



*Community Action's Mission is "dedicated to helping people achieve and maintain independence."*

**Community Action** is a private, non-profit 501(c)3 human service organization founded in 1966 to assist individuals in developing their potential for self-sufficiency and personal wellbeing. To this end, the agency provides responsive and supportive services in the counties of Barry, Branch, Calhoun and St. Joseph, cares for each person individually with dignity and respect and resolves and prevents problems through immediate action.

### Community Action Statistics

Community Action seeks to provide basic human services which assist individuals and families achieve and maintain their independence. In 2007:

- 1,022 children and expectant mothers were served through Community Action's Head Start, Early Head Start and Michigan School Readiness Programs.
- Over 100 Foster Grandparents had contact with more than 1,000 children weekly, resulting in more than 90,000 hours volunteered.
- 64 students participated in the Literacy After School and Summer Enrichment program.
- Community Action drove 132,565 miles to deliver nutritious meals to our clients.
- Community Action served 209,740 meals for senior citizens in our communities.
- Community Action handed out over 28,900 boxes of emergency and supplemental food.

- Community Action weatherized 158 households.
- Community Action assisted over 900 households in completing and electronically filing their income taxes, totaling over \$405,000 in refunds.
- Community Action provided emergency fuel, utility and/or rent assistance to thousands of families.
- Community Action provided 12,180 rides to Calhoun County seniors for medical appointments.
- Community Action supplied 8,638 rides for Calhoun County clients with disabilities.

### Community Action History

The Community Action movement was formed in the 1960s as part of America's War on Poverty. In 1964, Congress passed the Economic Opportunity Act, noting that, "Although the economic well-being and prosperity of the United States have progressed to a level surpassing any achieved in world history, poverty continues to be the lot for a substantial number of our people. It is therefore the policy of the United States to eliminate the paradox of poverty." In the 1950s, prior to the action by Congress, 22 percent of our nation's population lived in poverty. In 2006, 37 million Americans still lived in poverty, a rate of over 12 percent. Community Action, one of the nearly 1,000 Community Action Programs nationwide, is actively working to lower the incidence of poverty and improve the lives of those it serves.



**CommunityAction**

1-877-422-2726

Serving Barry, Branch, Calhoun and  
St. Joseph Counties since 1966

*“I tell people this is not just a preschool program – this is a family program because it does not just help your child, it helps the family as a whole.”*

When Cathy and her husband had their third son, they discovered he had a disability. The doctors prescribed therapy three times per week for Connor. Though Cathy thought their family had extensive health insurance coverage, it did not cover the therapy Connor needed. Cathy and her husband were worried about Connor’s future; they could barely afford preschool, no less therapy. Then, Cathy heard that Connor would be eligible for Head Start. The Head Start program would provide no-cost preschool for Connor as well as the therapy he needed to succeed.

*“Even though it’s been hard with his disability, it’s been like a blessing in disguise for us too, because it has helped my entire family.”*

Community Action’s Head Start program provided so much more for the family than just Connor’s schooling and therapy. Cathy, a shy stay-at-home mother, was encouraged to become involved in Policy Council. She eventually became the Chair of the Head Start Policy Council. The council members encouraged Cathy to speak up and taught her that it was okay to voice her opinion.

*“I can have a voice and it’s important to have a voice in your child’s life.”*

In addition to opening the doors for training, conferences and teaching Cathy leadership skills, Community Action’s Head Start program gave Cathy the courage and self-esteem to put herself back in the workforce. Now a home health aide, Cathy is going back to school to become a registered nurse.

**- Cathy, Calhoun County Head Start Parent**



**CommunityAction**

**1-877-422-2726**

Serving Barry, Branch, Calhoun and  
St. Joseph Counties since 1966



*"I wasn't working and it was getting brutal – it was getting the best of me."*

Cheryl had been out of work for seven months. She had been actively searching for a job, but the market was tough. When she went to Work First, a job assistance agency, Cheryl was told about Community Action's Community Kitchen Training Center. She decided to apply, was accepted and started the program.

*"There's a lot of things to learn. Same thing you do here you can do at home; things you need to know. It's a good experience."*

Cheryl worked side-by-side with paid kitchen staff, learning how to prepare and package large quantities of food for Community Action's congregate and home delivered meals. Eight weeks later, Cheryl graduated from the program with all the skills necessary to work in a commercial kitchen setting. She then applied for a position at Community Action and was hired as part of the kitchen staff. Through participation in Community Action's employment development programs, Cheryl has met her goals.

**- Cheryl, Calhoun County Community Kitchen Training Center Graduate**



**CommunityAction**

**1-877-422-2726**

**Serving Barry, Branch, Calhoun and  
St. Joseph Counties since 1966**

*“I had a lot of duct tape around my windows.”*

After Olive's husband passed away, she had difficulty keeping up on repairs to her old farmhouse. Olive's limited income did not allow her to hire contractors to do minor repairs. Problems with her knees made it difficult for Olive to try her hand at the repairs. Through Community Action's housing rehabilitation program, Olive was able to bring her house up to code, cut her energy costs and have more repairs done than she ever imagined.

*“My house is up to code now. They went through the house [pre-inspection] and when they got done, I thought, ‘Wow, I thought I had an old farmhouse and ended up with a HUD house;’ but my house is now up to code! I’ve got railings and everything!”*

Community Action's housing rehabilitation program provided new windows, steel doors, gutters, flooring, paint, lighting, a bathroom vanity and railings for Olive's house. Olive's favorite update was a small porch Community Action contractors built to replace her dilapidated cement steps leading to her front door. It gives her a wonderful shaded spot to sit on warm afternoons and watch the country traffic pass by.

**- Olive, St. Joseph County Housing Rehabilitation Client**



**CommunityAction**

**1-877-422-2726**

**Serving Barry, Branch, Calhoun and  
St. Joseph Counties since 1966**

## Client Spotlight – Transportation Services

Gilbert, a retired veteran, was taking care of his aging mother. Seven years ago, he lost his eyesight. Neither Gilbert nor his mother could drive. Through the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) services Community Action provides, Gilbert now has a ride to his medical appointments at the VA Medical Center.

*"I have a way to get places if I need it, when I need to go. Otherwise, I wouldn't be able to get around."*

**- Gilbert, Calhoun County Michigan Department of Transportation Client**



**CommunityAction**

**1-877-422-2726**

**Serving Barry, Branch, Calhoun and  
St. Joseph Counties since 1966**