn for the worse. Several years ago at the age of 46 Maureen suffered a brain aneurysm and her life was severely impacted and changed forever. She lost her job, her car and her apartment and suddenly she needed a lot of help.

With no income Maureen ended up in a homeless shelter. She applied for Food Stamps but needed a place to volunteer to qualify for the Food Stamp program. Maureen decided to volunteer at the Community Action Drop-in Center.

She was befriended by the center coordinator Pat Dennehy and soon her life began to turn in the right direction. The DIC staff worked to stabilize Maureen’s situation. She applied for and received Social Security benefits. She qualified for Mass Health so she could address her ongoing medical issues and she began to believe in herself again.

Today Maureen is living independently again. Her health has improved. She is active in her church and she still visits the CAI Drop-in Center at least once a week.

“I am really appreciative of Community Action and the Drop-in Center. Pat was very encouraging, very supportive. She has been a good spirit for me. Community Action helped me turn my life around.”
CONSUMER PROTECTION

The Consumer Protection Program provides information on consumer rights and mediates disputes between consumers and merchants, contractors, landlords and others. It is one of 19 local consumer programs in the Commonwealth working in cooperation with the Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General.

Each year the program receives more than 850 telephone inquiries and processes more than 500 formal complaints. The program successfully mediates about 80 percent of the complaints it receives.

2001

- CAI organizes public hearings to oppose proposed Key Span gas rate hikes.
- CAI’s Think Twice program pays to add additional police officers in Haverhill to curb teenage drinking.
- CAI Holds first annual golf marathon fundraiser and raises over $20,000.
- CAI honors founding board members Ester Rosen, Kallister Green-Byrd, Kay Stiennen, Atty. David Watnik, George Winfield and Donald Freeman.

2002

- CAI receives $180,000 Even Start Family Literacy Grant.
- CAI’s remaining tobacco prevention program is eliminated after seven years.
NORTH ESSEX MEDIATORS

North Essex Mediators of Community Action, Inc. has been providing Face-to-Face Mediation services for residents of northern Essex County since 1984. Many different types of conflicts, including family, business to business, private party and consumer-merchant disputes have been successfully mediated by NEM.

Disputing parties craft their own resolutions with the trained mediator acting as a neutral facilitator. All information provided to a mediator is confidential under state law. NEM receives referrals from the Consumer Protection Program, district courts, numerous area agencies and private individuals.

VOLUNTEER INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE (VITA)

Community Action, Inc. (CAI) participates in the IRS sponsored VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) Program which offers free tax help to low-to-moderate-income people (generally $54,000 and below). IRS-certified volunteers receive training to help prepare basic and intermediate tax returns for those unable to do so themselves.

The CAI VITA program operates seasonally, January–April, and is located at 3 Washington Square in Haverhill, MA.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Total Funding: $50,000
Total Staff: 1 Part-time
- 850 calls per year
- 300 cases
- 230 resolutions
- $125,000 per year returned to consumers

NORTH ESSEX MEDIATORS

Total Funding: $50,000
Total Staff: 1 Part-time, 20 Volunteer Mediators
- 300 mediations per year
- 270 resolutions
- Mediation services offered in Haverhill, Lawrence, Newburyport and Ipswich courts
- $350,000 returned to consumers per year

VOLUNTEER INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE (VITA)

Total Funding: $6,900
Total Staff: 2 Part-time, 8 Volunteers
Impact: (2014)
- 305 returns e-filed
- $214,000 returned to taxpayers through Earned Income Tax Credits
- $15,000 returned to taxpayers through Child Tax Credits
- $424,000 returned to taxpayers through federal returns
- $85,000 returned to taxpayers through state returns

2003
- Congressman Martin Meehan pledges to help Head Start find a new home after visiting deteriorating Head Start buildings located on the Don Orione campus in Bradford.

2004
- CAI launches Single Mothers Acting Responsibly Together (SMART) program to address 50% poverty rate among single mother families in Greater Haverhill.
- CAI submits $425,000 bid to City of Haverhill to purchase 21,000 square foot Fox School to provide new home for Head Start, Family Day care and Education and Training programs.
- CAI Homeless Drop-in Center moves to new home at the Universalist Unitarian Church, 16 Ashland St. in Haverhill. The new space is much larger and offers a full commercial kitchen.
ADULT LEARNING CENTER OF GREATER HAVERHILL

The Community Action, Inc. (CAI) Adult Learning Center is committed to helping students learn English, obtain their High School Equivalency (HSE), identify a career pathway and find their way to a brighter future. HSE & ESOL programs are funded by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

ESOL classes are for English Language Learners at various proficiency levels. Participants learn to read, write, speak and listen in English for multiple purposes. Participants learn about American culture, US government, current events and navigating the American systems. Students set goals including: obtaining citizenship, employment and training, helping their children with homework and participating in community activities.

2005

- CAI marks 40th anniversary with a dinner, fashion show and silent auction fundraiser. The event raises $10,000.
- CAI partners with City of Haverhill to restart Housing Partnership to address escalating affordable housing issues in the city.

2006

- CAI’s Heating Assistance, WIC, Education & Training, Family Day Care and administration staff move to a newly renovated space located at 145 Essex St. Haverhill following the sale and renovation of the former CAI offices located at 25 Locust St.
- Postal food drive in Amesbury donates over 2,000 pounds of food to the food bank located at the CAI Amesbury Center.
- Cost of heating oil rises 50 percent over the price from the previous winter causing hundreds of families to exhaust heating assistance benefits before January 1.
English for Work
The English for Work program is an intensive 12-week program for High Intermediate-Advanced Level ESOL Students. This program helps students to: improve English reading and writing skills, learn to communicate better at work, create a job-winning resume, learn to interview in English, explore career interests, prepare for college or job training and develop strategies to meet their goals.

High School Equivalency Test (HiSET) Preparation Classes
HiSET Preparation classes are offered to prepare students to take and pass the High School Equivalency Test (formerly called GED). Classes are self-paced with an emphasis on math concepts, writing skills and reading comprehension. Classes are offered both online and in a classroom setting. Participants must be at least 16 years of age and officially withdrawn from school.

Eligibility and Service Area
The CAI Adult Learning Center serves the following Massachusetts cities and towns: Amesbury, Bradford, Haverhill, Lawrence, Methuen, Newburyport and Salisbury.

GERALD GOLDMAN MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIPS
Community Action offers three $1,000 scholarships to eligible students who reside in the CAI service area. The scholarships are presented in honor of former CAI Executive Director Gerald Goldman, who passed away in 1995. Scholarships are awarded in three categories: post secondary, high school graduating senior and GED Recipients.

ADULT EDUCATION & TRAINING
Total Funding: $312,000
Total Staff: 8
- 58 Students enrolled in Adult Basic Education and GED preparation programs
- 3 students completed HiSET
- 2 students enrolled in NECC Transition to College program
- 65 students enrolled in ESOL classes
- 2 students completed all requirements for citizenship

GERALD GOLDMAN MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIPS
Total Staff: 1 Part-time and up to 7 Volunteers
- 3 $1,000 scholarships presented annually
- 41 Scholarships totaling $38,500 have been awarded since 1998.

IMPACT & RESULTS

2007
• After completing a $1.5 million extensive renovation project, CAI reopens the Fox Education Center in September to house Head Start, Adult Education and Family Day Care programs.

2008
• CAI holds lottery to sell six condominiums for income eligible residents over the age of 55 at the Fairways in Haverhill.
• CAI assists the Gazette Santa Fund distribute more than $35,000 to area needy families to help them buy toys and food for the holidays.

• CAI offers Common Cents matched savings/asset development program with the help of Pentucket Bank to help low-income working families save to purchase a home, enter higher education or start a business.
Energy Programs

2009

• CAI names the community room at the Fox Education Center in memory of Patricia (Pat) Meagher who served as the agency’s first housing services coordinator from 1980 to 2004.

• CAI Executive Director John Cuneo organizes first ever Rubber Duck Regatta on the Merrimack River and raises $50,000 for the Haverhill Rotary.

2010

• CAI receives $1.2 million to fund Early Head Start program and Head Start expansion. Grant will serve 73 children and create 23 new jobs.

• CAI joins with Newburyport YWCA to participate in the YWCA’s national “Stand Against Racism” initiative.

ENERGY PROGRAMS

CAI’s Home Heating Assistance Program provides savings and discounts that help manage the high price of staying warm during the winter. Eligible individuals and families may be eligible to have a portion of their heating bill paid and/or receive financial assistance to repair or replace their heating units or weatherize their homes.

Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) helps eligible residents defray the high cost of home heating. Oil, gas, electric and other primary energy bills (wood, coal and propane) are paid directly to the vendor during the period between November 1 and April 30.
Heating Emergency Assistance Retrofit Task Weatherization Assistance Program (HEARTWAP)

The Heating Emergency Assistance Retrofit Task Weatherization Assistance Program (HEARTWAP) provides heating system repair and replacement services to low-income households. The program operates year-round.

Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP)

The Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) provides up to $7,500 in added insulation, replacement windows and general plugging of air leaks in homes and apartments whose occupants are eligible for LIHEAP.

Oil Co-op Program

The Oil Co-op Program provides discounted oil prices to all eligible Heating Assistance Clients who heat their homes with oil. Participants pre-pay a minimum amount and purchase oil at a low discount rate year round. The pre-pay minimum fluctuates with the price of oil.

Eligibility

Eligibility for Heating Assistance and Heating System Assistance is based on household size and income.

CAI Energy Programs serve the following Massachusetts cities and towns: Amesbury, Boxford, Georgetown, Groveland, Haverhill, Merrimac, Newbury, Newburyport, Rowley, Salisbury and West Newbury.

LOW INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (LIHEAP)

Total Funding: $3,175,000
Total Staff: 9

• 4300 total households received Heating Assistance
• 102 emergency no-heat households successfully assisted
• 1591 elderly households assisted
• 629 households with children under age 5 assisted
• Over $2.6 million returned to CAI communities

HEATING EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE RETROFIT TASK WEATHERIZATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (HEARTWAP)

Total Funding:
$318,000 - Total DHCD Funding
$162,000 - National Grid Electric Contribution
$300,000 - National Grid Gas contribution

Total Staff: 2

• 190 households received free annual heating system evaluation/cleaning and tune-ups
• 303 households received heating system repairs
• 105 households received heating system replacements
• 16 oil tanks removed
• $317,000 returned to CAI communities

2011

• CAI becomes United Way Partner agency.
• CAI renovates Goldman Head Start Center into Early Head Start space.
• CAI Board members urge area federal legislators to fully fund Community Services Block Grant program following President Obama’s proposal to cut funding by 50%.
• The Town of Amesbury notifies CAI that it needs to vacate its free space that the CAI Amesbury Center has occupied for more than 25 years in the Town Hall Annex building.
After months of searching CAI finds a new Amesbury location in a store front located at 44 Friend Street. The new office houses Community Services, WIC, Heating Assistance, and food and clothing banks.

CAI’s Annual Fashion Show/Silent Auction raises over $14,000.

2012

- CAI’s Education and Training program provides on-site English classes for employees at Hans Kissle, a private company that makes prepared foods for local stores.

HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

First Time Home Buyer Program

Certified by the Massachusetts Citizen Housing and Planning Association, the First Time Home Buyer Program offers buyer education classes to residents interested in learning how to purchase their first home. It includes information on mortgages, budgeting, credit, legal issues, appraisals, condominium purchase, insurance, housing law, tax advantages, home inspection and more. The program is funded through grants from TD Bank, Pentucket Bank, and Haverhill Bank.

Down Payment and Closing Cost Assistance

Eligible first time buyers who have completed CAI home buyer training may qualify for loans and grants of up to $10,000 to assist with their down payment and closing costs.
State & Municipal Affordable Housing Lottery
CAI administers an affordable housing lottery for state and local housing programs including 40b comprehensive permit projects. Income limits vary but generally range from 50 to 80 percent of area median for a family of four. Lottery winners may be eligible for down payment assistance programs.

CAI Rental Management
CAI owns and manages one apartment adjacent to its Head Start center in Newburyport. Tenants with Section 8 or other rental subsidies are encouraged to apply when available.

Presidential Gardens Neighborhood Association
Presidential Gardens is a 200 unit, subsidized rental development that offers one, two and three bedroom apartments. It represents nearly 50% of the site-based, subsidized family housing units in the City of Haverhill. In 1990 with strong assistance from CAI, the Presidential Gardens tenants formed their own non-profit corporation, the Presidential Gardens Neighborhood Association (PGNA) to purchase the property from its former owners and preserve the property as an affordable rental neighborhood. The PGNA has secured $8 million over the past 25 years to renovate the neglected units into safe, modern apartments with a new community center, laundry rooms and playgrounds.

Today CAI continues to assist the PGNA Board of Directors operate Presidential Gardens. CAI has staff out-stationed at Presidential Gardens to assist the PGNA Board with the daily operation, provide resident services and fully staff an after-school and summer on-site youth council program. Families are encouraged to participate in the Corporation for Enterprise Development financial literacy program that is administered by CAI and the Massachusetts Community Action Program (MASSCAP). First Time Home Buyer classes are held on-site. CAI also provides full fiscal services for the PGNA.

FIRST TIME HOME BUYER PROGRAM

**Total Funding:** $18,500  
**Total Staff:** 1 Part-time, 6 Volunteers  
- 96 households completed First Time Home Buyer classes  
- 43 participants purchased first home  
- 21 participants received down payment assistance

PGNA

**Total Funding:** $227,000  
**Total Staff:** 1 Full-time, 6 Part-time  
- 200 families live in safe, modern affordable rental units  
- 9 residents serve on the PGNA Board of Directors  
- 60 youth participate in the MassHousing funded Youth Council Program  
- 50 families receive free food at the bi-weekly food bank program offered on-site  
- 8 families participate in the Massachusetts Community Action Program's CFED financial literacy program  
- 20 residents regularly volunteer to help with resident services activities  
- CAI's First Time Home Buyer classes are held in the PGNA community room.

2013

- Federal sequestration funding cuts force CAI to reduce budgets in Head Start, Family Day Care, Administration and Community Services programs.
- VITA volunteers file over 300 tax returns which result in $485,000 in federal and state refunds and $200,000 in Earned Income Tax Credits for area taxpayers.
- CAI purchases 3 Washington Square office condominium in Haverhill for $185,000. The space houses Administration, Community Services, Consumer Protection & Mediation, and Housing Development programs.
- CAI partners with Northern Essex Community College (NECC) to offer nurse aide training classes at the NECC campus in Lawrence.
- CAI commemorates Homeless Drop-in Center’s 25th year anniversary.
STRATEGIC PLAN 2015–17

In 2014 Community Action, Inc. (CAI) conducted a community survey that confirmed the needs of low-income people in the CAI service area were access to affordable food, shelter, a living wage and a variety of support services. Respondents also offered creative ideas to meet those needs. CAI used these results and ideas to develop a three year Strategic Plan (2015–17). The main goals of the plan are to:

GOAL 1. Improve Services: increase services and access to services.

GOAL 2. Improve Community Building: increase CAI’s collaborations and partnerships with other service providers in the communities served.

GOAL 3. Improve Agency Capacity: refine policies and procedures to better meet the needs of the clients and the community.

To be successful in meeting these goals, CAI will continue to:

- Fuse creative thinking with hard work.
- Seek to better identify and understand the needs of the community.
- Work in cooperation with our clients and our community partners to create high quality, accessible services.
- Work more effectively and efficiently, increasing private funding to help maintain a stable financial picture.
- Support a well-trained, professional staff and improve technical communication resources.
- Recruit and support volunteers, especially active, engaged board members.

The strategies identified in FY 2012–14 and FY 2015–17 strategic planning process will improve CAI services and assist a greater number of clients to become self-sufficient, contributing members of the community. As a result the communities we serve will also be improved.
2014 FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Sources of revenue

- Federal: $9,803,743
- Program Service Fees: $396,318
- Contributions & Cash: $679,336
- State: $3,309,306

USES OF FUNDS

- Energy Assistance: $4,515,241
- Head Start: $3,567,416
- Family Day Care: $1,860,580
- WIC: $1,913,004
- Community Services: $829,127
- Education & Training: $308,779
- Housing Services: $184,719
- Administrative: $964,721
- Fundraising: $15,058

Uses of Funds

- The Breakfast Exchange Club raises $20,000 for CAI’s Heating Assistance program at their Walk 2 Scavenger Hunt fundraising event.
- CAI Head Start is awarded $1.3 million federal partnership grant to fund collaboration between Early Head Start and local early child care programs.
- CAI purchases 2nd and 3rd floor at 3 Washington Square for $264,000. Most of the Adult Education programs moved to third floor. Second floor to provide space for future program consolidation.
- WIC and two ET classes move to the Phoenix Building operated by Bethany Homes. CAI closes out Essex St. lease.
- CAI holds a 50th Anniversary Commemoration event highlighting five decades of the agency’s local effort in the “War on Poverty” declared by President Lyndon Johnson in 1965.
COMMUNITIES WE SERVE

Our programs serve the following cities and towns in Massachusetts: 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.

MAIN OFFICE - (Central Administration, Community Services, Consumer Services, Education & Training, Energy Programs, Housing Development)
3 Washington Square
Haverhill, MA 01830
Main: 978-373-1971
TTY: 978-374-5214

FOX CENTER
(Family Day Care, Head Start)
75 Elm Street
Haverhill, MA 01830
Family Day Care: 978-373-1971
Head Start: 978-372-5052

SEACOAST CENTER
(Head Start)
447 Merrimac Street
Newburyport, MA 01950
978-499-8357

GOLDMAN FAMILY CENTER
(Head Start)
230 Hilldale Avenue
Haverhill, MA 01832
978-241-4261

NORTHERN ESSEX WIC
Main Office/Haverhill
10 Phoenix Row
Haverhill, MA 01832
978-374-2191
Amesbury: 978-388-2575
Beverly: 978-922-2110
Gloucester: 978-281-4540

AMESBURY CENTER
44 Friend Street
Amesbury, MA 01913
Main: 978-388-2570
WIC: 978-388-2575

DROP-IN CENTER
16 Ashland St. (Universalist Unitarian Church/basement)
Haverhill, MA 01830
978-914-7423

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY CONNECTION
346 Broadway (First Presbyterian Church)
Haverhill, MA 01832
978-914-7893

THANK YOU STAFF, DONORS, SPONSORS AND VOLUNTEERS!

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