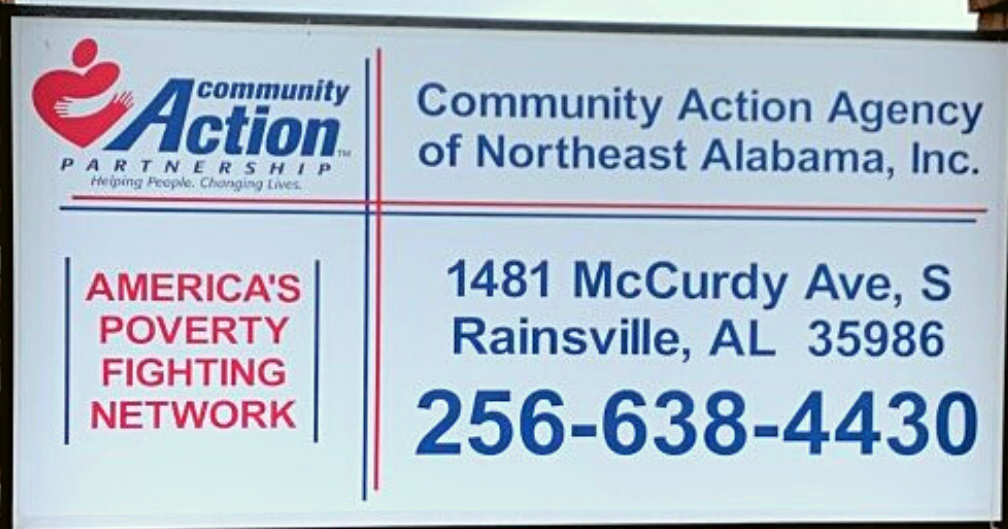


# 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

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COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY  
OF NORTHEAST ALABAMA



# 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

While 2021 was another year of unknowns for our agency, our staff expressed resilience despite the setbacks and challenges we faced. This report outlines some of the key outcomes achieved in 2021 in each of the domains our programs address. We are thankful to each of our community and state partners for their continued support of our organization and its mission.

Do all the good you can,  
by all the means you can,  
in all the ways you can,  
in all the places you can,  
at all the times you can,  
to all the people you can,  
as long as ever you can.

- John Wesley



## A NOTE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

Dear Partners and Friends,

Your continued support of the Community Action Agency of Northeast Alabama (CAANEAL) is greatly appreciated. Since 1965, the year after President Johnson announced the "War on Poverty," CAANEAL has strived to implement programs to address poverty and help those living at or below the federal poverty guideline to achieve self-sufficiency.

CAANEAL Board of Directors represent the following sectors of the population: low-income population, private individuals, and public officials. These three classification groups are vital to the success of fighting the war on poverty.

All board members work diligently to fulfill their duties and responsibilities to ensure the mission of the agency is carried out. As we continue this important work, we hope you will partner with us. We are stronger as a community when we work together for the common good.

Sincerely,  
D. L. Stiefel  
Board Chairman



## A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Within this Annual Report, you will find the story of our agency. You'll witness both the narrative of our beginning and our aspirations for the future. You will also hear from our clients themselves as they share their stories of how Community Action Agency influenced their lives. Our Case Managers will relate success stories they have witnessed and partnerships they have created. While this report will focus on the specific successes we have achieved in 2021, please know that this year is only a piece of the 56 year history in which Community Action agency has been serving our area. Through the various programs and services we provide, individuals, families, and even communities have been influenced and positively changed. It is an honor to serve as the Executive Director of such an influential organization. I am blessed each day by the hard work of our employees and their dedication to making their communities a better place with better opportunities for their neighbors to achieve success.

In the aftermath of 2020 and the COVID pandemic, our organization has faced exceptional challenges. However, despite the many challenges we have faced, our organization has also been given extraordinary opportunities. We recognize that 2021 was a challenging year for everyone, especially for our neighbors in need. It is our privilege to provide programs and services in these trying times and it is a blessing to see the continued resilience and success our programs can bring, regardless of the circumstances.

2021 was a record year for our agency. We were given additional funding opportunities by the state government and by our generous community partners to meet the growing needs we assessed within our service area. This additional funding significantly increased the number of households we served. You will see a lot of numbers within this annual report. These numbers are important to us because they help to tell our story. To me, these numbers reflect the real treasure of the Community Action Agency of Northeast Alabama—our Board of Directors, staff, clients, volunteers, and donors. The most important message I hope you receive from this report is that each of these numbers and statistics represent an encounter between our clients and our staff. Our desire and mission is for each of our clients to become more self-sufficient, and we believe these encounters will make the difference in producing this result. While this result cannot be shared by numbers alone, we hope the success stories and client testimonials within this report provide insight into the true accomplishments of our agency. We set out this year to focus on this aspect of our mission and began our GROW Program. This program has been weighing on my heart and mind for many years, and I am excited to see where this program will be this time next year.

As you continue reading, please know at the heart of our success is a strong team unified by shared goals. I am so thankful for our entire team. Their drive and passion are what enable us to achieve our goals. I look forward to what new and exciting things our agency has in store for the coming years.



*-Carrie Lea*



# Our Purpose



## Our Mission Statement:

Our agency's mission is to "build coalitions of partnerships, volunteers, and programs dedicated to breaking the cycle of poverty by improving the quality of life and empowering community participants to become self-sufficient in Blount, Cherokee, DeKalb, Jackson, Marshall, and St. Clair counties."

## Our Vision:

Community Action Agency of Northeast Alabama is dedicated to providing a strength-based approach from both our staff and the individuals and families we work with to find innovative solutions to problem areas in their lives. We believe that by setting realistic goals, keeping the line of communication open, providing our available resources, and relying on support from our partners within the community, we can help strengthen the lives of families and individuals.



## Community Action Promise

Community Action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, and are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.

## Our Values:

- **Compassion:** At CAANEAL, we recognize that possessing an attitude of compassion is an essential characteristic of being successful in our agency's mission. In order to empower our clients, we must first show compassion. Additionally, as staff members we must also be willing to exchange compassion toward one another as we work toward our goals.
- **Willingness to Serve:** Our agency's willingness to serve sets us apart as an organization. We recruit and hire individuals who truly want to see change within their communities. This desire for change motivates our staff to serve in whatever capacity is necessary to achieve this goal.
- **Partnerships:** We recognize that the entire community must be involved in our efforts for any of our goals to come to fruition. Because of this, we consistently network and establish partnerships with local community members to create linkages for gaps in services and create new opportunities for our agency. All of our agency's success connects back to our partner organizations who are likewise committed to our mission, vision, and values.
- **Exceptional Customer Service:** We pride ourselves on consistently achieving exceptional customer service ratings from our clients. In 2021, our agency received an average of five stars on all of our customer service surveys.
- **Dedication to Improving Self-Sufficiency and Quality of Life:** No matter what position, from our Executive Director to our Case Managers, everyone that is a part of our organization is dedicated to our mission.

# OUR SERVICE AREA

## Blount County

According to the 2020 Census, Blount County is home to over 57,000 residents. Nearly 16% live at or below the federal poverty guideline. In the agency's most recent survey, individuals from Blount County cited their top five needs as: inability to pay utility bills, unable to afford the cost of food, unable to afford the cost of rent, the community lacks affordable healthcare services, and homes in the community are in poor condition.

## Cherokee County

Cherokee County has a population of just over 29,000 individuals. 16% of these individuals are reportedly living at or below the federal poverty guideline. The top five needs assessed in Cherokee County are as follows: inability to pay utility bills, unable to afford the cost of food, unable to afford the cost of fuel, homes in the community are in poor condition, and the community lacks services for the disabled.

## DeKalb County

DeKalb County, home to over 71,000 residents, reports approximately 18% of those residents as living at or below the federal poverty guideline. These residents have stated the following as their greatest needs: inability to afford utility bills, unable to afford food costs, homes in the community are in poor condition, few affordable healthcare resources, and the community lacks services for the disabled.

## Etowah County

Etowah County's population is just over 102,000 individuals. Nearly 16% of these individuals are reported to be at or below the federal poverty guideline.

## Jackson County

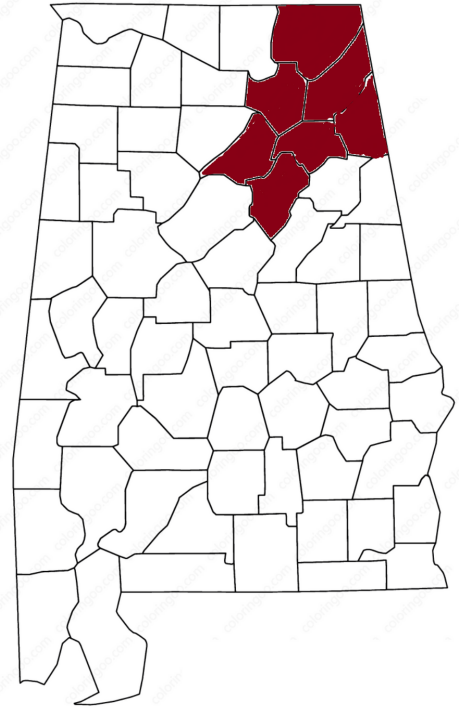
Jackson County has a population of over 51,000 individuals. Of these individuals, nearly 15% fall at or below the federal poverty rate. The top five needs identified by the Jackson County community are: inability to afford utility bills, unable to afford food costs, homes in the community are in poor condition, the community lacks services for the disabled, and families are unable to afford the cost of rent.

## Marshall County

One of our organization's largest counties, Marshall County is home to nearly 97,000 residents. The county has a poverty percentage of 16%. These impoverished individuals cited the following as their community's greatest needs: inability to pay utility bill, unable to afford food, few affordable healthcare resources, homes in the community are in poor condition, and the community lacks services for the homeless population.

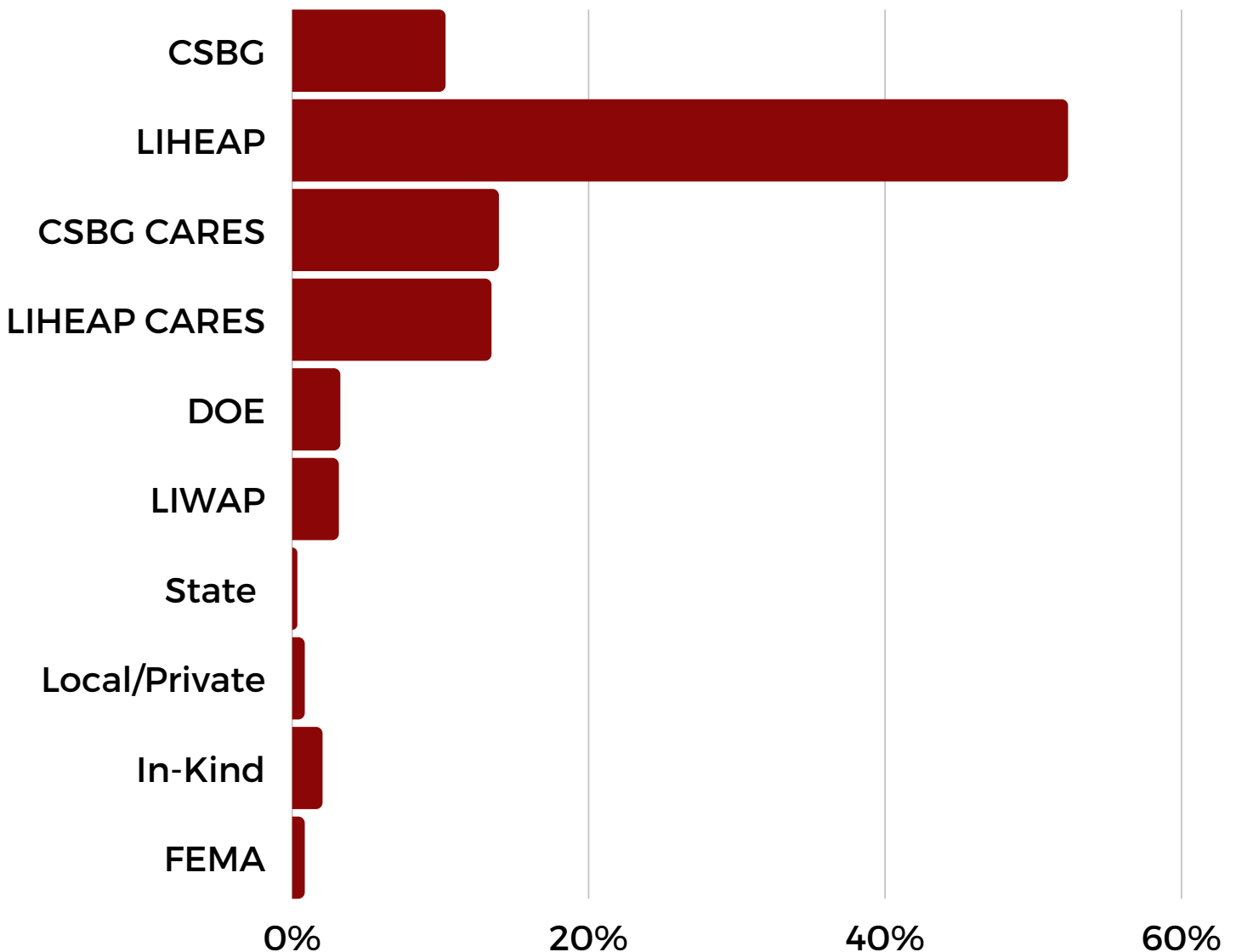
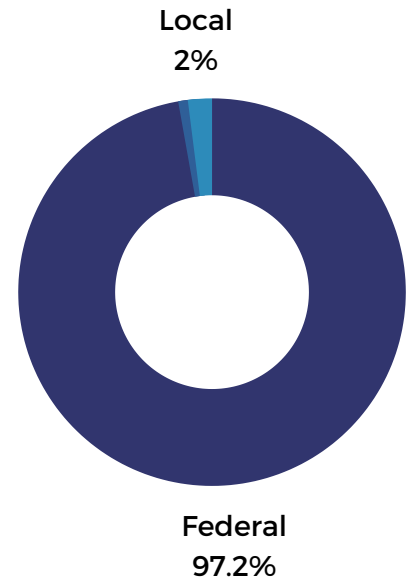
## St. Clair County

Our southern-most county, St. Clair, has a population of just over 91,000 residents. Of these residents, 18% are identified as being at or below the federal poverty guideline. The community's greatest needs are: inability to pay utility bill, unable to afford food, unable to afford rent, homes in the community are in poor condition, and the community lacks affordable healthcare resources.



# ORGANIZATIONAL RESOURCES

97% of our funding comes directly from federal grants provided through the Alabama Dept of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA). The largest of these grants are our LIHEAP (Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program) Grant and our CSBG (Community Services Block Grant).



## Leadership Team:

Our agency has an experienced administrative team committed to ensuring agency compliance in all programs, efficiently managing program resources, and to promoting the vision of Community Action.



Our Executive Director, Carrie Lea, has been at the agency for 20 years. Carrie has served in a variety of roles, from Program Director, to Chief Fiscal Officer, to Executive Director. Carrie is also a Nationally Certified ROMA Trainer and is pursuing her CCAP Certification. Carrie's leadership is the heart of our organization. She consistently motivates her team to live out the agency's mission.

Taylor Yancey serves as our Community Services Director. Taylor has been with the agency for 6 years, working in the accounting department, as a Case Manager, and now as our Community Services Director. Taylor specializes in all things LIHEAP and CSBG. Taylor is a Nationally Certified ROMA Implementer and has nearly finished her ROMA Trainer Certification.



Serving as our Housing Services Director, Luke Laney has been with the agency for one year. Luke has quickly revitalized our Weatherization Assistance Program, earning recognition for our agency and additional housing projects for our clients in need. Luke has a Bachelor's Degree from Jacksonville State University and a Master's Degree from Bryan College.

Payton Lewis, our Chief Fiscal Officer, has been serving in her position for five years. Payton graduated with a Bachelor's in Accounting from Auburn University and does an excellent job overseeing the agency's financial and human resource management. Payton is a Nationally Certified ROMA Implementer.



Maggie Bell has been with CAANEAL for nearly three years, serving first as a Case Manager and now as they agency's Development Director. At the agency, Maggie manages publications, grant proposals, and marketing. Maggie will finish her Bachelor's Degree in English in May of 2022. She is also a Nationally Certified ROMA Implementer.

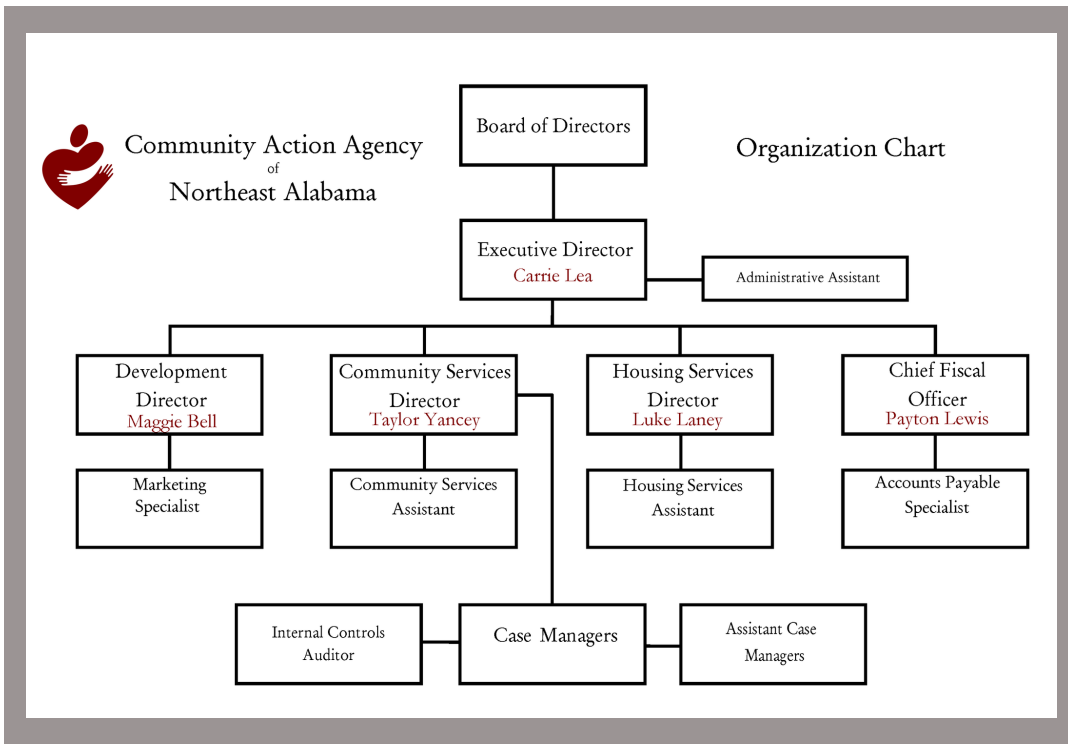
In addition to our administrative team, our agency also has fifteen full-time Case Managers serving within our six counties. Our case managers are committed to achieving our agency's mission and efficiently facilitating agency programs.



# LEADERSHIP TEAM



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Our organization is governed by a tri-partite Board of Directors. We have three board members from each of our six CSBG-funded counties for a total of 18 board members equally representing the public, private, and low-income sectors.

## **Board of Directors:**

- Blount Co. - Chris Green - *Public Sector* - (9 years)
- Blount Co. - Jody Sharp - *Private Sector* - (4 years)
- Blount Co. - T. Ray Mauldin - *Low-Income Sector* - (3 years)
- Cherokee Co. - Tim Burgess - *Public Sector* - (3 years)
- Cherokee Co. - Kay Davis - *Private Sector* - (10 years)
- Cherokee Co. - Dewandee Neyman - *Low-Income Sector* - (8 years)
- DeKalb Co. - Ricky Harcrow - *Public Sector* - (10 years)
- DeKalb Co. - D. L. Stiefel - *Private Sector* - (15 years) - President
- DeKalb Co. - Hugh Phillips - *Low-Income Sector* - (8 years)
- Jackson Co. - Danny Rich - *Public Sector* - (2 years)
- Jackson Co. - John Bobenage - *Private Sector* - (7 years) - Vice President
- Jackson Co. - Lloyd Case - *Low-Income Sector* - (1 year)
- Marshall Co. - Tony Gunter - *Public Sector* - (7 years)
- Marshall Co. - Cherri Barnard - *Private Sector* - (7 years) - Secretary
- Marshall Co. - Jason Harper - *Low-Income Sector* - (2 years) - 2nd Vice
- St. Clair Co. - Ivi McDaniel - *Public Sector* - (6 months)
- St. Clair Co. - Sue Turton - *Private Sector* - (5 years)
- St. Clair Co. - LaCindra McGowan - *Low-Income Sector* - (6 months)





## Compliance History:

Our agency currently administers LIHEAP, CSBG, and Weatherization grants for Blount, Cherokee, DeKalb, Jackson, Marshall, and St. Clair counties as well as the Weatherization program in Etowah county. Each of our counties also administer non-federal/local programs to our service areas. Through the work of our well-trained, passionate Case Managers, we have not only been able to administer all funds granted, but also provide resources and referrals to achieve change in our clients' lives. Our organization has demonstrated exceptional compliance history in various categories including: organizational standards, independent financial audits, and grant/program compliance audits.



In 2021, our agency received 100% compliance on the CSBG-regulated Organizational Standards. Meeting these standards verifies that our agency has the capacity and framework necessary to successfully administer CSBG grants and ensures the maximum feasible participation of low income individuals in our programs.

Last year, Jeff Allen, an independent auditor from Mobile, Alabama, completed an independent audit of our organization, in compliance with the CSBG Organizational Standards. His audit concluded no findings for our organization. This audit can be supplied to demonstrate stability of our grant management.



Our agency received an excellent audit review for our CSBG, LIHEAP, and WAP grants during the most recent program year. Our Case Management team efficiently processes applications for each of these programs and received high ratings for their compliance.

## Agency Compliance Highlights:

- Achieved 100% of Organizational Standards
- Excellent audit review of CSBG Programs
- Excellent audit review of LIHEAP Funds
- Excellent audit review of Weatherization Program
- Received an average of 5 stars on Customer Satisfaction Survey
- Received no findings from our annual independent audit
- Completed compliance review of Emergency Food and Shelter

## Community Services Block Grant Highlight:

### G.R.O.W Program:



**G.R.O.W**

GAINING RESOURCES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND WELLBEING  
A Program of the Community Action Agency of Northeast Alabama

Our agency seeks to utilize emergency service programs, funded through our CSBG and local grants, to achieve our agency's mission of promoting families toward self-sufficiency. In order to accomplish this goal, we established the GROW (Gaining Resources, Opportunities, and Well-Being Program).

The GROW Program allows our Case Managers to create individualized self-sufficiency plans with our clients who are not on fixed incomes. These plans utilize CSBG-funded resources across all six domains including assistance with budgeting, securing affordable housing, establishing goals, applying for jobs, and pursuing higher education.

### Services We Provide:

SRV 1f - Job Readiness Training

SRV 7a - Job Search Coaching

SRV 1j - Resume Development

SRV 1k - Interview Skills Training

SRV 1l - Job Referrals

SRV 1m - Job Placements

SRV3b - Financial Coaching

SRV 1j - Budgeting Program

Other Community Referrals



CSBG HIGHLIGHT

## Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program Highlight:

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is the largest grant our agency manages! This year, we received an increase in LIHEAP funds, bringing our total program budget for the year to \$6,416,229.

The grant is funded by the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs to assist applicants in paying their electric or gas bills. Clients are eligible for one LIHEAP regular heating payment and one LIHEAP regular cooling payment per year. Clients who qualify for crisis assistance are eligible for an additional LIHEAP crisis heating payment and LIHEAP crisis cooling payment per program year. Funds are paid directly to utility companies and vendors.

In certain months throughout the year, our agency targets vulnerable households to receive energy assistance including seniors, disabled, and homes with small children. By targeting these households, our agency is able to prevent crisis situations for those homes. By reducing a family's utility burden, that family is then able to use their funds to help support other areas of their budget like food, clothing, or even furniture. LIHEAP funds allow families to save more money by helping cover months of highest utility usage. The Success Story below details how our organization is able to leverage a variety of funding options for our clients to achieve self-sufficiency.

### Success Story:

One of our senior clients submitted the following success story for us to share! This client needed to move into a more affordable housing situation. Our Case Manager

helped the client submit an application for housing in a local affordable housing complex for seniors. After the client was accepted, we were able to use LIHEAP Crisis Funds to pay a deposit and get new electric service to her apartment. Then, LIHEAP regular funds allowed our Case Manager to help cover the cost of her utilities for the next couple of months! Because this client was on a fixed income, she would not have been able to make this move and afford the deposit without the help of LIHEAP Funds.

Community Center 1-6-2022  
Hi, my name is Ann and I'm 73 years old and live on a fixed income. I have lived with my kids for the past fifteen years. I couldn't afford to have my own place because I didn't receive enough money from social security checks. Thanks to the help of the Community Center I am now living in a really nice apartment at Deer Ridge II in Holt Payne because I received enough money to pay the \$300 deposit needed to have my power turned on and also received money to pay my power bill for many months. If this wasn't enough I received a food card and gas card to help me get established when I first moved in. I appreciate Haven Blalock for the way I was treated and with her help I now have my own home. Thanks Geneva Ann Murphy



LIHEAP HIGHLIGHT

## Weatherization Assistance Program Highlight:

The Weatherization Assistance Program is a grant made available to low-income families who own their own homes within our program area. The grant is designed to lower the energy usage of a client's home and improve the applicant's health and safety by tightening up their homes and preventing outside air infiltration. These measures also reduce the applicant's monthly energy bills, promoting the family toward self-sufficiency and an improved quality of life.

In 2021, we received over \$600,000 in federal funding for our Weatherization Program. With these funds, we were able to weatherize 54 homes! Weatherization measures completed include: air sealing/infiltration reduction, attic insulation, dense-pack sidewall installation, duct insulation, floor insulation, programmable thermostats, general energy saving measures, heater repairs or replacements, and other health and safety measures.

### Success Story:

Our Weatherization Assistance Program is able to help effectively weatherize homes and reduce the overall energy burden of the family. One of our weatherization clients this year was able to successfully reduce the energy bill of her home by replacing some of the older windows of her home!



WVAP HIGHLIGHT

## Affordable Housing Program Highlight:

CAA Development LLC assists in developing affordable housing projects across our communities. These projects allow our organization to meet community level initiatives that we have assessed. Our organization partners with other development and management agencies in order to secure funding for these projects and ensure their construction and completion. Affordable housing is a need in every community, and we are glad to have the opportunity to help meet this need!

In 2021, our organization opened the Cove at New Haven in Guntersville, Alabama. This housing complex is a 56 unit multi-family affordable housing complex. Our team was able to visit the finished complex earlier this year.

56

Units Completed

56

Units Under Construction

In 2021, our organization also began constructing a new affordable housing complex called The Timbers at Galloway. This complex is located in Scottsboro, Alabama and will be providing 56 units for seniors in the community.



Pictured: The Cove at New Haven in Guntersville



HOUSING HIGHLIGHT

## Key Outcomes and Activities by Domain:

All of our agency's programs are categorized into outcome domains. These domains help us to conceptualize the various areas where the causes and conditions of poverty are apparent. By dividing our programs into domains, we can more accurately target the domains in which families and individuals most need assistance. For each domain, we have developed different programs to combat the specific causes and conditions of poverty we assessed in our community needs assessment.



### Employment:

We had 7 key outcomes in the employment domain in 2021! As a result of our Case Management program, 5 individuals were able to obtain employment, 1 individual increased their rate of pay, and 1 individual maintained employment as a result of CAA interventions. In addition, our agency increased the number of partnerships with employment agencies and career centers in the area.

### Education:

Two of our clients reported outcomes in the education domain. Both of these clients obtained a certificate or degree relating to the achievement of educational or vocational skills. Our Case Managers also increased their relationships with local community colleges and career training programs by attending community resource meeting and networking meetings.

### Health & Social Development:

- 12 individuals demonstrated increased nutrition skills.
- 98 individuals demonstrated improved physical health and well-being.
- 10 individuals demonstrated improved mental health and well-being.
- 2 seniors maintained independent living situations.
- 1,744 food assistance vouchers provided

These outcomes were achieved through a variety of programs that our agency was able to offer through CSBG and CSBG CARES funding. Our agency provided a prescription assistance program, in which 138 families were able to receive \$75 prescription vouchers toward their medical bills. Additionally, 65 families in Pell City received copay vouchers to cover the cost of their visit to the local health clinic. 25 individuals received mental health counseling as a result of these visits.



## Housing Programs:

- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program CARES (LIHEAP CARES)
- ABC Trust Emergency Cooling/ABC Trust Utility Assistance
- Caring for Others Utility Assistance - Jackson County
- Catholic Charities Utility Assistance
- COVID-19 Community Care Funds (Sponsored by Fort Payne Improvement, Guntersville Electric, North Alabama Electric, Scottsboro Electric Power Board, and Sand Mountain Electric Cooperative)
- Emergency Food and Shelter
- CSBG Direct Aid & CSBG CARES Direct Aid
- Weatherization Assistance Programs
- Guntersville Project Help
- LIHEAP Energy Counseling Program
- Neighbor Helping Neighbor Utility Assistance (Sponsored by North Alabama Electric and Sand Mountain Electric)
- Project Help (Jackson, MUB, Bridgeport, and Scottsboro)
- United Givers Fund
- ABC Home Forward Weatherization
- TVA Home Uplift Program

## Housing Outcomes & Services:



- 623 Rental Assistance Payments
- 6,952 Utility Assistance Payments
- 105 Utility Deposits
- 3,147 Utility Arrears Payments
- 2 Permanent Housing Placements
- 18 Home Repairs
- 4 Healthy Home Services
- 49 Energy Efficiency Improvements
- 196 obtained safe and affordable housing
- 42 individuals avoided eviction
- 107 improved health and safety conditions in their homes
- 12k improved energy efficiency and reduced energy burdens
- 6k avoided a utility shut-off



## Customer Demographics Highlight:



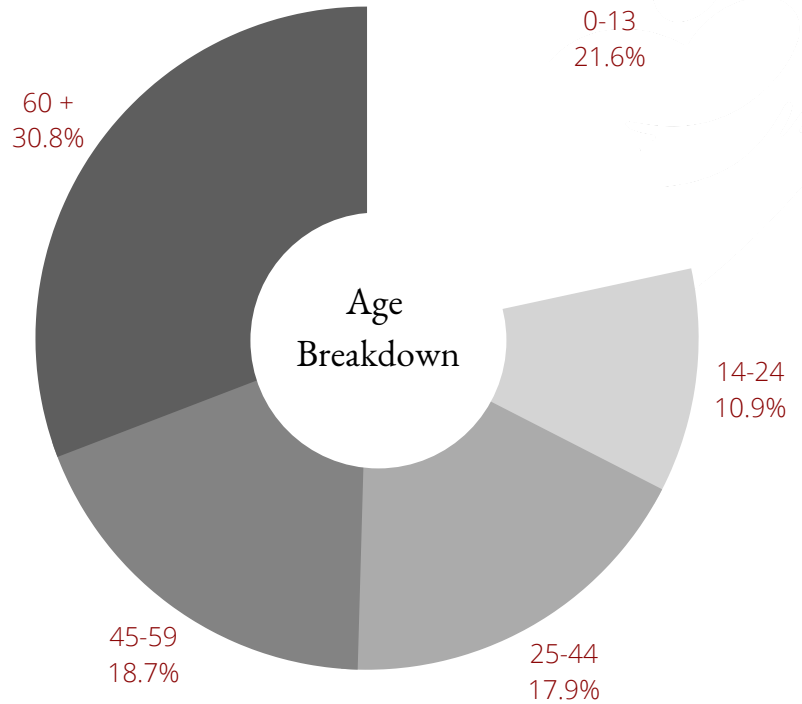
62.3% female

38.8% male

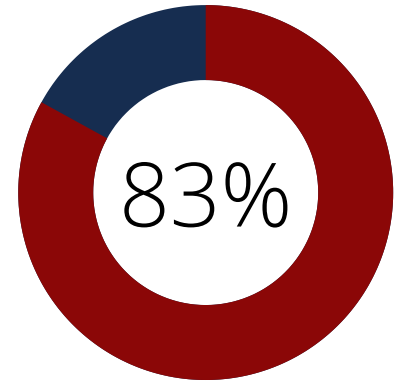
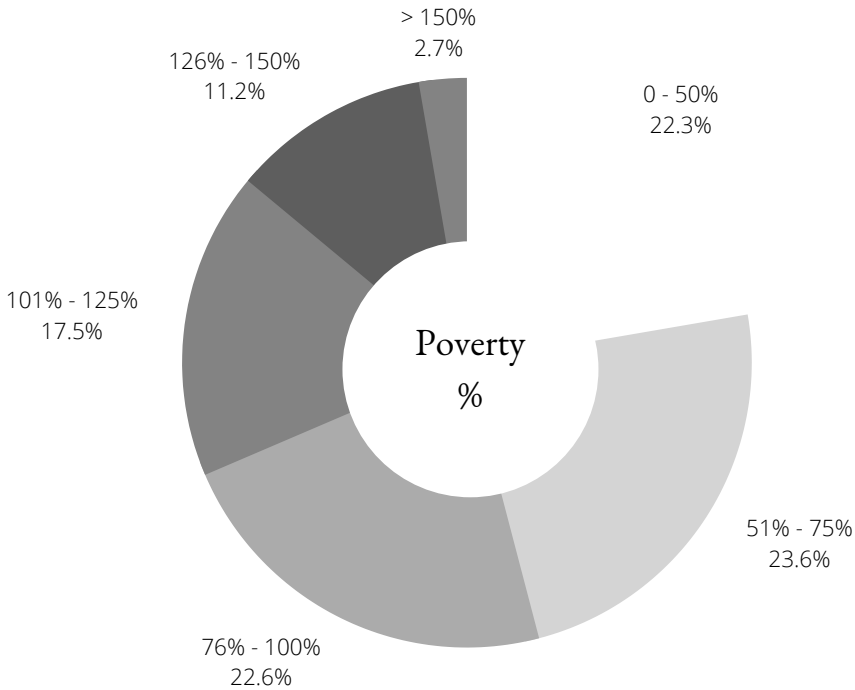
39.7% are disabled

52% have high school diplomas

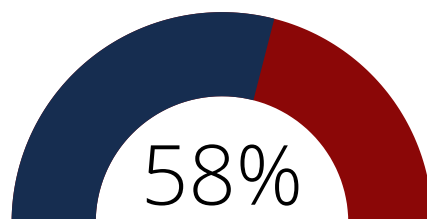
**13,000 total**



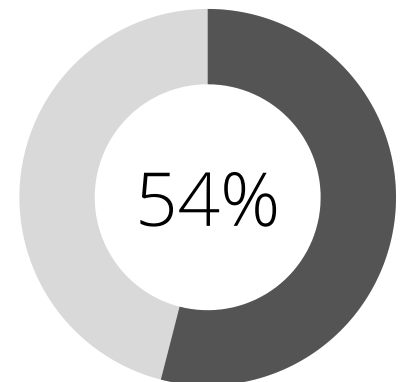
## Household Demographics Highlight:



are on fixed incomes



are single-person households



rent their homes

**7,147 total**





# Agency Highlights



## Agency Capacity Building:

This year our agency was able to participate in a variety of capacity building activities including conferences, trainings, and networking meetings. Each member of our organization's team was able to participate in these activities in some capacity and expand their knowledge and skills!

Our leadership team attended several LIHEAP, CSBG, and WX workshops throughout the year to learn about the upcoming changes and updates to the programs. The information from these workshops was then shared to our Case Managers and Board through staff and board meetings.

Several case managers attended community networking meetings with other resource agencies their area. These networking meetings allow our Case Managers to learn about new resources that are available in their service area and how they can provide these resource opportunities to the clients they see on a daily basis. Our agency also underwent ROMA training throughout the year.

In June, several staff and board members attended the Navigate Leadership Conference in Huntsville, Alabama. This conference provided valuable insight into new ways of being a community leader within the nonprofit world. It also introduced our team to the True Charity Network, an organization which provides excellent resources for Case Managers. Our Case Managers have all become certified through True Charity's Case Management program and have increased their skills in case management.

In October, Carrie, Luke, and Maggie attended the Alabama-Florida Joint Leadership Institute in Fort Lauderdale, where they were able to connect with nonprofit leaders from across the two states. In addition, several staff and board members attended the Community Action Association of Alabama annual conference in May. In total, our Board attended 36 hours of training and our staff received 815 hours of agency capacity building training in 2021!





# Agency Highlights



## Community Partnerships:

One of the greatest assets of our agency is our commitment to coordinating with community partners. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these community partners have proved invaluable to our agency's ability to succeed and meet the greatest needs in our community. This year, our agency was able to utilize several community partners to secure additional funding for our agency and provide new opportunities to our clients. We are so thankful to all of our vendors and partner organizations for their continued support of the Community Action Agency and our mission. We were able to partner with the Fort Payne Chamber of Commerce to install a computer lab in our DeKalb office!

This year, our organization partnered with Sand Mountain Electric, Fort Payne Improvement Authority, and TVA to begin the TVA Home Uplift Program in our area. This program provided additional weatherization funds to our organization. Our agency also received COVID relief funds from several local utility companies including Sand Mountain Electric, Guntersville Electric, North Alabama Electric, Fort Payne Improvement, Marshall DeKalb Electric, and the Scottsboro Electric Power Board. These funds allowed our organization to provide additional assistance to our LIHEAP clients and to provide water assistance.





# Agency Highlights



Thank you for joining us in an overview of 2021! Our board, staff, and clients sincerely appreciate you taking the time to learn more about our organization and the services we provide. As you can see from these pictures, our agency is dedicated to networking within the local community and growing together as an organization through trainings and fellowship days. We are looking forward to continue building new relationships and memories in 2022!

