

2021 Annual Report



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IN MEMORY OF
SANDRA ROBERTSON
1960-2022

Sandra Robertson served at Community Action Council for more than 32 years. She began in the classroom as a Assistant Teacher and ended her career as a Family Service Worker.

Sandra was loved by her participants and was known for her caring nature and giving heart.

Patricia Shobe was Sandra's supervisor and co-worker for 22 years. "I will miss her laughter and her 'clutching her pearls' most of all," said Patricia. "She was sincere and pure and she absolutely loved her job."

Hello Everyone,

I'm so excited for you to read this edition of the Annual Report! Its pages tell the true story of what it means to be a Community Action Agency, showing up again and again for our community in times of hardship and celebration, joy and mourning. To say the last two years of this global health pandemic have been "difficult" would be an understatement, and I'm exceedingly proud of the grit, empathy, and determination of Council staff throughout it all.

In 2021 we moved fully back into the office, Head Start classes came back to the centers, and the majority of our supportive services resumed in-person operations. This wouldn't have been possible without the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines in early 2021. The Council was front and center during this time, hosting vaccination clinics and education campaigns, including incentivizing staff vaccination and hosting a panel of doctors to answer vaccine-related questions at our new Media Studio.

Speaking of our Media Studio, it's hard to remember how we ever functioned without it! The media team is responsible for streaming virtual services, program advertisements, social media updates, and educational media such as the "Lex Talk. More Action." podcast and the "Unapologetically Woman" YouTube series. Fifty remarkable local women shared their stories with me for this series, which culminated in the inaugural "Unapologetically Woman Fall Sneaker Ball" in November. This event marked the first time in almost two years that we were able to gather, wearing fancy attire and sneakers to dance the night away and raise money for youth violence interventions. The choice of sneakers was intentional: it symbolizes that we're still here, feet on the ground, running the race to end poverty in our communities.

And running we have been! As you will read in this report, we were there, boots on the ground, when multiple flooding events hit Nicholas, Powell, and Estill counties. When the eviction moratorium was lifted in Kentucky, our Housing Stabilization program was there to help those facing the immediate threat of eviction. Overall, we assisted over 17,000 individuals through services ranging from utility bill assistance to tax filing, to providing temporary emergency shelter during the winter. And, as always, we have continued to provide high-quality early childhood education through operating Head Start in 15 counties, serving over 2,000 children and their families.

The demand to fill vacant positions across the Council led to a range of creative initiatives over 2021, including a virtual job fair and competitive hiring bonuses. Our website received an exciting makeover and now has the potential to engage more people in the necessary and powerful work we do. Our HR department is currently in the process of further streamlining our hiring process and embarking on an aggressive "hiring blitz." We are rising to meet the challenge of this "Great Resignation," just like any other crisis. Good thing we have lots of practice.

On a more somber note, we've witnessed a tragic uptick in the number of domestic violence cases in our community throughout 2021. This uptick coincides with national data showing an increase in homicides and gun violence. I will not pretend to know all of the complex factors that led up to these heartbreaking events, but I do know that we have the ability to make a difference during this systemic crisis. Our supportive services intervene during some of the most stressful times in people's lives, and our Head Start programs are designed to assist whole families who face the mental and physical burden of living in poverty. Our presence is needed now more than ever, and we will continue to seek out trauma-informed training and mental health resources for our staff and the communities they serve.

The pandemic is by no means the sole source of the inequities that plague our society, but it continues to exacerbate them and bring them to light. The immense pressures involved with living in poverty and through a pandemic are disproportionately faced by Black, Hispanic/Latino, LGBTQ+, and other historically underrepresented groups who make up a large portion of our service population. 2021 saw us add our first Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion position to our structure, host a community-wide implicit bias webinar, and celebrate Juneteenth as an educational staff holiday for the first time. We commit to continuing to lift up the marginalized, amplifying their voices, and learning from them in the process.

Our vision is, as always, a society where it's normal for everyone to have the opportunity to not only be self-sufficient, but to thrive. Thank you for coming alongside us as we strive to make a real difference to those living in or near poverty.

All the best,





A LETTER
FROM OUR

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Greetings,

Following my second year as Chairperson of the Board of Directors, I want to use this space to say a huge “thank you” to Community Action Staff, leadership, and my fellow Board members. It has been an honor to work alongside those who are so committed to the safety and wellbeing of our most vulnerable neighbors, and who forged ahead despite the numerous unforeseen challenges of the past year. Your resilience and dedication is truly admirable.

One of these challenges, the current workforce shortage crisis, has been on the Board’s agenda for much of 2021. Adequate staffing is necessary for the high-quality, uninterrupted provision of services, and we fully support Sharon and her leadership team in their campaign to invest in the Council’s current staff while also rapidly filling vacant positions. Such initiatives include a “hiring blitz”, a pay raise for Head Start teachers, and incentives for all new hires and referrals.

The retention and hiring of qualified teachers for the Council’s Head Start programs is important now more than ever. For years now, the demand to increase access to high-quality early childhood education for children under three has been one of the top needs determined by the Council’s Head Start and Early Head Start Community Assessment. The Board fully supports the Council’s proposed request to the Office of Head Start to increase the number of Early Head Start slots in key counties throughout the service area, thereby increasing the number of children under 36-months who have access to high-quality child development services.

It was also a priority of the Board in 2021 to ensure that the Council became established as part of our community’s long-term solution to the issue of affordable housing. The lack of affordable housing in our communities is an ongoing problem in Kentucky, as are the rising costs of rent and skyrocketing housing prices. The Board fully supports the Council

as it moves into this arena, actively pursuing the acquisition of property to increase Lexington’s affordable housing inventory. When the right opportunity comes along, it is our hope that the Council will be able to provide livable, affordable housing for those with the greatest need.

Thanks to my position at the Kentucky Health Information Exchange, I am all too aware of the challenges that people with low-income experience daily in the realm of healthcare, and the value of the support that the Council provides during some of the most stressful times of people’s lives.

I know I speak for the rest of the Board of Directors when I say that we are united in support of Community Action Council, and strongly believe in this agency’s ability to weather any storm, from pandemics to workforce shortages. Your Board is behind you!

Sincerely,

Denise Beatty



A LETTER
FROM OUR

BOARD

CHAIRPERSON



IMPLICIT BIAS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

For more than a half-century, the Council has embodied and championed the aspirations of equality, inclusiveness, and opportunity for all. The continued challenges we face because of COVID-19 have laid bare challenges that persist for people of color and minorities. And while racial, financial, and social inequities are visible, others are less obvious.

That is why in April 2021, the Council hosted a two-hour virtual symposium to discuss implicit bias. While some biases are apparent, implicit (or unconscious) bias refers to attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious way. We hosted this virtual event, attended by more than 700 people, in partnership with Fayette County Public Schools, the University of Kentucky School of Education and LG&E-KU, because we believe it is our duty to examine the biases we hold so that we can work toward a better future for every member of our community.

You see, the Council first opened its doors in 1965, amidst the turbulent era of the Civil Rights movement, just a couple of years after the first March on Washington and Dr. Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" filled the hearts, the hopes and dreams of so many Americans with a sense of promise and potential. From the beginning, we have believed that it is our job to address the causes of poverty in our communities and acknowledge and confront economic and social injustices that may prevent members of our community from accessing

the same opportunities. While the face of poverty and general attitudes towards race have changed significantly since 1964, systematic racism has remained and violent acts of oppression towards people of color and minorities continue to rob individuals and communities of the opportunity to succeed.

Fast forward to 2020. As the world was waking up to a virus that would soon dominate every waking moment of our lives, racial inequalities refused to take a backseat. It could not—because of the realities people like Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd—and sadly, so many others faced.

As the organization leading the fight against poverty, the Council felt the moment was essential to showcase our commitment to driving change and our desire for a more equitable community. The Council created a new position, the Officer of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion to that purpose. And even before the President recognized Juneteenth as a day of service and solidarity with all members of the community, the Council's Board of Directors named the day an agency holiday. The Council continues to work toward a more just and equitable society through partnerships with the city's One Lexington office and Partners for Youth.

Progress has been slow and there is still much to be done, but the Council will be on the frontlines of change, arm-in-arm with the communities we serve.



A FLOOD OF *SUPPORT*

The year 2021 will be remembered by Kentucky residents; for some, it will be for all the wrong reasons. Multiple catastrophic weather events caused local states of emergency across the region. Devastating flooding and tornadoes decimated whole towns, leaving many to question how, or if, they can ever recover. All 15 counties in the central and eastern parts of the state where Community Action Council operates experienced flooding last year, with many counties seeing historically high-water levels. Add to that the coronavirus pandemic and a persistently high poverty rate in these counties (Estill, Nicholas and Powell counties have an average poverty rate of almost 27 percent), and many are suffering in ways they never imagined.

Among the counties affected by flooding, Nicholas County was uniquely impacted. According to our Nicholas County Center Manager Angie Schalch, the flooding was almost entirely within the city limits of Carlisle. The town's grocery store was essentially washed away. Houses were knocked off foundations. In the spirit of Community Action, Schalch and her colleagues stepped forward to meet the moment.

"Our response to the flood was very quick," said Schalch. "We had boots on the ground the next day. We did a water drop [the next] day and throughout the weeks that followed. And our staff volunteered on the weekends to help people clean up."

Council employees pooled from their own personal resources and raised thousands in donations for flood victims. In partnership with the Christian Appalachian Project, the Council coordinated the delivery and distribution of several tractor-trailers full of home goods, including couches, chairs, appliances, kitchen tables, and tableware. A nearby Costco added its support and contributed food and clothing. Through a partnership with God's Pantry, the Council added a second food bank for the residents of Carlisle and passed out Goodwill vouchers worth \$2,000.

While it will take some time to recover from the flooding, Community Action Council will be there, supporting the communities we serve.



OUR CHILDREN DESERVE A HEAD START

Our country continues to wrestle with the worst of itself, caught between the clutches of racism, inequality, and poisoned politics. The effects of these toxins upon our children are especially tragic, given that so many of them already face so much adversity. Is it any wonder that these are fertile grounds for trauma to grow and thrive?

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are events in a child's life that have profoundly negative effects, and subsequently negative consequences, on a child's life. Major clinical studies, such as the Kaiser Permanente study of 1995, which took two years and involved more than 17,000 people, revealed how childhood trauma causes adverse outcomes throughout a lifetime.

But there is light amidst the darkness, and that light is Head Start.

A study from 2015 on the impact of Head Start on children who had experienced violence—particularly relevant in light of recent events—found that

enrollment in Head Start “was positively associated with children’s socio-emotional outcomes, with greater impact on those who had... experienced violence or crime.”

The hardships of poverty can lead to desperation and create environments ripe for violence. Head Start faculty are uniquely positioned to address the trauma of violence students may experience. Through its use of the Creative Curriculum, a research-based, whole-child approach to Preschool education, Head Start faculty learn trauma-informed best practices that help mitigate issues caused by experiencing violence. Research into the positive effects of teacher-student relationships in Head Start programs has shown the critical role that educators play in the health and welfare of their students, especially in matters of violence.

The Council recognizes the contributions teachers make to the healthy development of children. A fully-staffed, fully-operational Head Start program

is an asset to the community and one that the Council and our school district partners acknowledge is fundamentally essential to the health and wellbeing of our children.

Now more than ever, we need actions that elevate our communities. For more than 57 years, the Council has fought for the most marginalized and vulnerable among us. Our early childhood initiatives like Head Start, Early Head Start, and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start give children from under-resourced communities access to high-quality pre-K education and a chance to prosper while also providing childcare for working parents. Our programs and services address inequities born from systemic racism and cultural biases. And our advocacy at all levels of government offers hope so that they may know a brighter future.

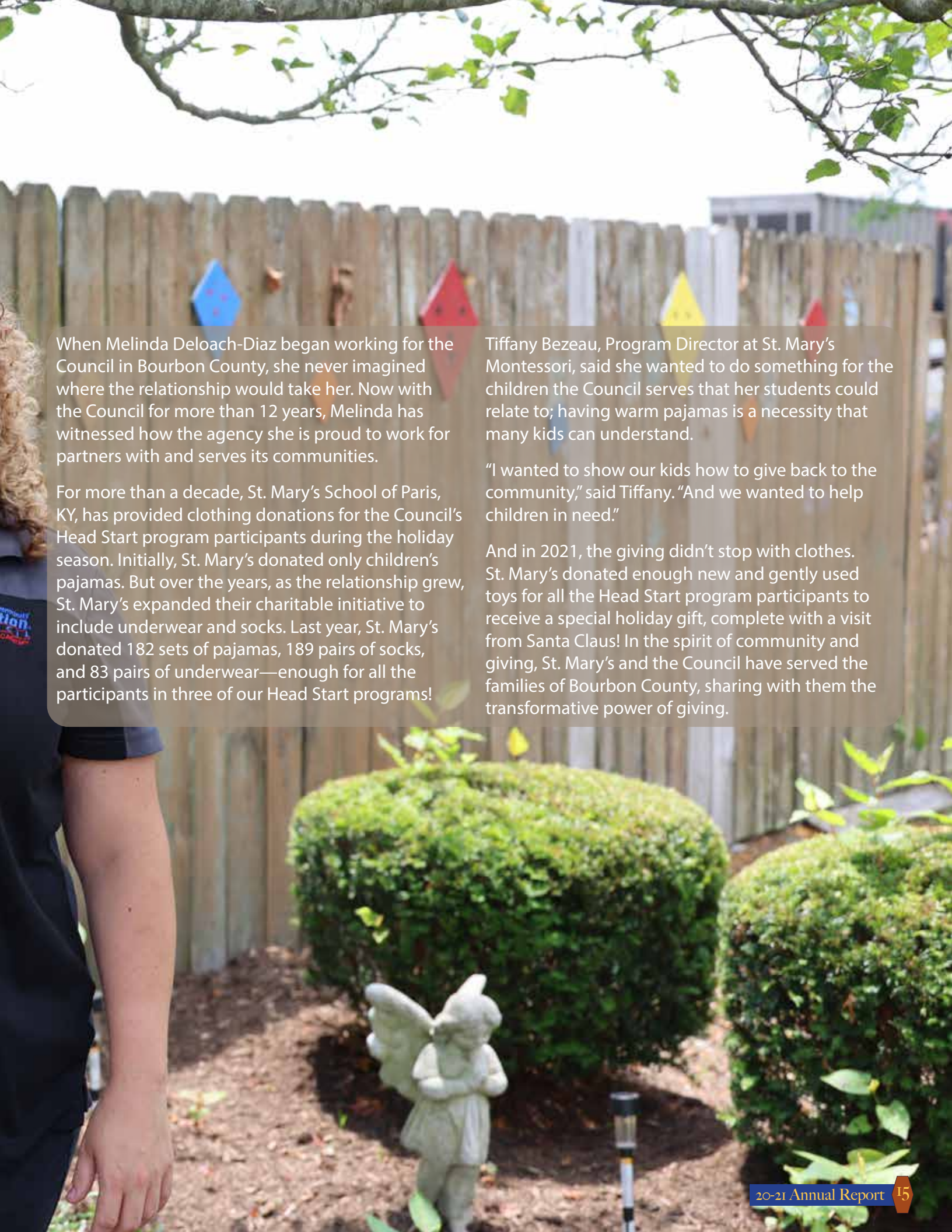
If you believe in the power of community, then you are with us. Because at Community Action Council, we are with you.



NOW ENROLLING

A woman with curly brown hair, wearing a black polo shirt with a logo, stands next to a tree in a backyard. The background features a wooden fence and a black metal fence. The text "THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF GIVING" is overlaid on the image.

THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF **GIVING**



When Melinda Deloach-Diaz began working for the Council in Bourbon County, she never imagined where the relationship would take her. Now with the Council for more than 12 years, Melinda has witnessed how the agency she is proud to work for partners with and serves its communities.

For more than a decade, St. Mary's School of Paris, KY, has provided clothing donations for the Council's Head Start program participants during the holiday season. Initially, St. Mary's donated only children's pajamas. But over the years, as the relationship grew, St. Mary's expanded their charitable initiative to include underwear and socks. Last year, St. Mary's donated 182 sets of pajamas, 189 pairs of socks, and 83 pairs of underwear—enough for all the participants in three of our Head Start programs!

Tiffany Bezeau, Program Director at St. Mary's Montessori, said she wanted to do something for the children the Council serves that her students could relate to; having warm pajamas is a necessity that many kids can understand.

"I wanted to show our kids how to give back to the community," said Tiffany. "And we wanted to help children in need."

And in 2021, the giving didn't stop with clothes. St. Mary's donated enough new and gently used toys for all the Head Start program participants to receive a special holiday gift, complete with a visit from Santa Claus! In the spirit of community and giving, St. Mary's and the Council have served the families of Bourbon County, sharing with them the transformative power of giving.

UNAPOLOGETICALLY

WOMAN FALL SNEAKER BALL





After the lockdown of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and months of social distancing to stop the virus spread, we believed that people were ready to get out of their homes and would come to a formal event for an opportunity to dance and fellowship.

We were right! Safely and with precaution, in 2021, we came together in person for our first-ever “Unapologetically Woman Sneaker Ball” to celebrate the Council’s accomplishments and, more importantly, to highlight and honor our donors along with dozens of outstanding Kentucky women. The theme—formal attire paired with sneakers—symbolized the idea that our feet are still firmly planted on the ground here in our community.

At the direction of Executive Director Sharon Price, Community Action Council launched “Unapologetically Woman,” a YouTube video series showcasing these phenomenal women who inspire, lead, and forge the way for others. As the name implies, an Unapologetic Woman makes no apologies for her perspective but dedicates herself—her skills,

talents, and experiences—to impact her neighbors and community.

Our 2021 Unapologetic Woman of the Year was journalist and producer Renee Shaw. Shaw said she was unsuspecting that she would be chosen.

“I was completely shocked!” she said when interviewed months later by Sharon Price for the recap episode of Unapologetically Woman Season 1.

All the women had an opportunity to vote for themselves or another woman as the Unapologetic Woman of the Year, and her peers chose Renee. But Sharon said, “It wasn’t a competition. My favorite part of the night was when we introduced you. It was so authentic; it wasn’t planned. All the women embraced you and celebrated for you and with you!”

Renee said the memory still gave her chills. “I was just in shock as I looked around and saw all these women that I admired; either I interviewed them, or have been in organizations with them, or just knew them through social or church circles. To look around

to see this beautiful collection of women who are doing the dag-gone thing. For them to look at me with such high regard, it was fortifying.”

Renee began her career at KET in 1997 as a public policy reporter and associate producer. In 2005, she launched the first statewide minority affairs program, Connections with Renee Shaw, on KET. As one of KET’s public affairs program producers, Shaw is producer/managing editor and host of KET’s legislative coverage, co-hosts election night coverage, hosts KET’s health series, and produces numerous other issue-centered programs at KET. For over a decade, she produced Comment on Kentucky, KET’s longest-running public affairs program. She travels across the state, moderating public issues forums and speaking about diversity, media, political, and state legislative matters.

The success of the 2021 Sneaker Ball was inspirational and is now an annual event. The Unapologetically Woman series continues on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/Lexcommaction>

AGAINST ALL ODDS

Chastity Griffin first walked through Community Action's doors as a teenager, after aging out of the foster care system and experiencing homelessness. Now, she's the Council's Street Outreach Coordinator, is completing her Doctorate in Education and Leadership, and is starting a non-profit recovery cafe, "Kate's Place." Ms. Griffin would likely be the last person to sing her own praises, but you'd be hard pressed to find anyone else who so completely embodies the spirit of Community Action in both outlook and journey.

While being interviewed on the Council's Lex Talk, More Action podcast, Ms. Griffin described how she "showed up at Community Action with no ID, no GED, and met the director." The Council helped her obtain affordable housing and reach financial stability, after which she was able to pursue her education. She earned a Bachelor's in Sociology and a Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling from the University of Kentucky, and soon she'll be defending her doctoral thesis: Educating Housing Case Managers and Street Outreach Workers on the Racial Disparities in Housing. "I was an 8th grade dropout, foster child, and single mother," states Ms. Griffin. "All odds stood against me, but with a solid support system from the Community Action staff, and my children being able to attend Head Start, I was able to obtain an education that would lead me and my children on a solid path of stability."

The Assertive Street Outreach team, comprised of Brandy Clark, Chris Clark, and Ms. Griffin, draws daily upon seemingly superhuman reserves of empathy and perseverance to assist Lexington's

unsheltered population. This involves procuring IDs, connecting individuals to housing options, advocating in court, searching for hidden encampments, and taking calls outside of regular business hours. Ms. Griffin emphasizes the need to build trusting relationships in order to help people who have repeatedly been failed by the system. "If I say I'm going to show up at 8 a.m. to their tent, I show up by 7:55 a.m. Trust-building is the path to helping individuals accept services they need."

As for the common refrain of why don't they just get a job, Ms. Griffin knows from experience that equating homelessness with joblessness is an incorrect and harmful assumption. "The majority of the people we work with have income. It's just not enough. Thinking back to the first 45 people we worked with at the [COVID-19 Temporary Emergency Shelter], around 75 percent of them had a source of income." No one would guess that Ms. Griffin had also once been without consistent shelter, and she cites her story to remind others that there is no single face of homelessness. "It can happen to any of us. If you remember that, you look at individuals without shelter from a different point of view."

When asked what advice she has for those currently experiencing homelessness, her positivity and resilience ring through: "Keep hope. Find your support group. Mine was Community Action."

If you want to hear more from Chastity and learn about other issues in our community, the LexTalk, More Action Podcast is on SoundCloud and most places you can find podcasts.



COMMUNITY SUPPORTERS AND DONORS

ACM Construction
Patricia Alcorn
John Allison
Sue Ashford
AVOL Kentucky
Raymond & Nancy Bale
Bonnie Barnes
Barbara Bashaw
Baumann Paper Co. Inc.
Leslie Bebensee
Neil Bedwell
Heather & Darrin Belcher
Blue Grass Community Foundation
Bluegrass Hospitality Group
Bluegrass Recreation, Sales, and
Installation
William & Nona Boatright
Leidy Borges-Gonzalez
Art Brenda
Bethany Brown
Theresa Bryan
Hycinthia Carbuccia
John Catron
Central Bank & Trust Co.
Rhonda Childers
City National Bank of West Virginia
Jessica Coffie
Karen Colbert
Rebecca A. Coleman
James Coles

James M. Collier III, MD PSC
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Bobbie Conrad
Jessica Cook
Matthew Cooper
Whitney Cotton
Donna Crawford
Valerie Crawford
Creech Family Foundation Inc
Rosalba Davila
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Charles Duke
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Tina Ecklar
Ed Gonzalez's Solutions, LLC
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Fayette County Public Schools
Fidelity Charitable
Luke Finster
Lawton Foley
Derek Fugate
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Ellen Ganley
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Teresa Graves
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Denise Harlow
Heather Henson
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Tracy Hoskins
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Cara Howell
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Humana Horizons
Irvingville Baptist Church
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Henry & Patricia Jackson
Christopher "Marty" Jones
Edward Jones
Kentucky Utilities
Kroger Co.
Lakeshore Learning Materials
Melanie Lebron-Gonzalez
Michele Lee
John & Carol Leinenbach
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Candice Long
Ewbank Lourrae
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Mallinckrodt Pharmaceuticals

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National Philanthropic Trust
Northern Kentucky Community
Action Commission
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Brianna Stanley
Kelly Stein
Robert & Ruth Straus
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Mark & Jane Telfer
The Bargain Box
The Hope Center
The National Christian Foundation
KY
Melissa Tibbs
Jeff True
Karla Underwood
United Way Metro Chicago
United Way of the Bluegrass
Margret Upchurch
Urban League of Lexington-

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Angela Wagers
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Elaine D. Ward
Missy Watkins
M. Russel Wells
Brittany White
Deborah Whitehurst
Rhonda Williams
Wise Bird Cider Co., LLC
Tracy Woosley
Xpress Parking

FISCAL REVIEW

REVENUE



Grant	\$50,546,312
Contract	\$630,604
Contributions	\$5,065,894
Investment	\$1,477,166
Other	\$1,621,766
In-Kind	\$4,491,870
Total	\$63,833,612

EXPENSES



Salaries	\$15,255,895
Fringe Benefits	\$6,542,561
Partnership/Contractual	\$5,359,209
Supplies	\$5,785,471
Space	\$2,876,834
Travel	\$228,644
Communications & IT	\$931,087
Participant Assistance	\$10,221,466
In-Kind Expense (GAAP)	\$4,491,870
Other	\$1,427,795
Subtotal	\$53,120,832
Change in Net Assets	\$10,712,780
Total	\$63,833,612



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