

2021-2022 Annual Report





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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Hello Everyone,

I am delighted to present to you this year's Annual Report. Within these pages you will find the essence of what it means to be a Community Action Agency. You will see—as I have seen—the determination, the resolve, honor and dedication with which the Council's staff have performed in service to the community.

I am so proud to share with you a few of the great things your Community Action Council has accomplished over the past year.

Amidst the ongoing difficulties caused by the pandemic, our team managed to assist over 17,000 individuals through services such as housing stabilization and avoiding eviction, energy assistance and help with tax filing, to providing temporary emergency shelter during the coldest winter months. Community Action Council has always been committed to addressing the urgent needs of our neighbors, while at the same time working to create opportunities that instill hope and provide stability. That guiding principle is one of the reasons our agency expanded its high-performing Commercial Driver's License (CDL) training program during the pandemic—to help even more individuals earn a nationally-recognized credential, higher wages, and career advancement. In the last year, our CDL program graduated more than 50 people who went on to accept high-wage positions driving buses, flatbeds, haulers, and other vehicular work in construction, delivery, and transportation. One of our graduates, Braxton Fuller, started his own business and was recognized by Lexington's Mayor Linda Gorton during the 2023 State of the City address.

This is just one of many examples you will read throughout the pages of our report underscoring Community Action Council's commitment to fulfill our National Promise, which reads in part "Community Action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope and improves communities..."

As you read about the accomplishments and the impact of Community Action Council's work, I hope you are inspired to join us to create a better community for everyone.

With you in service,

Sharon Price, MA, CCAP
Executive Director



A LETTER FROM OUR

BOARD CHAIRPERSON





Fellow Community Members,

The Council has made tremendous strides toward addressing the root causes of poverty this year. From tackling the affordable housing crisis to helping families combat the effects of toxic stress created by poverty and trauma and so much more. The Council is doing the foundational work required to make long-term, sustainable progress for those most in need.

We have so many amazing stories to share about the transformative power of Community Action, and this annual report contains just a few of the many examples of powerful work we are accomplishing.

My time as Board Chair has provided me with a tremendous opportunity to serve others and work alongside passionate, driven people who are willing to stand up for

those whose voices often go unheard. Our new Board Chair, Danny Murphy, will provide the leadership needed to keep pushing the Council to new heights.

I want to commend the hard work that my fellow board members, the agency staff, and our program participants have put in to lift up our communities, as well as the generosity of our donors who have placed their faith in the Council and empowered this progress.

Every day, we are looking for inspired employees who are ready to create real change in the world, strategic community partners who are ready to march with us, and smart donors who are ready to fight for the future by investing in our communities today.

Thank you for learning more about the Council and please consider how you might join us in our life changing work.

Best wishes,

Denise Beatty

PROJECT LIFE

Roughly 500 young people age out of foster care every year in Kentucky – often losing the stability and support that the system can offer. While young adulthood is a challenging time for many, former foster youths often face the adult world without the money, life skills, and support systems needed to get them on their feet and make positive plans for their future. This is where Project LIFE comes in.

With understanding and non-judgmental guidance, Project LIFE case managers help participants to develop goals based on their individual needs, enter the workforce, continue their education, take care of their health, develop their financial literacy, and – the biggest post-COVID-19 pandemic challenge – find suitable housing. Not only are rent prices soaring across the state, but young people’s lack of credit history coupled with landlords asking for a wage that is three times the monthly rent cost can become a major stumbling block, especially given that most participants are working their first jobs out of high school, often at minimum wage. But success is possible with just a little help.

Jasmine Johnson was 21 years old and pregnant when she entered the 12-month Project LIFE program. Case managers worked with Jasmine to help her develop a plan for her future and achieve the goals she set for herself. Jasmine dedicated herself to success and took advantage of every opportunity that Project LIFE had to offer. She

entered safe housing, found work, enrolled in college, took parenting classes, took care of her health, paid her rent on-time, and earned the \$2,200 employment incentive offered by the program for staying employed throughout her time with the program.

Jasmine said that Project LIFE gave her the opportunity to set herself and her son up for success. “During those 12 months, I had a kiddo, I was able to accomplish all of my goals, get back in school, and work on getting better transportation. I’m now going into more housing, and I think I’ll be pretty set.”

One of Jasmine’s case managers, Treena Burnette, said that often participants just want someone to care about them and that by offering support, counseling, advice, and connections to community programs, participants begin to thrive and their sense of pride and confidence in themselves grows.

Jasmine said, “I really appreciate my case managers, Ms. Treena and Ms. Cheryl [Smith], that helped me get through it. They were the best on my team. They made sure that I achieved all of my goals and that I did what I said I was going to do. I’m very grateful for them and for this project.”



BUILDING RESILIENCE, CREATING POSITIVE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

Talk of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) has dominated conversations around mental health and family well-being in recent years. The ACEs are instances of traumatic stress in a child's life, such as losing a parent or suffering abuse or neglect. Research has shown that prolonged exposure to ACEs causes harm to children's psychological and physiological development.

A study of data from the 2020-2021 National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH) showed that, in Kentucky, 27.8 percent of children ages 3-17 had experienced at least one ACE event, while 50.3 percent had experienced two or more ACEs. 10.9 percent of children under 18 experienced the ACE of living with a family member who had a problem with alcohol or drugs—among the highest for all US states.

While the statistics can be scary, Community Action Council and its Head Start programs face the challenges ACEs create by helping children and families build up their protective factors. Protective factors include building parental resilience, making social connections, having concrete support for parents, creating nurturing attachments, and building a child's social and emotional competence.

Allowing children the opportunity to experience, regulate, and express their emotions is essential to supporting early childhood social and emotional health. Ensuring that the whole family has access and opportunities to develop strong social-emotional connections is crucial as we rely on this skill to express our needs, pay attention, follow directions, solve problems, get along with others,

and manage our emotions when challenged, among other reasons.

Through family engagement activities, such as "Donuts with Dad" and "Talleres Para Mama: Workshop for Mom," Head Start is helping families break out of their shells and break down the negativity they may have experienced in the past. Family engagement activities help shape how children and parents build relationships with their peers. Research has shown that when families are engaged in their children's education, success outcomes such as academic success, improved child behavior, lower parental stress, and more robust emotional development are achieved, all of which build family resilience and help to create positive environments for children to grow.



JUNETEENTH

FREEDOM DAY

JUNE 19

In June of 2021, the Council celebrated Juneteenth as a paid holiday for staff for the first time—even before it became a recognized federal holiday. For the last few years, staff have been able to take the day and celebrate “America’s second Independence Day” with their family, friends, and communities.

Juneteenth commemorates June 19, 1865, when among the last enslaved people in America were finally freed in Texas after roughly 400 years of chattel slavery. While the Emancipation Proclamation was issued in 1863, enforcement was slow to take hold and was applied inconsistently throughout the South. Actual emancipation would not come for years. Texas was among the final hold outs, with at least 250,000 people

still enslaved in 1865. Two union border states, Delaware and Kentucky continued the institution of slavery through December 1865, making our home one of the last places in the country to end slavery.

Juneteenth celebrations began in Texas and slowly spread across the country, sometimes called Jubilee Day or Emancipation Day. The day became a time to celebrate freedom and black achievement as well as a time for activism and the continued pursuit of equality under the law.

President Obama said, “Juneteenth has never been a celebration of victory, or an acceptance of the way things are. It’s a celebration of progress. It’s an affirmation that despite the

most painful parts of our history, change is possible—and there is still so much work to do.”

At Community Action Council, we believe in the values that Juneteenth represents—freedom, community, equality, self-determination, creating economic opportunity, exercising our rights as citizens, and respecting our fellow human beings. It is our responsibility to remember and not take for granted the work of generations that has led us to today, even as we build the future we want for ourselves and the generations yet to come.

Celebrating Juneteenth is just one of the ways that the Council is living our values, honoring our employees’ lives, and leading by example.



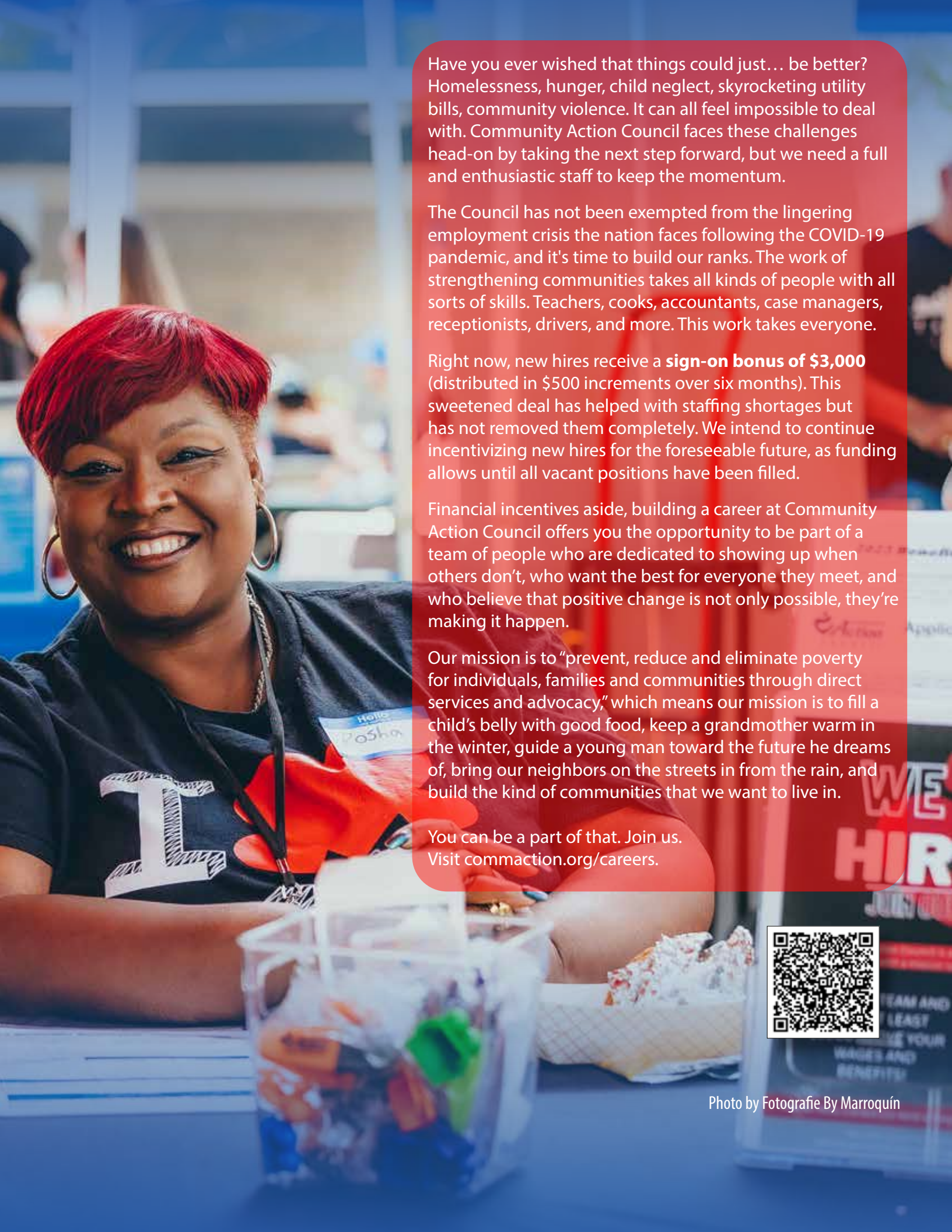
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COUNCIL

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Have you ever wished that things could just... be better? Homelessness, hunger, child neglect, skyrocketing utility bills, community violence. It can all feel impossible to deal with. Community Action Council faces these challenges head-on by taking the next step forward, but we need a full and enthusiastic staff to keep the momentum.

The Council has not been exempted from the lingering employment crisis the nation faces following the COVID-19 pandemic, and it's time to build our ranks. The work of strengthening communities takes all kinds of people with all sorts of skills. Teachers, cooks, accountants, case managers, receptionists, drivers, and more. This work takes everyone.

Right now, new hires receive a **sign-on bonus of \$3,000** (distributed in \$500 increments over six months). This sweetened deal has helped with staffing shortages but has not removed them completely. We intend to continue incentivizing new hires for the foreseeable future, as funding allows until all vacant positions have been filled.

Financial incentives aside, building a career at Community Action Council offers you the opportunity to be part of a team of people who are dedicated to showing up when others don't, who want the best for everyone they meet, and who believe that positive change is not only possible, they're making it happen.

Our mission is to "prevent, reduce and eliminate poverty for individuals, families and communities through direct services and advocacy," which means our mission is to fill a child's belly with good food, keep a grandmother warm in the winter, guide a young man toward the future he dreams of, bring our neighbors on the streets in from the rain, and build the kind of communities that we want to live in.

You can be a part of that. Join us.
Visit commaction.org/careers.



Photo by Fotografie By Marroquín

AFFORDABLE HOUSING CRISIS

Within the Council's largest urban area, Lexington, nearly 400 affordable housing units are lost annually. Recent state and national data show that rent costs in Lexington have increased almost 30% since the start of the pandemic, including a year-over-year increase that outpaces prior years' records in other cities of a similar size. Over 40 percent of Kentuckians are now housing-burdened, meaning they spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs. In Fayette County, nearly 50 percent of households are housing burdened.

Throughout our service area, affordable housing and shelter options are always full now, with waiting lists. 2022 K-Count (Kentucky Point-in-Time Count) data released from the Kentucky Housing Corporation indicates that 729 individuals were experiencing homelessness in the Council's service area, predominately in Fayette County, on a single night in January. Across the Council's 13-county Head Start service area, child homelessness in the 2021-2022 school year was 2,232, an overall 17 percent increase over the

previous year. The data collected over the last few years signals an unprecedented critical housing crisis.

Unstable housing can have a variety of severe consequences for children and youth. Children born into homelessness are more likely to suffer from low birth weight and are more likely to be hospitalized as infants. When a child with a history of homelessness reaches school age, they're likely to lag behind their peers academically—and tend to stay there. Children who have experienced homelessness are less likely to graduate from high school and are more likely to have physical and mental health problems.

When funds were made available to the city of Lexington through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to address housing issues, the Council took the chance and submitted an application that would, in part, increase the number of available and affordable homes in Lexington.

At the time of this writing, the Council has purchased 13 houses, which are being

used for transitional housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. After the pilot project ends, the units will become part of the available inventory of affordable housing in Lexington. During the 18-month pilot project period, participants received several wrap-around supportive services, resources to stabilize their living conditions, access to healthcare services and personal items, assistance finding transportation, and assistance to increase household income. The program provides participants with a robust toolkit of skills and resources to aid them in securing and retaining permanent, stable housing of their own.

"This is a totally new venture for the Council," said Marty Jones, director of housing and homelessness services. "It's an ambitious project, but we know that the need for affordable housing is extremely high and, in large part, is what sits at the bottom of a person's ability to stay housed. Being able to increase the number of affordable housing units locally should continue to serve our neighbors for years to come."



THE ROAD BEST TRAVELED

In the summer of 2017, the Council launched a pilot Commercial Driver's License (CDL) program to address three significant barriers commonly experienced by families living in poverty: unaffordable childcare, a lack of marketable work skills, and an absence of available living wage employment. At the time, a shortage of qualified school bus drivers made the program particularly relevant. Initially, recruitment for the program prioritized parents and guardians of children enrolled, or eligible to be enrolled, in one of the Council's Head Start programs, but it has since become available to the larger community.

Another shortage of drivers coincided with the pandemic, and it continues to be an issue despite a general decline in cases of the COVID virus. As a result, employers are now offering better-paying work for those willing to obtain the necessary driver credentials. Currently, five of the top 10 employers in Central Kentucky, including Fayette County Public Schools, Amazon, and UPS, rely on transportation for their business enterprises, and the governor's economic development plan for the state identifies transportation as a high-demand industry.

The benefits of the Council's CDL program are clear. In a recent class, 95 percent of graduates found full-time work in a CDL-required field. This is even more remarkable given that 90 percent of



participants began the course unemployed. Former students of the program have gone on to work for businesses such as Lexington-Fayette Urban County government, the University of Kentucky, Fayette County Public Schools, and Raj Hauling, Inc., among others.

Joshua McCann, CDL Training Coordinator, said that graduates of the program feel a sense of accomplishment upon completing the course. "Graduates tell me how the training changed their lives," McCann said in a recent interview. "They feel they can provide for their families."

Community Action Council is committed to making positive, lasting changes in the communities we serve. The CDL program is proof of that commitment, epitomized in our Promise.



**Learn More About
our CDL Program**



GROWING A CULTURE OF DIVERSITY



Watch Diversity Drive

“The fact is, if you want to build teams or organizations capable of innovating, you need diversity,” said a Scientific American article regarding the merits of diversity in the workforce. Another study from 2006 out of Stanford University and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign examined the impact of racial diversity on decision-making amongst small groups and found that “The groups with racial diversity significantly outperformed the groups with no racial diversity.”

The evidence is clear, having Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) discussions in the workplace makes us better problem solvers. McKinsey and Company, a DEI consulting firm, describes DEI as “three closely linked values held by many organizations that are working to be supportive of different groups of individuals, including people of different races, ethnicities, religions, abilities, genders, and sexual orientations.”

As an organization, we constantly seek ways to improve our services. Becoming more conscious and aware of how diversity, equity,

and inclusion practices can be included in our work leads us to more thoughtful engagement.

Enter Clifton Jackson, one of our newest employees, who has taken on the role of DEI Officer with the Council. Clifton keeps us conscious of our DEI responsibilities and opportunities. He provides guidance and support on all matters of equity and inclusion.

Clifton went to college seeking a degree in social work. During that program, he earned certification in the principles of DEI. “I am very passionate about DEI work, being that I am an African American male and a member of the LGBTQ community. Nobody should ever feel like they are less than, or that they’re invisible or unheard.”

Clifton boils it down for us, saying, “DEI means that everyone feels like they belong, that they’re welcome, that they’re accepted. DEI means that there is a fair playing field for all.” He notes that the Council is a fairly diverse organization. At its administrative offices, women represent over three-quarters of staff, and almost half of all employees identify as

non-Caucasian. “But we can do more,” Clifton says.

Whether bringing implicit biases to light or implementing ongoing diversity training, organizations must embrace DEI for it to become a natural aspect of the workplace. However, change can be difficult, especially when it challenges an organization’s culture,” Clifton says. “It can lead to uncomfortable and even heated conversations. But we have to be open to having those conversations in order to grow.” It can be challenging work, but we know that it is work worth doing.

Clifton has ideas to “take DEI to the next level” as it applies to the Council and communities we serve. “Something that I’m really looking forward to is having a cultural diversity field day; something fun, not only for our staff but for the community because it’s important to include everybody.”

Clifton’s work is emblematic of the Council’s over-arching purpose, because at Community Action Council, our cause is community.

KIM PARKER-BROWN




2022 Unapologetic Women

Kyra Elzy
 Jacqueline Coleman
 Martina Barksdale
 Sarah McGill
 Kelly Ruff
 Polly Ruddick
 Anne Gay Donworth
 Hannah LeGris
 Kacy Allen-Bryant
 Linda Gorton
 Kim Parker Brown
 Lindsey Burke
 Huajing Maske
 Kaelyn Query
 Denotra Gunther
 Denise Gray
 Danielle Clore

Wanda Gonsalves
 Lori Stewart
 Tamara Vest
 Diane Minniefield
 Ebony Hutchison
 Andrea Bruns
 April Ballentine
 Ximena McCollum
 Nanci House
 Rose Santiago
 Charliese Brown Lewis
 Lou Anna Red Corn
 Clarissa Thomas
 Lisa Lourie
 Cassia Hernon
 Suzy Armishaw
 Shambra Mulder

Lori Clemons
 Wendy Jackson
 Brigitte Blom
 Angela Evans
 Linda Blackford
 LaTasha Buckner
 Whitney Baxter
 Merlene Davis
 Janeth Ceballos
 Chastity Griffin
 Raquel Carter
 Mirna Cerrada
 Bessie Jackson
 Kathy Witt
 Tiffany Brown
 Isabel Sylvie Delphin Arceneaux (Honorary)





Wife, mother, lifelong educator, entrepreneur. These are just some of the roles played by the 2022 Unapologetic Woman of the Year, Kim Parker-Brown.

In 2021 and 2022, Executive Director Sharon Price interviewed 50 incredible women for the Council's Unapologetically Woman web series. The series explores the work, the lives, and the challenges faced by women who are making an impact around the region, celebrating their talents, journeys, and successes. An Unapologetic Woman shows strength, works hard, and doesn't apologize for her perspective or her impact on the community.

From a field of 50 remarkable people, Parker-Brown was voted by the community to be the Council's Unapologetic Woman of the Year. Parker-Brown has been a lifelong educator. From playing teacher on the playground to tutoring in the neighborhood, to teaching middle schoolers and special education students, to becoming a college professor, she has helped to develop minds across a broad spectrum of students. She said, "I want to see kids grow up and do well. I want them to progress through life knowing that someone cared about them when they were in school." By leading with love and care, she creates an environment where education and minds can flourish. Her background in special education even led her to work with the Special Olympics, which led her to develop a whole cheerleading program from the ground up. Lately, she has been preparing to launch a beverage line using a family tea recipe that receives rave reviews, adding entrepreneurship to her list of accomplishments.

Parker-Brown received her award at the Council's annual gala fundraiser, the 2022 Fall Sneaker Ball, held on September 29. Surrounded by her fellow Unapologetic Women, all wearing formal attire with sneakers, she was celebrated for representing the idea that no matter how far we go, our feet are still planted firmly in the community.

At the end of her Unapologetically Woman interview, Parker-Brown tells viewers to "Have courage, step out on faith, and never stop." We are honored to serve alongside this incredible woman.

The next Fall Sneaker Ball will be held in September of 2023. Join us and rub elbows with the influential and powerful women shaping Kentucky while we dance and celebrate the hard work that goes on every day to build a better world.

To see all the illuminating interviews with the 2022 Unapologetic Women, visit the Council's YouTube page at youtube.com/@Lexcommaction.

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Elsa Davis
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Tracy Woosley
Tim Wright
Xpress Valet, LLC
James & Gena Ziliak

FISCAL REVIEW
REVENUE

97% GRANTS \$67,974,045

3% INVESTMENT (\$1,916,871)

2% OTHER \$1,689,243

.4% IN-KIND \$276,501

Total – \$68,022,918

FISCAL REVIEW EXPENSES



Total – \$68,955,581



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