

2022 ANNUAL REPORT

COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY
OF NORTHEAST ALABAMA



Our Mission

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 our service area.

2022 ANNUAL REPORT

2022 brought in unprecedented growth and opportunity for our agency as a whole. In February of this year, our agency officially began serving Jefferson County, Alabama. This report outlines some of the key outcomes achieved in 2022 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

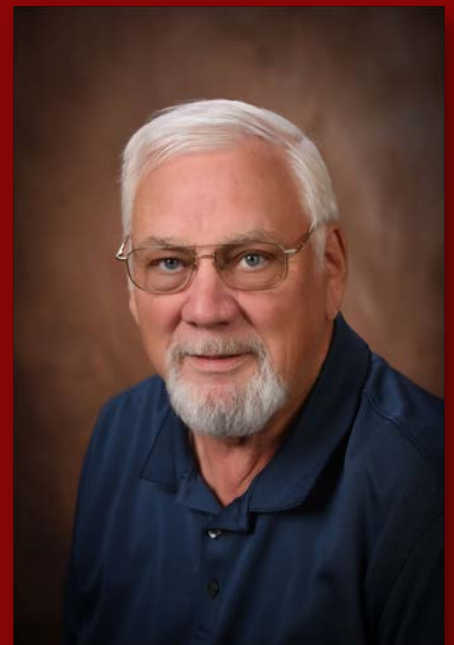
Dear Partners and Friends,

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



A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Our 2022 Annual Report tells many important stories about our agency. These stories not only depict our successes and achievements from this past year, but they also showcase the extensive history of our organization's mission and our plans to continue this mission into the future. We hope that this report will serve as a snapshot in time of the many changes and expansions we underwent in 2022. You will hear from many different voices across our organization. I am honored to serve as the organization's Executive Director. In my twenty years working in this organization, I have witnessed the programs and services we provide have a tremendous impact on reducing poverty in local communities and inspiring families toward self-sufficiency.



This year, many new faces have joined our family. In February, our agency officially expanded to include Jefferson County, Alabama. We have since added new board members, Case Managers, leadership staff, partners, and clients to our family. We are so thankful for the opportunity to grow in this capacity. Even though we have experienced growing pains, I have been able to see our agency, board, and staff overcome barriers in order to meet the needs of families in this new service area. We look forward to seeing our partnerships and presence in this community continue to evolve.

Looking forward, I am excited to announce the addition of two new departments to our organization—our Family Services Department and our Housing Counseling Department. Both of these sectors will be included in our GROW Program as we continue to expand the services provided within the program. The GROW Program will make a significant impact on our ability to achieve our organizational mission in the future. We have created new community partners and received additional grant funding in support of the program and its services.

2022 was a record year for our agency. Our budget doubled in size with the addition of Jefferson County and through additional support from our state and community partners. This additional funding significantly increased the number of households and individuals we were able to serve this year. You will see a lot of numbers within this report. These numbers are important to us because they help us tell our story. The most important message I hope you gather 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.

I want to take a moment to honor and thank one of our Case Managers who has set an example of what it means to encourage and guide others. Mrs. Norma Harvey has served as a Case Manager for our organization for fifty years. During her tenure at the organization, Norma has impacted the lives of hundreds of people in Jackson County. Some of her clients sent their own comments about Norma's influence on their lives saying: "She has done so much for me, and she has always been there when I have needed help;" "She is an exceptional lady who goes out of her way to help others;" and "Norma is a blessing and goes above and beyond." Norma, we echo the praises of the many lives you have touched, and we thank you for your dedication to "helping people, changing lives."

-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 our service area."

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.
- **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.
- **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 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 14% 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: utility bills, living wage jobs, financial skills training, homelessness, and affordable healthcare.

Cherokee County

Cherokee County has a population of just over 29,000 individuals. 14% of these individuals are reportedly living at or below the federal poverty guideline. The top five needs assessed in Cherokee County are as follows: utility bills, financial skills training, home repairs, homelessness, and transportation.

DeKalb County

DeKalb County, home to over 71,000 residents, reports approximately 15% of those residents as living at or below the federal poverty guideline. These residents have stated the following as their greatest needs: utility bills, financial skills training, homelessness, childcare, and home repairs.

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: utility bills, financial skills training, affordable healthcare, home repairs, and affordable housing units.

Jefferson County

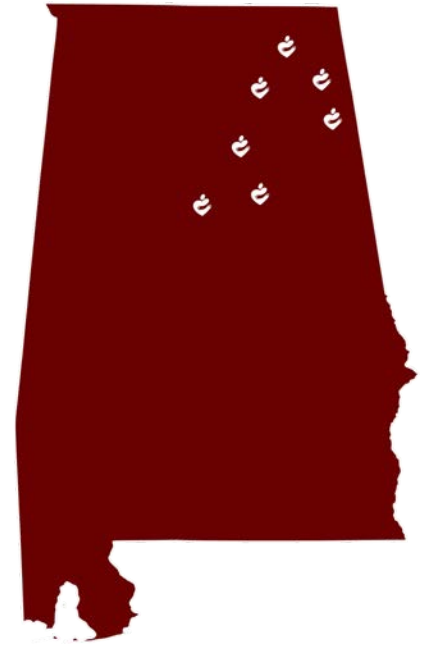
Our organization's largest county, Jefferson County has a population of over 670,000 people. The poverty rate for Jefferson County is just over 14% at or below the federal poverty guidelines. The top five needs cited in Jefferson County were utility bills, financial skills training, job skills, homelessness, and home repairs.

Marshall County

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: utility bills, affordable healthcare, homelessness, affordable housing units, and home repairs.

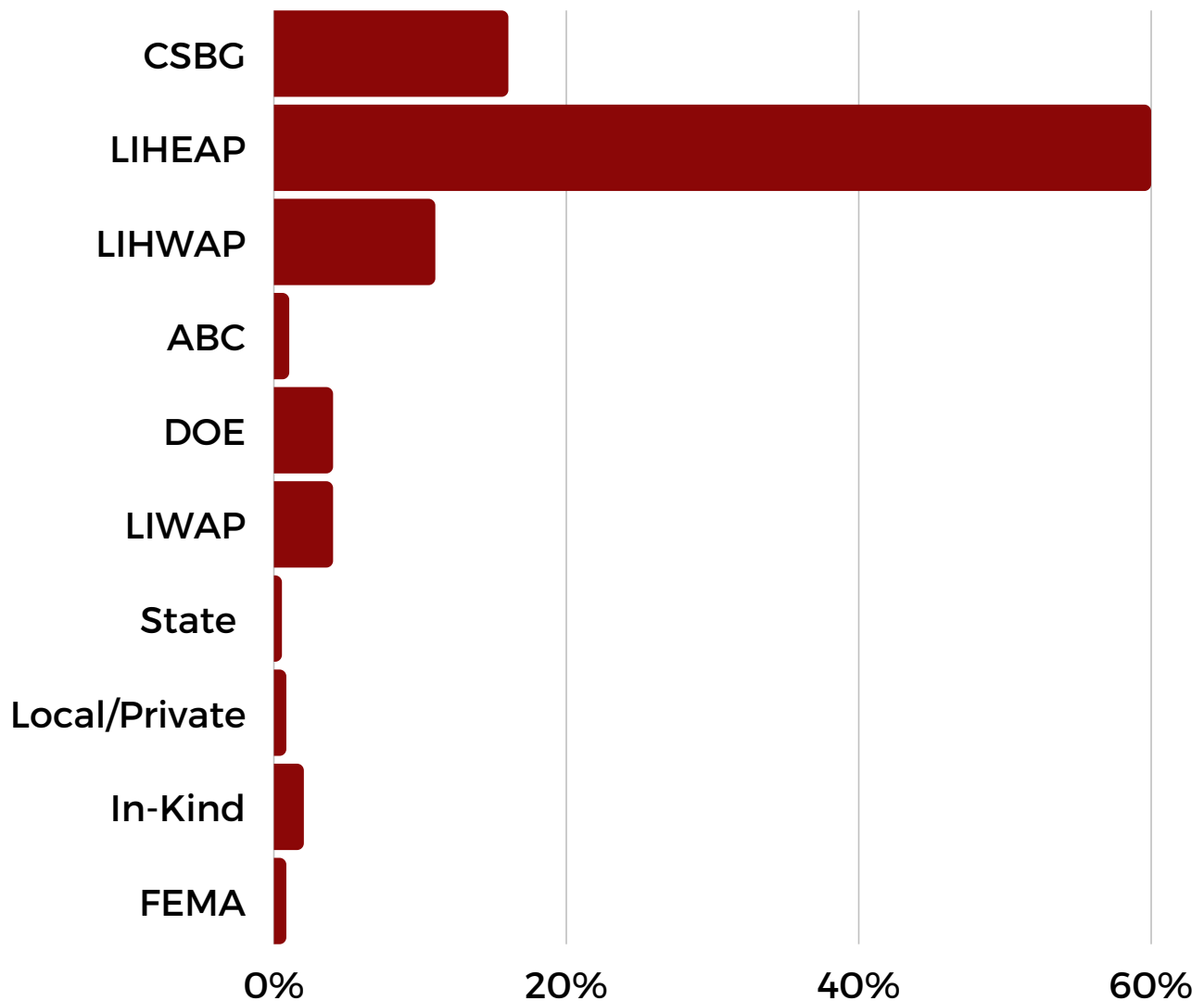
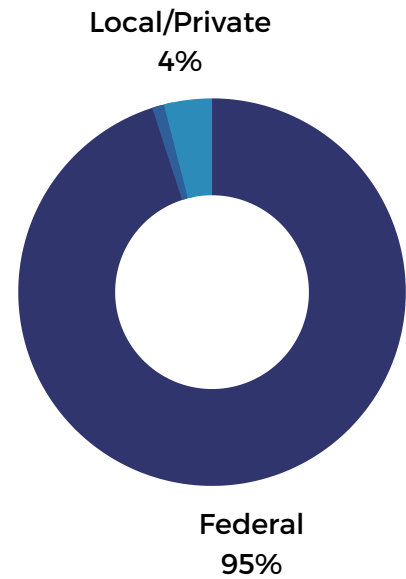
St. Clair County

One of our southern-most counties, St. Clair, has a population of just over 91,000 residents. Of these residents, 10% are identified as being at or below the federal poverty guideline. The community's greatest needs are: inability to pay utility bills, financial skills training, food insecurity, living wage jobs, and home repairs.



ORGANIZATIONAL RESOURCES

95% of our funding comes directly from federal grants provided through the Alabama Dept of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA). The largest of these grants is our LIHEAP (Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program) Grant and our CSBG (Community Services Block Grant. Other state grants we receive include the Low-Income Home Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) and the Weatherization Assistance Program Grants (DOE & LIWAP). We also receive funds from the Alabama Business Charitable Trust (ABC) through Alabama Power and Emergency Food and Shelter Funds (EFSP) through FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency).



Leadership Team:

Our agency has an experienced leadership team committed to ensuring agency compliance in all programs, efficiently managing program resources, and to promoting the vision of Community Action. In addition to our leadership staff, our agency also has three administrative staff members and twenty-eight case managers who administer our agency's programs and services in all seven counties. Below are short descriptions of our leadership team's experience and qualifications.



Carrie Lea has been our agency's Executive Director for 2 years and she has been with the agency for 20. Carrie has served as Program Director and CFO. She is a certified CCAP Professional and a National Certified ROMA Trainer.



Payton Lewis has served as our Chief Fiscal Officer for nearly six years. She is currently pursuing her CCAP Certification and is a National Certified ROMA Implementer. Payton has a Bachelor's degree in Accounting from Auburn.



This year Luke Laney was promoted to Chief Operations Officer. Luke previously served as our Housing Services Director for two years and led our Weatherization Program. Luke has a Master of Education degree from Bryan College.



Haven Blalock served as a Case Manager for our agency for over thirty years! Haven was promoted to our Community Services Director position earlier this year. Haven leads the Case Managers in the northern six counties.



Willie Pace has 13 years of experience with the Community Action Network and has been serving as our Community Services Director since February of this year. Willie leads our team of Case Managers in Jefferson County.



Maggie Bell has been with the agency for nearly 4 years, and she is currently serving as our Development Director. Maggie is a National Certified ROMA Implementer, and she has a Bachelor of Arts in English from Lee University.



Paul Gilbert was recently hired as our Family Services Director. Paul was formerly a Case Worker for DHR, and we are excited for him to lead our family service programs. Paul earned his Bachelor's Degree in Social Work from JSU.



Tyesha Ray has 6 years of experience with the CAP Network, and she was promoted to our Housing Services Director position earlier this year. Tyesha completed her Master's Degree in Psychology from the University of Pheonix.



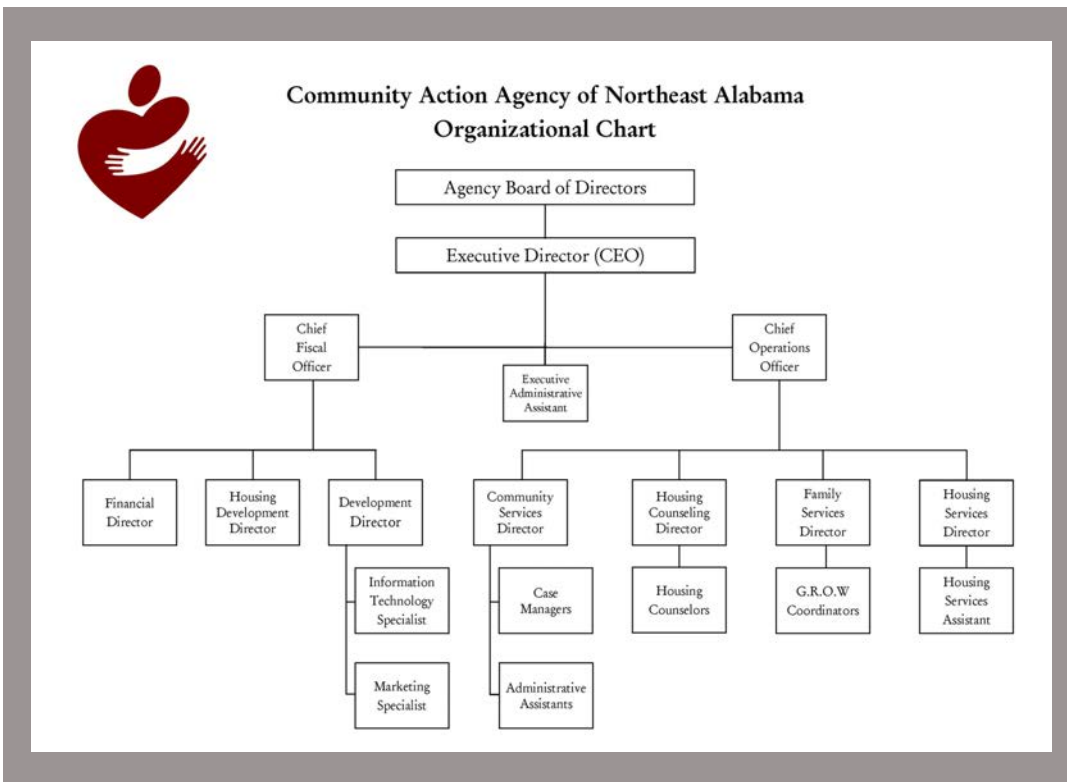
Joseph Cunningham has been working in the CAP Network for 2 years and is a HUD Housing Counselor. Joseph is now starting our new program as Housing Counseling Director. Joseph has a Bachelor's in Finance from UA.



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 seven CSBG-funded counties for a total of 21 board members equally representing the public, private, and low-income sectors.

Board of Directors:

- Blount Co. - Chris Green - *Public Sector* - (10 years)
- Blount Co. - Jody Sharp - *Private Sector* - (5 years)
- Blount Co. - T. Ray Mauldin - *Low-Income Sector* - (4 years)
- Cherokee Co. - Tim Burgess - *Public Sector* - (4 years)
- Cherokee Co. - Kay Davis - *Private Sector* - (11 years)
- Cherokee Co. - Dewandee Neyman - *Low-Income Sector* - (9 years)
- DeKalb Co. - Ricky Harcrow - *Public Sector* - (10 years)
- DeKalb Co. - D. L. Stiefel - *Private Sector* - (16 years) - President
- DeKalb Co. - Hugh Phillips - *Low-Income Sector* - (9 years)
- Jackson Co. - Danny Rich - *Public Sector* - (3 years)
- Jackson Co. - John Bobenage - *Private Sector* - (8 years) - Vice President
- Jackson Co. - Lloyd Case - *Low-Income Sector* - (2 year)
- Jefferson Co. - Toraine Norris - *Public Sector* - (6 months)
- Jefferson Co. - Gail Cruz - *Private Sector* - (6 months)
- Jefferson Co. - Latrice Jackson - *Low-Income Sector* - (6 months)
- Marshall Co. - Tony Gunter - *Public Sector* - (9 years)
- Marshall Co. - Cherri Barnard - *Private Sector* - (8 years) - Secretary
- Marshall Co. - Jason Harper - *Low-Income Sector* - (3 years) - 2nd Vice
- St. Clair Co. - Ivi McDaniel - *Public Sector* - (1 year)
- St. Clair Co. - Sue Turton - *Private Sector* - (6 years)
- St. Clair Co. - LaCindra McGowan - *Low-Income Sector* - (1 year)



Compliance History:

Our agency currently administers LIHEAP, LIHWAP, CSBG, and Weatherization grants for Blount, Cherokee, DeKalb, Jackson, Jefferson, 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 2022, our agency received 98% 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 Wear Howell LLC completed an independent audit of our organization, in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States. Their 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 98% 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:



Transportation Program:

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. This year, our organization recognized a growing need within our communities for transportation assistance. We witnessed members of our urban communities unable to consistently afford bus passes, and many families in our rural areas struggled to afford gas as prices continued to rise. A lack of transportation was identified as a top ten need in all seven of our counties in our most recent Community Needs Assessment. The rising cost of transportation contributes to unemployment rates, childcare difficulties, and missing medical appointments for low-income community members. To combat this need, our organization used CSBG and local funds to purchase gas cards from local gas stations and through the Blackhawk corporation. Blackhawk allows our organization to purchase gift cards in bulk that support a variety of local gas stations. Our organization also purchased bus vouchers from local public transportation companies in Blount, Jackson, Jefferson, Marshall, and St. Clair counties. In 2022, nearly 700 families received transportation assistance from our organization!



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 \$10,000,723.

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.

Case Management Success Story:

Our LIHEAP Program allows low-income families to connect with Case Managers with more than just utility assistance payments. Our Cherokee County Case Manager, Jennifer, was helping a LIHEAP client and noticed he was not receiving the full amount he was eligible for in disability. After working with the client to help with his energy bill, Jennifer was then able to help him reapply to receive the full benefit amount!



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 2022, we received over \$600,000 in federal funding for our Weatherization Program. With these funds, we were able to weatherize 90 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.



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 2022, our organization 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 families in the community.

56

Units In Progress



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 12 key outcomes in the employment domain in 2022! As a result of our Case Management program, 5 individuals were able to obtain employment, and 7 individuals 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. One adult improved their basic education, and one adult obtained their GED. 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:

- 164 prescription payments given.
- 8 individuals demonstrated improved physical health and well-being.
- 21 doctors visit payments.
- 2 individuals were counseled on health insurance options.
- 14 dental assistance payments.
- 2,664 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 164 families were able to receive \$75 prescription vouchers toward their medical bills. Additionally, 14 families in Jackson County received dental care through our partnership with SMILES Inc.

Housing Programs:

- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program ARP (LIHEAP ARP)
- 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

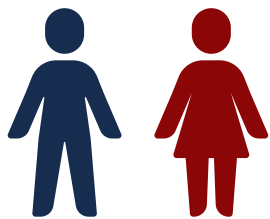
Housing Outcomes & Services:



- 712 Rental Assistance Payments
- 11,900 Utility Assistance Payments
- 248 Utility Deposits
- 6,188 Utility Arrears Payments
- 4 Permanent Housing Placements
- 42 Home Repairs
- 41 Healthy Home Services
- 51 Energy Efficiency Improvements
- 30 obtained safe and affordable housing
- 419 individuals avoided eviction
- 305 improved health and safety conditions in their homes
- 21,690 improved energy efficiency and reduced energy burdens
- 13,032 avoided a utility shut-off



Customer Demographics Highlight:

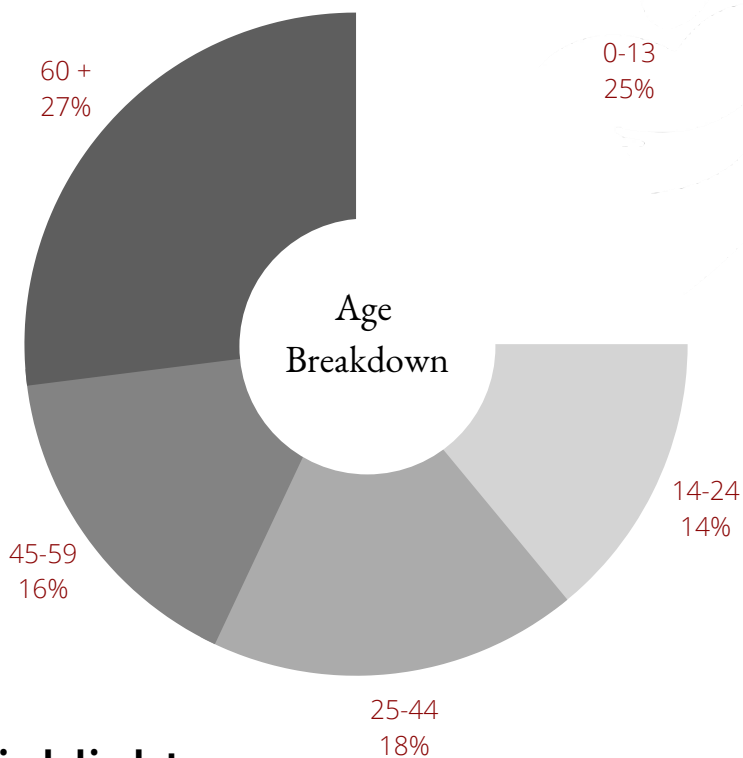


65.3% female
34.7% male

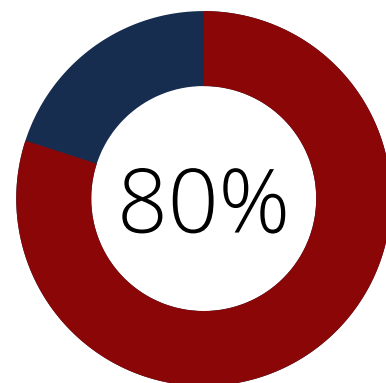
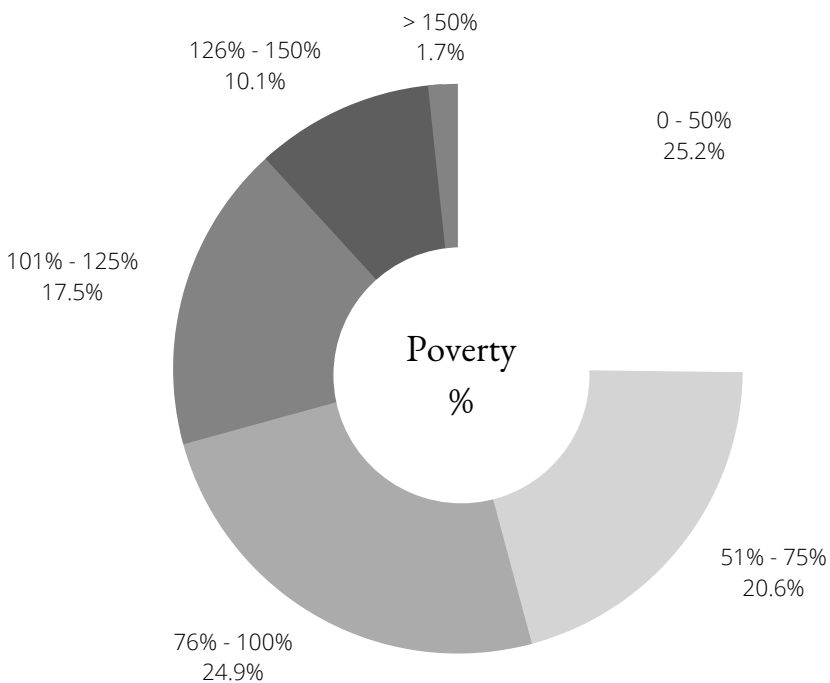
35.4% are disabled

62% have high school diplomas

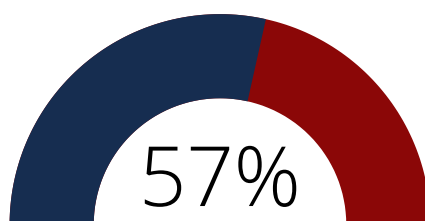
22,682 total



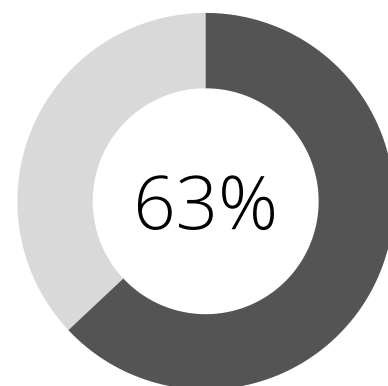
Household Demographics Highlight:



are on fixed incomes



are single-person households



rent their homes

12,221 total



Agency Highlights



Agency Capacity Building:



Community Services Director, Haven Blalock, receiving grant funding from Tyler Cooper, SMEC.

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 in the 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.

In November, our leadership team attended the Alabama-Georgia Joint Leadership Institute in Auburn, 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 500 hours of agency capacity building training in 2022!



Executive Director, Carrie Lea, and Community Services Director, Willie Pace, attending a networking meeting.



Agency Highlights

Community Partnerships:



Executive Director, Carrie Lea, receiving grant funding from representatives from Cadence Bank.

One of the greatest assets of our agency is our commitment to coordinating with community partners. During the past couple of years, 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 are especially thankful to the new partners we have made in Jefferson County as we have expanded our area.

This year, we partnered with Sand Mountain Electric, Fort Payne Improvement Authority, and TVA again to continue the TVA Home Uplift Program in our area. This program provided additional weatherization funds to our organization. Our agency also received additional community care 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 and food assistance.



Executive Director, Carrie Lea, receiving \$50,000 in Home Uplift funds from TVA, FPIA, and SMEC.



Pictured above: Pam Evett and Jordan Gaddis at a resource fair



Pictured left: agency staff meeting at Northeast Alabama Community College



Agency Highlights



Thank you for joining us in an overview of 2022! 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 2023!

