

ANNUAL REPORT

2017-2018



CHANGES SHAPE THE PLAN FOR OUR FUTURE DIRECTION

It is with great pride that we present the 2017-2018 Warren Forest Counties Economic Opportunity Council's Annual Report. We hope this brings greater insight into the accomplishments of the people in our community whom we are dedicated to serve. The report outlines not only the services provided but; it puts a spotlight on what happened as a result of participating in one, or more, of our programs.



During the year, the Agency formulated a new strategic plan to guide our direction over the next five years. Although not apparent in our statistical report, implementation of the strategic plan has already had an impact on the Agency. Assisting people in becoming self-sufficient has always been the backbone of the Agency. Now a greater emphasis is being placed on intensive case management and greater client interaction. Instead of primarily being a single service provider for resolving only an immediate need; we are becoming an Agency dedicated to ascertaining the deep rooted barriers within our consumer that hamper the journey to

self-sufficiency and helping people overcome these.

This “philosophical” change has created some difficulty for our regular consumers. However, in the long run we believe this change will be beneficial to the success of our families and the community. It is with pride once again that we present to you the Annual Report. We hope that it energizes your commitment to the individuals and families of our community as much as it does for us.

Thank you for the continued support!

Sincerely,

Robert A. Raible
Executive Director



ENDING VETERAN HOMELESSNESS IN OUR COMMUNITY



“It was a miracle!” That’s exactly how John Ross describes his experience with the Supportive Services for Veteran Families program and the impact it had on his life.

Ross served with the Army and spent the last three years of his enlistment serving as a Tank Crewman in Mianz, Germany. He eventually returned to the United States after being discharged but a string of bad decisions ultimately led to his incarceration.

Despite his good intentions, following his release from prison in March, John’s life continued to spiral out of his control. He had hoped that moving back to northwestern Pennsylvania, where he had many fond childhood memories, would be all that was needed for things to fall back into place. It wasn’t long though before he found himself evicted from his apartment, homeless, and, even worse, feeling an overwhelming sense of hopelessness.

Ross secured a place in an emergency shelter that provided a temporary shelter in Meadville, PA. Depression and the sense of helplessness led him to thoughts of suicide before long. It was this that actually led him to the SSVF Case Worker, Rick Wagonseller through a referral made during a call to the Veterans Crisis Line. The crisis line is an invaluable service provided by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, for veterans experiencing extreme hardship and/or suicidal thoughts.

John made contact with Rick shortly after he received the referral and was also introduced to CHAPS, a mental health service provider in Meadville, and HUD-VASH Case Manager, Abby McUumber. Taking advantage of these resources allowed John to right his course and get his life back on track.

When asked about the program’s impact on him John has said:

“All I can say is it’s the best thing that ever happened to me. It helped me get back on my feet and has even given me a chance to give back. It showed me where I could go for help in the future. Now I have a home base and everything is wonderful. I almost committed suicide, but the SSVF program came out of nowhere and saved me.”

In addition to helping John obtain housing, Rick also transported him to the Veteran’s Miracle Center of Erie which

provided him with clothing, kitchen appliances, utensils, and a number of other household items.

Thanks to the program, desperation is no longer the driving force in John’s life. Today, he volunteers at the same shelter that housed him when he had nowhere else to go. In fact, they are even discussing the possibility of bringing John on as a paid employee.

The Supportive Service for Veteran Families is made possible through a partnership with Chautauqua Opportunities in neighboring New York State. We proudly serve veterans in Warren, Forest, Crawford, and McKean Counties. Case Managers worked diligently to assist in many different ways based on the Veteran’s unique set of needs and circumstance. Typical services included helping find safe, affordable housing, moving, connections to other resources and supports, barrier removal, financial assistance, short term rental assistance, utility payments, and security deposits.

SSVF IMPACTS

47 Veteran Households Actively Assisted

10 Homeless Veterans Assisted with Placement in Shelters

13 Evictions stopped

28 Veterans Successfully Placed in Permanent Housing for 90 Days

COMMUNITY SERVICES | SETTING THE FOUNDATION FOR STRONGER FAMILIES

The dedicated staff of the Community Services department share an office location with the Agency's Housing Department at the Faith Inn Shelter in downtown Warren, PA. We offer a combination of intensive programs designed to help participating clients overcome barriers to self-sufficiency and emergency services to address crisis situations. As with all Agency programs, those offered within Community Services utilize our network of strong partnerships with area social service providers to link clients with all the tools and supports needed to help alleviate crisis situations and address long term needs.

"We rise by lifting others."

-Robert Ingersoll

Our Community Services programs offered throughout 2017 and 2018 included, but were not limited to, the following: Homeless Assistance Program (HAP), Dollar Energy Grant, Neighbor-for-Neighbor (National Fuel Gas), Columbia Gas CAP program, Pre-Purchase HUD Homeownership Counseling, Foreclosure Mitigation, Financial Capability Counseling, Work Ready, Employment & Training, and Emergency Food & Shelter.

We have shifted to offer fewer one-time services in this department and are putting greater emphasis on intensive case management designed to build on life skills needed for successful money management, employment, and for ultimately self-sufficiency.

Utility and energy assistance programs offered in 2017-2018 primarily consisted of an application for assistance and had the following impacts:

24 Households (53 People) successfully applied for the Columbia Gas level billing CAP program.

24 Households were given Neighbor-for-Neighbor grants to prevent National Fuel shut offs or to obtain deliverable fuel.

4 Households received Emergency Food & Shelter Funds for deliverable fuel

2 Households recieved a Dollar Energy grant to prevent utility shut offs.

Please note that the Agency stopped processing Dollar Energy applications in September 2017.



EMERGENCY HOMELESS PREVENTION FUNDS

The Homeless Assistance Program is made possible through County funding which is split between The Salvation Army and the Agency. Individuals and families in danger of becoming homeless or who are homeless are eligible for assistance with rental arrears, security deposits, first month rent, and in some cases, utility assistance to prevent eviction. In the last program year the Agency was able to assist:

7 Households with utility shut offs

12 Households had eviction proceedings stopped

6 Homeless households were assisted with security deposits & first month rent

CLASS IS IN SESSION! BUDGETING 101



For over a decade the Warren-Forest Counties EOC has partnered with the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency to bring free financial counseling and education to Warren and Forest County as a recognized HUD Housing Counseling Agency. The Agency has a specially trained, dedicated counselor who provides homebuyer education, financial coaching, rental assistance and homeless counseling, and foreclosure prevention sessions. Homebuyers can expect to receive guidance and advice designed to improve housing conditions and be better prepared homeowners. Topics covered in this type of counseling include, but are not limited to: evaluating mortgagor readiness, fair housing, credit report analysis and repair, budgeting for mortgage payments, improving money management, selecting a real estate agent and home inspections. Financial coaching is designed to help both renters and buyers understand and manage their finances. Credit, savings, assets, and understanding how to create and follow a sustainable budget are a key focus. In the past year:

41 Households enrolled in financial counseling

25% Of households created and followed a household budget for 90 days

1 Household saved \$400 each month by following counselor suggestions

The Agency also has a program to assist with delinquent mortgages, the Homeowners' Emergency Mortgage Assistance Program, known as HEMAP.



1 Household was approved in the 2017-2018 year

The process begins when the homeowner receives an Act 91 Notice. This Notice advises them of their right to apply for a HEMAP loan which could, if approved, cover delinquent payments as well as assist temporarily on a monthly basis if the household income is insufficient. Once the Notice is received the homeowner has 33 days from the date of the Notice to contact our Agency and set up an appointment. Our Agency then has 30 days from the appointment to complete and submit the full application. The main areas of eligibility are that the property must be owner-occupied, you must be delinquent due to circumstances beyond your control and you must be able to show that you will be able to resume the full mortgage payments within a maximum of 24 months. Once an application has been submitted, HEMAP has 60 days to make a decision. As long as the process takes place within the specified time limits, your lender cannot take foreclosure action until a decision is reached.



WORK READY

Working hand-in-hand with the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services and the Warren and Forest County Assistance Offices; the Warren-Forest Counties EOC works with direct referrals of clients for the Work Ready program. The primary goal of Work Ready is to assist clients in transitioning to the EARN program (Employment, Advancement, and Retention Network). Clients work with an employment Case Manager to address any identified barriers and learn needed skills to be successful upon entering the work force. Between 2017-2018:

6 Referrals enrolled

2 Obtained full time employment after exiting

1 Successfully finished vocational school

1 Participant volunteered for job experience

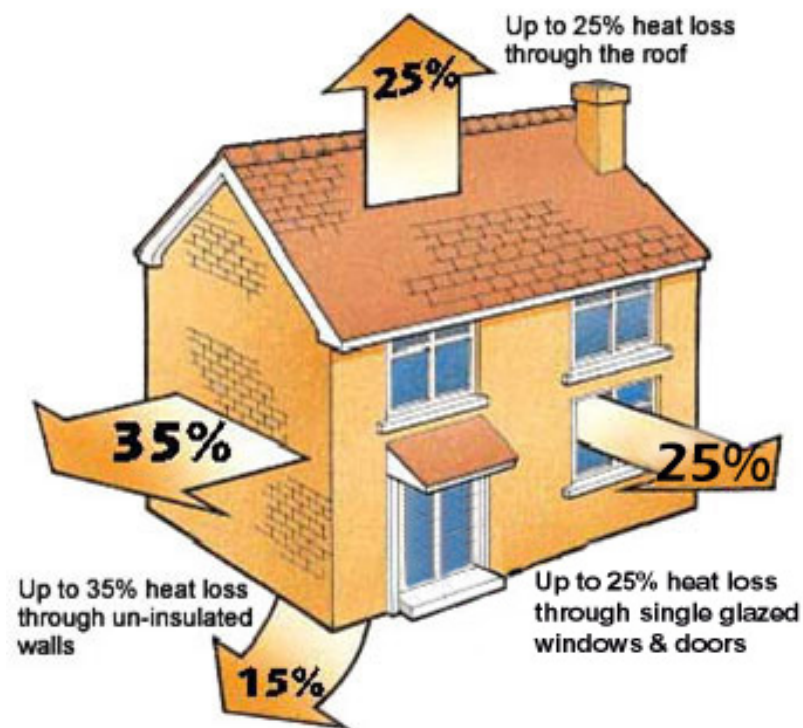
The Employment Case Manager also provided job skill training, assisted with resumé development, job search, mock interviews, and employment barrier removal to clients. In total:

23 Individuals enrolled

7 Obtained full or part time employment

17 Developed needed job skills for employment

WEATHERIZATION PROGRAMS



The Agency provides multiple weatherization programs in Warren, Forest, and Venango Counties to help low-income households control heating costs and overall, benefit from more energy efficient, safe, and healthy homes. In addition to maintenance and repairs; the rising cost of utilities for already struggling households has frequently resulted in crisis situations and unmanageable housing expenses. Our programs are designed to help eligible households with needed improvements to their homes that help conserve energy and reduce high heat and utility costs. These programs include: Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (both crisis and non-crisis), Penelec WARM, National Fuel, and the Department of Energy's Weatherization program.

The energy audit, an assessment of the property which includes recommendations of different measures which could be done, is the first step after the application and screening process.. These measures may include blower guided air sealing, improving insulation and ventilation, health and safety measures, and in emergency situations the replacement or repair of qualified appliances.

LIHEAP, through the CAO, assists low-income families with heating bills via a grant program. Grants are sent directly to the utility company. In colder months households in immediate danger of losing heat can qualify for a crisis grant. In Penelec WARM, participating households receive an in-home energy usage audit and create an energy savings program.

Program achievements in the past 2017-2018 year included the following:

12 Households (16 people) in Forest County received LIHEAP Crisis

87 Households (215 people) in Venango County received LIHEAP Crisis

55 Households (139 people) in Warren County received LIHEAP Crisis.

8 Households received Weatherization through a standard LIHEAP grant to assist with energy costs

6 Homes were weatherized through the Department of Energy program

87 Households participated in the Penelec WARM program

9 Homes were assisted through the National Fuel Repair or Replace program

1 Household was assisted through the National Fuel LIURP program

CONSTRUCTION HAS BEEN COMPLETED!

In the spring of 2016, in response to the request by the City of Warren Redevelopment Authority's request for reuse plans, the EOC proposed constructing new, affordable housing units on one or both of the available vacant lots located on Beech Street. In keeping with the identified lack of accessible housing options for low-income families the EOC proposed making at least one unit fully accessible to a wheelchair bound individual. In response to the proposal, the City of Warren gave one lot to the EOC to use for the proposed use with the other, adjacent lot given to the local Habitat for Humanity. With the location secured, the EOC secured funding through the Neighborhood Assistance Program in partnership with Northwest savings bank for the site prep and design of a single-family, fully accessible unit for a low income individual or family with a documented mental health diagnosis.

Construction of the Beech St. unit began in 2017 and was completed in mid-2018. Habitat for Humanity, due to the smaller lot size and location, ultimately determined that it would not be able to build a home off site and move to the location. The two lots were combined and utilized by the EOC to construct a duplex where both single story units mirror each other in layout while meeting ADA requirements. The units each contain two bedrooms, a living/dining area, kitchen, bath, and laundry. Both units are now occupied and will remain long term rental apartments owned and managed by the EOC. The units are part of our permanent housing and are offered to eligible tenants based on HUD Fair Market Rental Rates.



Upper Left: Photo of the Beech Street duplex shortly after initial framing was completed.



Upper Right: Photo of the Beech Street duplex with roof truss system being installed.



Upper Left: Photo of the Beech Street duplex from the side while under construction in late Fall 2017.



Upper Right: Photo of the Beech Street duplex from the front while under construction in Winter 2018.



Upper Left: Interior view of an apartment at Beech Street



Upper Right: Photo of the completed Beech Street duplex prior to tenant move-in.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT | INCREASING AFFORDABLE HOUSING

A PARTNER IS FOUND IN NORTHWEST BANK



In late 2017, the Agency faced a hard reality. Funding for emergency shelters has grown scarce and the Agency would soon have to re-purpose the existing Faith Inn shelter in way that still served a need within the community. A growing need for transitional housing for individuals who are hard to place and exiting the County Prison had long been discussed. This is where Northwest Bank stepped in.

From far left to right: Heather Cathcart-Norris, Vice President of the Board of Directors for EOC and Robert A. Raible, Executive Director are shown accepting a check from Marina Burch and Shane Oschman of Northwest Bank for the 2018 Neighborhood Assistance Program. In this program, offered through the PA Department of Community and Economic Development,

local businesses partner with agencies in projects that address specific community needs. This generous donation was used to fund updates and renovations of the Faith Inn Shelter. Six of the nine units became transitional housing for those persons who have completed their sentence at the Warren County Jail and are hoping to successfully transition back into the community. The housing will be for those who would otherwise be homeless and more likely to end up back in the system or serve past their sentence due to not having a place to go. The program provides supportive services including housing search, placement, budgeting and employment as well as connections to other programs within the community in an effort to help people re-enter the community.

PRODUCE EXPRESS FARM TO TABLE

In a rural area where transportation and the higher cost of fresh produce are regularly observed obstacles for individuals and families the Agency sought out a way to help. Each month the Warren-Forest Counties Opportunity Council helps to facilitate a Produce Express distribution in partnership with the Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest Pennsylvania. Distributions for this highly valued program occur on the third Thursday of each month and provide a limited number of boxes packed with seasonal fruits, vegetables, and some non-perishable items for eligible households in Warren County.

Last year we were proud to assist

216 families in Warren with accessing fresh produce through the Produce Express program.

A waiting list is maintained each month due to high demand and the 120 slots per month are typically filled within four hours.



AN OVERVIEW

The Housing Department provides a combination of facilities and services to meet the needs of homeless individuals through emergency housing, transitional housing, permanent housing, and housing assistance options. Almost all of our programs are primarily designed for those households in crisis situations and are currently homeless or facing homelessness. The success of the programs over the years is made possible by the hard work of our trained and dedicated case managers as well as the ability to coordinate and partner with various human service agencies within the community. This ensures that the essential services needed for households in crisis are available and accessible. The primary goal for participants in the Agency Housing Programs is to assist in advancing individuals and families from temporary to permanent housing and, ultimately, independent living.

Currently, the Housing Department oversees nine properties providing a mix of emergency, transitional, and long-term homeless housing solutions, including the Faith Inn Shelter in downtown Warren and permanent housing options for residents of both Warren and Forest Counties.

DID YOU KNOW?

235 individuals were assisted with housing needs during the 2017-2018 program year through one or more programs.

66 households can be served at any single point in time throughout 20 buildings

PERMANENT HOUSING

We currently have 11 permanent housing sites with 34 rental units available to individuals in Warren and Forest Counties. The program's primary focus is providing affordable housing for the more vulnerable residents within our community. These may include those with a mental health diagnosis and/or substance abuse disorders, transitional age youth (ages 18 to 24), and forensic mental health clients. To qualify for this housing; individuals must be able to live independently, have income, and active case management services in place. In 2017-2018:

62 individuals in **37** households were assisted with affordable housing.

Two new additions to the available properties include the accessible units within the Beech Street duplex and a 3 bedroom house on St. Clair Street was renovated to be used as part of a Fairweather Lodge project operated by the Forest Warren Mental Wellness Association. In the Fairweather Ledge concept, developed by Dr. George Fairweather in 1963, people with mental health issues are less likely to return to institutional settings and/or homelessness when they live and work together as a group. Research has also shown that people in this type of program tend to stay in the community longer, employment opportunities are created, and overall, a Fairweather Lodge concept is less costly.



HOUSING | YEAR IN REVIEW

THE FAITH INN HOMELESS SHELTER

In March 2018, the Faith Inn Homeless Shelter underwent a significant change due to a nationwide drop in emergency shelter funding. At this point in time, the nine unit shelter converted six units to transitional housing for a new re-entry program and decreased available shelter units to three of the nine. The Community Services Block Grant program (CSBG) made possible through a federal discretionary spending allocation currently supports the continued operation of the dedicated shelter units. Homeless individuals and families with a household income at or below 125% of the Federal Poverty Income Guideline are eligible to apply.

Between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2018:

57 homeless households were sheltered for up to 30 days.

60% exited into safe, affordable housing.

The lack of enough affordable housing, limited subsidized options through Section 8 or the local Housing Authority, depressed wages, and other factors continue to make housing a growing need within the community. Since first opening in 2011, the Faith Inn Shelter has consistently maintained a waiting list of families and individuals facing a true housing crisis. Once enrolled in the program; households work on identifying and addressing barriers and link to other supportive programs / services which may further help them as they work toward true self-sufficiency.

To make a difference in someone's life, you don't have to be brilliant, rich, beautiful or perfect. You just have to care.)

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

17 Chronically homeless individuals participated and were housed.

4 of **7** total households have exited into permanent, affordable housing

5 individuals obtained full or part-time employment

This program is in its' second year of operation and consists of four site-based apartments in Youngville, PA. The program is designed specifically for chronically homeless individuals and families with disabilities or mental health diagnosis. The program follows a Housing First concept where homeless families and/or individuals are provided with safe housing regardless of income, criminal record, documented substance abuse, mental health, or other factors. Once housed, a dedicated Case Manager works intensively with households to identify and address barriers that have made long term permanent housing nearly impossible in the past. There is no time limit on how long a household can remain in this program.

One household consisted of a young, single mother who was pregnant with her second child. This young woman was also enrolled in the Agency's Work

Ready program to work on obtaining and building job skills while also addressing transportation and child care barriers. After having her second child and being cleared to seek employment she quickly secured a part-time position that gave her the needed experience to obtain a full-time position. It wasn't long before she found that with the barrier of housing taken care of she was able to focus on addressing her other barriers. As she became more self-sufficient she looked for other housing options and ultimately secured an affordable, safe home for herself and her children.

ESCAPING FROM A BAD SITUATION

The past program year marked the final year for our transitional housing program for individuals and families fleeing domestic violence. Participants can stay for up to 24-months in one of the four available apartment units located throughout downtown Warren. At a single point in time; the program could accommodate up to 12 people within 4 households. The Warren-Forest Counties EOC coordinated with A Safe Place shelter for referrals into the program.

While participating in the transitional housing program, clients receive counseling services from A Safe Place while an Agency Housing Specialist provides case management services, addresses barriers, and assists in locating and securing permanent housing.

In our final program year:

4 households (10 people) participated in the program

100% exited into safe, permanent housing

THE PATH PROGRAM

The purpose of the PATH transitional housing program is to assist individuals with mental health issues in transitioning successfully into a permanent housing setting. A PATH Mental Health Housing Specialist oversees the 4 transitional houses located on North State Street near the Warren State Hospital grounds. Referrals of single individuals into the program come from a variety of sources which include, but are not limited to, jails/prisons, rehab facilities, walk-ins, families, psychiatric facilities, and hospitals. While many housing programs contain strict guidelines regarding who can be approved, PATH is designed to be more flexible so that it can accommodate those individuals who might otherwise fall through the cracks. Income is not a determining factor and individuals need only be homeless or at risk of homelessness while also having a mental health diagnosis.

Between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2018:

31 at risk individuals were housed and participated.

13 exited into safe, affordable apartments.

18 to **75** was the age range of all individuals served by the program

In the upcoming year the focus will be on assisting clients in obtaining and maintaining employment and breaking down any other barriers that are in the way. Staff have also received certifications as an Offender Workforce Development Specialist and in S.O.A.R to help those applying for Social Security and Disability benefits.

Our standout story from the last program year is of a client who had lost everything after the company he was working for moved out of the area. SM had worked for the company as a long term employee and had 20+ years of welding experience. When his company opted to relocate he soon found himself struggling to find more work in the area.

Without a job, SM became homeless and was living in the woods before entering the program.

When SM entered the transitional housing PATH program his mindset was simple. He was going to secure employment once again and work for six more years before he retired. Unfortunately, this plan proved far easier said than done. SM spent months applying for work and was told repeatedly that the type of welding position he was looking for was more of a younger man's game. This common refrain began to wear on SM and his depression worsened while his anger grew. We helped SM take a step back and re-evaluate. Through the S.O.A.R program we assisted SM with his application for Social Security. In the first turn in a more positive direction, SM was granted Social Security with almost an entire year of back pay. A source of income restored; SM was approved for an apartment at Tidioute Towers and the back pay was used to purchase items like furniture, computer, and fishing equipment so that he could once again enjoy a pastime he had thought would also be lost.



A MUCH NEEDED PROGRAM FOR A SECOND CHANCE

In April of 2018 the Re-Entry Housing program officially began with six of the nine units at the Faith Inn Shelter converting to transitional housing for those hard to place individuals exiting the Warren County Jail. This program has long been a need within the community.

Housing has become a persistent need for residents of Warren County with more vulnerable members of our community being most at risk. This situation is due to multiple factors: generational poverty, declining population, little economic growth, housing affordability, and a growing lack of options. Individuals who are struggling with mental health diagnosis, disability, or a criminal record are further burdened when trying to find safe, permanent, and affordable housing. Ex-offenders in our community find this to be especially true and in some instances, the lack of housing can prove impossible to overcome without help. Individuals being released from the County prison have in the past faced the prospect of no job, no place to live, and no hope of successfully re-entering the Warren County community. In fact, many individuals in Warren County actually remain in jail longer than they need until they ultimately leave prison and become homeless.

The Agency, beginning in April of 2018, began working in conjunction with the Warren County Prison Authority to provide a collaborative solution to this issue. The reallocated units within the Faith Inn are now dedicated for

use by those individuals exiting the County Prison system who do not have anywhere else to go. Individuals can stay for up to 6 months while working closely with an Agency Housing Specialist, the Warren County Prison Counselor, Probation, and any additional support service staff working with the individual for a successful re-entry. Services designed to increase the likelihood of a positive re-entry actually begin prior to an individual's release date. Service plans identifying any barriers for the individual to overcome are created and while enrolled in the program the focus remains on eliminating these barriers, locating suitable housing, securing income / employment, and learning life skills needed for success such as money management.

6 individuals have participated in the program between April 1, 2018 and June 30, 2018



PICKING HERSELF UP AND STARTING OVER

You never know when life will throw you a curveball you didn't see coming. One client this year had a series of events that at first seemed unrelated but ultimately led her down a road she never thought she'd be on. This story actually goes back to 2014 when a winning scratch off ticket coincided with the death of her mother. The thrill of winning quickly became the way to cope each day with the devastating loss. In hind sight she will tell you that she regrets not accepting the offered grief counseling services through Hospice because using gambling to cope grew into a much bigger problem than she could have ever predicted.

As the addiction to chasing another win grew; her ability to afford the habit could not keep up. She was soon avoiding various bills, lying, hiding, and eventually stealing all to continue gambling. In a moment of clarity, after wracking up \$15,000 in debts under another person's identity, she turned herself in. She had lost everything. Her family, friends, mother, job, home, car, and on and on the list went.

Toward the end of 2015 she began attending AA meeting regularly often traveling with a new group of acquaintances

to and from meetings in Titusville and Corry, PA. She even began paying restitution before she had to face the judge in a courtroom. However, even with her proactive approach the time for her to face the consequences came on October 6, 2017. She was sentenced to 12 to 24 months in the Warren County Prison. This was a wake up call that she is not likely to forget any time soon.

While in jail she was eligible for work release and credits that with helping her stay focused on the changes she needed to continue making. Due to her attitude and good behavior; she was released after 9 months into the ReEntry Housing Program. She was already working but would still need to secure housing with limited income, resources, and references.

She did not lose hope. She had "done the crime and did the time" but knew that her story wasn't over. She wanted a second chance to try again.

The ReEntry program provided needed structure, rules, and support to help her continue moving forward. She still had her job and while it "isn't the greatest job" she is just thankful to have it. Her job allows her to be a part of the community that she once took for granted. Now, she knows better than most that everything can change or be taken away.

Once settled in at the Faith Inn she was able to regroup and focus on her next steps. She met with the Housing Specialist at the Warren-Forest EOC two times each week as well as the Employment Case Manager and attended budget counseling. She said that all of the support and services helped in

getting her on the right path and out of the shelter. She then met with the Case Manager overseeing the Rapid ReHousing program for the Agency to apply for assistance with moving into her own apartment. Through the Rapid ReHousing program she was able to quickly find an apartment within walking distance of public transportation so that she could continue working and was approved for assistance with the first month rent and security deposit.

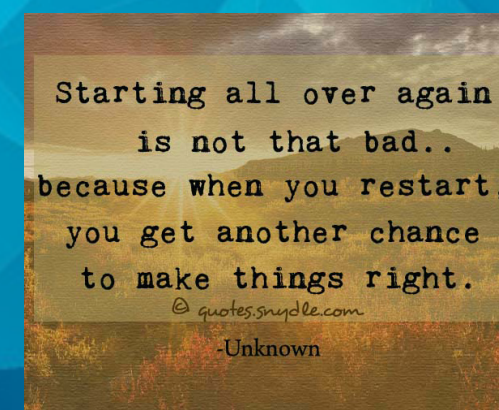
She is now settled into her apartment, working full time with a supportive employer that understands a need for second chances, and continues to work on maintaining her recovery from the gambling addiction.

She credits and recommends:

Celebrate Recovery with Denise and Doug Reed which meets every Thursday at 6pm.

She will always regret her actions of the past but she is moving on as a new person. She is grateful and thankful for the people and places that have given her a chance to start over. She has even started repairing relationships with family and friends for which she is incredibly grateful.

"Even when life is boring I am just happy for the small stuff. Even if it is just making someone else smile."



RAPID REHOUSING

This program assists literally homeless individuals or families with the opportunity to obtain a permanent housing solution through rental and utility assistance for a short period of time while families focus on stabilizing their current situation and eliminating barriers. The Housing Specialist connects participants with additional programs and services that may assist them in becoming self-sufficient. These include, but are not limited to: Head Start, Children & Youth, Salvation Army, Budget Counseling, and Employment and Training. Job search, housing search, utility services, moving assistance, and basic necessities are also addressed on an as needed or case-by-case basis.

Between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2018:

21 homeless households were permanently housed.

One client was a young, homeless veteran who had been living in his car. His income was just shy of \$100 each month from VA benefits. When he arrived at the Faith Inn he had nothing. Thanks to the Rapid ReHousing program we were able to find and secure an apartment. He also quickly found a stable job with a starting pay rate that was above minimum wage. It wasn't long before he went from homeless to being self-sufficient once more.

Recently he stopped into the office to pick up some paperwork and let us know he is still employed and doing well. He was grateful for the help in "getting back on his feet" that the Rapid ReHousing program and the Warren-Forest Counties EOC was able to give him.

HEAD START | EARLY EDUCATION



“The goal of early childhood education should be to activate the child’s own natural desire to learn.”

- Maria Montessori

Head Start is a federally funded pre-school program promoting school readiness for children ages 3 to 5 by enhancing their cognitive, social, and emotional development in a classroom environment through a combination of individual and group activities. Our highly qualified teachers possess a four year degree in education with certification or experience in early childhood education. Classroom Aides possess, at minimum, the Child Development Associate credential (CDA). An overarching goal of our program is to not only prepare children for Kindergarten, but also to address health, nutrition, social, and other needs for each child and family based on a family needs assessment. This past year, the Warren Head Start program made strides toward increasing the learning and developmental outcomes for 40% of our

students by providing additional hours of high-quality learning experiences to 74 of the 185 enrolled students. This was limited to only 40% of our enrolled students due to funding constraints. Now, 74 children attended classes 5 days per week for 6 hours per day for a total of 170 days in 5 classrooms. The remaining 111 children attended classes for 4 days per week for 5 hours per day for a total of 128 days in 7 classrooms. The program was able to eliminate its’ four, double-session classes increasing class time from 3.5 hour to 5 hours per day for 4 days per week.

The five center locations throughout Warren County include the McClintock and Seneca Centers in Warren, Allegheny Valley Center in Clarendon, Youngsville Center in Youngsville, and the Lottsville Center in Bear Lake.

ENROLLMENT INFO

Head Start follows certain eligibility criteria and in the past year:

110 children were from families with a household income below 100% of the poverty guidelines

28 households were receiving public assistance such as TANF, SSI, etc

8 children were homeless at the time of enrollment

3 were foster children

40 children were in households earning between 100% to 130% of the federal poverty guideline

13 children were from over income families



FOCUS ON HEALTH

The school year kicks off with a mass screening event for all new students to assess developmental, mental health, vision, hearing, physical, dental health, growth, and articulation to establish a baseline for all students. This event also allows our dedicated staff to identify areas where children and families may need assistance in accessing additional programs and services.

- 202 children received hearing, vision, height/weight, developmental, and social/emotional health screens at the Mass Screening event
- 193 children had an iron screening
- 175 children had a lead screening
- 188 children had a dental exam
- 200 children have a source for ongoing dental care
- 56 children were identified as needing dental treatment
- 43 children received dental treatment following exam
- 196 children had a medical exam
- 201 children have a source for ongoing medical care and health insurance
- 196 children received all of the required immunizations
- 40 children received treatment for chronic conditions

ENGAGING FAMILIES

Head Start emphasizes the role of parents as their child’s first and most important teacher. With that in mind, our dedicated staff works to build relationships with families to support well-being and positive parent-child interaction, families as learners and lifelong educators, engagement in transitions, connections to peers and community, and families as advocates and leaders. Throughout the program year we created many opportunities for family engagement including:

- Classroom volunteering
- Participation in themed unit end celebrations
- Participation on field trips
- Parent/staff conferences and home visits
- Policy Council members
- Governing Board members
- Center Parent Committees
- Workshops designed to meet parents’ needs and interests
- Weekly newsletters
- Family game night
- Special activities to encourage male involvement



FOR OUR FAMILIES

Family Resource Assistants work closely with families throughout the year to help address barriers the family may be facing. Last year, families were assisted with the following:

- 9 families received food assistance
- 8 parents successfully made and followed monthly budgets
- 9 parents obtained transportation to keep medical appointments
- 277 parents learned and displayed improved family function skills
- 189 families obtained and/or maintained safe and affordable housing
- 100 families obtained WIC services
- 120 families received SNAP
- 277 parents are better care givers for their children
- 189 parents completed the Family Partnership Agreement

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Through the assessment process and mass screening it was determined that almost 19% of all enrolled children were eligible to receive special education or related services and had an individualized education plan (IEP) established.

38 children were determined to be eligible for additional services

25 had a speech or language impairment or delay

13 had a non-categorical or developmental delay

4 children received mental health support services

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh

PROGRAM FACTS & FIGURES

- Funded Enrollment | 185
- Total Enrolled | 202
- Families Served | 189
- Number of 4 Year Olds | 117
- Number of 3 Year Olds | 85
- Second Year Students | 74
- Average Attendance | 92%
- Monthly Enrollment | 100%
- Children Transported to and from Head Start | 191
- Meals Served | 45,507
- Total Volunteer Hours | 875.25
- Total Volunteers | 71

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Assessment in Head Start is a continuous cycle of observing, collecting facts, evaluating, summarizing, and planning. Children are assessed three times throughout the program year to evaluate their progress in seven key areas of development using the Teaching Strategies Gold Assessment System. The chart below shows the percentage of Head Start children (3 and 4 years old) meeting or exceeding the specific objectives in each key area.

Key Areas of Development:

- Physical (Fine Motor)** | Demonstrates fine-motor strength and coordination, uses fingers and hands, uses writing and drawing tools
- Social Emotional** | Regulates own emotions and behaviors, establishes and sustains positive relationships, participates cooperatively and constructively in group situations
- Physical (Gross Motor)** | Demonstrates traveling, balancing, and gross-motor manipulative skills

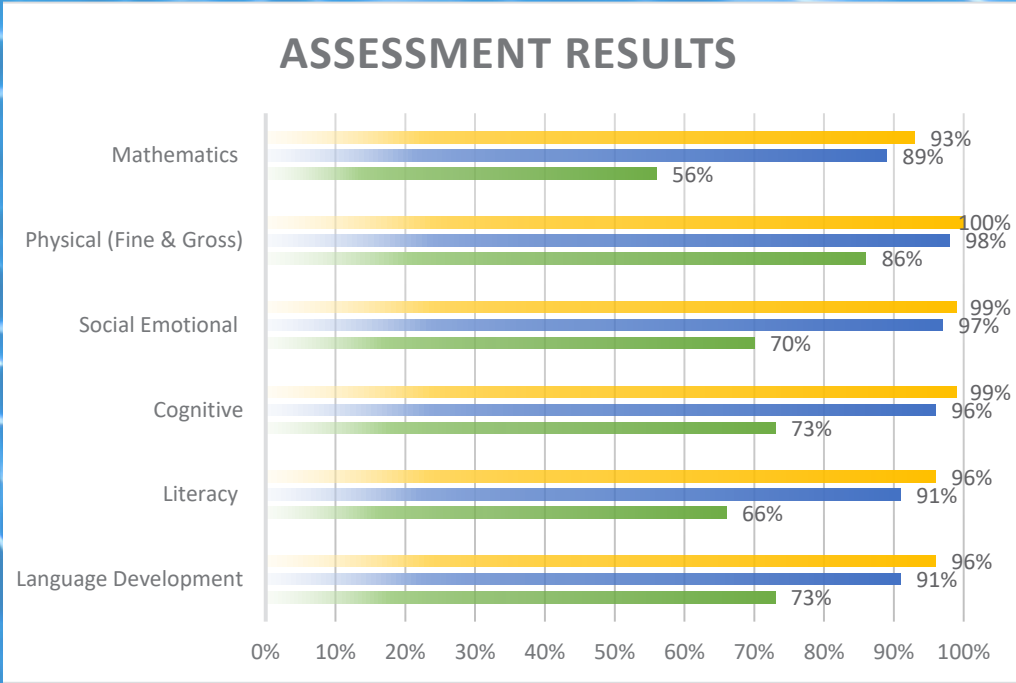
Mathematics (Cognition and general Knowledge) | Uses number concepts and operations, explores and describes spatial relationships and shapes, compares and measures, demonstrates knowledge of patterns

Literacy | Demonstrates phonological awareness, knowledge of the alphabet, knowledge of print and its uses, comprehends and responds to books and other texts, and demonstrates emergent writing skills

Language | Listens to and understands increasingly complex language, uses language to express thoughts and needs, uses appropriate conversational and other communication skills

Cognitive | Demonstrates positive approaches to learning, remembers and connect experiences, uses classification skills, uses symbols and images to represent something not present

Note that not all student data was included in this report. Late entry students that are not in all assessment periods are not included.



FEDERAL ON-SITE REVIEWS | 2017-2018

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) recently conducted three reviews of the Warren County Head Start program focusing on Federal regulations critical to the delivery of quality services.

11.17.15-11.18.15 | An Environmental health and Safety review found no areas of non-compliance.

04.05.16-04.07.16 | CLASS review was completed which assesses interactions between children and teachers in three broad domains of classroom quality. Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support are all measured on a seven point scale. These serve as important indicators of the future school readiness. Thresholds have been establishes as a score of 4 for Emotional Support, 3 for Classroom Organization, and 2 for Instructional Support.

Results by domain were:

Emotional Support | 6.3068

Classroom Organization | 6.3030

Instructional Support | 3.3636

05.09.16-05.13.16 | Comprehensive Services / School Readiness review found no areas of non-compliance.

TRANSITIONING UP TO KINDERGARTEN

Our goal in Head Start is to help facilitate a smooth transition to Kindergarten. This is accomplished through strong, positive connections between Head Start and families, between Head Start and Kindergarten teachers, and Head Start visitations to area kindergarten classrooms.

Activities include:

- Collaboration with parents, staff, principals, and kindergarten teacher
- Opportunities to visit area kindergarten classrooms
- Meeting with MAWA agencies and principals to ensure there is no break in services for children with disabilities
- Empowering parents to advocate for their child
- Creating a packet of activities for the child and parent to work on throughout the summer
- Ensuring families have the proper documentation, paperwork, and dates/times to register their child for Kindergarten

From the 2017-2018 class:

106 children transitioned into the Warren County School District for Kindergarten



PA PRE-K COUNTS

In Warren County the Warren-Forest Counties Economic Opportunity Council is the lead agency for the state funded pre-school program, PreK Counts. The program is available to 3 and 4 year olds living in households with an income that is at or below 300% of the federal poverty guideline. There are 26 funded slots for Warren County split between two agencies providing early education servies. The Warren-Forest Counties EOC Head Start Program provides programming to 20 of the 26 slots. Jefferson DeFrees Family Centers is contracted to provide programming for the remaining 6 slots. Children participate in 180 days of classroom instruction. Classes are 5 days per week for 6 hours per day. This allows for 5 total hours of instruction plus breakfast and lunch.

BY THE NUMBERS

- Funded Enrollment | 20
- Actual Enrollment | 21
- Number of 4 Year Olds | 17
- Number of 3 Year Olds | 4
- Children with a Disability | 2
- Children with an IEP | 2
- Income at or below 300% | 21
- Average Yearly Attendance | 91%
- Total Meals Served | 6,369

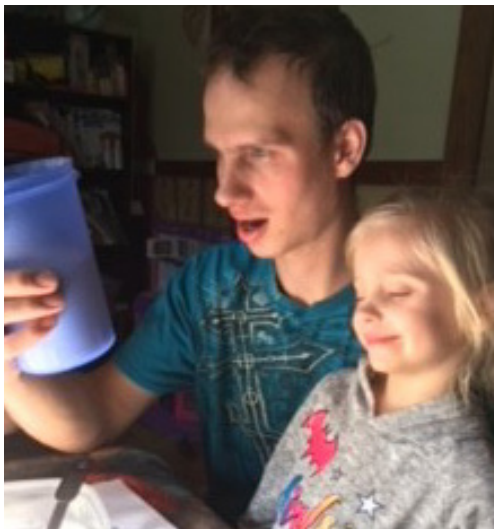
PA PRE-K COUNTS SCREENING RESULTS

Similar to their Head Start counterparts, our PreK counts students begin the school year at the mass screening event where developmental milestones, hearing, vision, and growth (height/weight) screens are all completed. All enrolled children had a medical home and maintained it for the school year. All of the enrolled children also had completed all required immunizations and had well child exams on file.

- 6 children did not have a dental home at enrollment but had secured and maintained one during the school year
- 20 children had a dental exam
- 100% of enrolled children had hearing and vision screenings
- 1 child was referred for a vision concern and received treatment
- 100% had a growth assessment
- 2 children were identified as over weight and 3 children were obese
- 20 children had mental health screenings and 3 were re-screened and within normal limits
- 20 children had social emotional deveolopment screenings. Over the course of the year, 15% (3) children were referred as a result of screening or concerns. One child was found to be eligible for services.
- 15% (3) children were eligible for services through IU5



HEALTH CARE INSTITUTE | YEAR END REPORT FOR WARREN EOC HEAD START



In 2016, the Warren-Forest Counties Economic Opportunity Council's Head Start program applied for a competitive nationwide grant from the National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness - UCLA Health Care Institute Training. Our program was one of 30 selected throughout the United States for the 5 year grant program.

Our dedicated, local Head Start staff have been trained and will continue to receive additional training on key topics of children's health, including oral health, mental health and wellness, and nutrition and obesity prevention. These specially selected topics have and will continue to be useful in improving the overall health of families, their children, and, by extension, our community. Training for parents and caregivers is designed to improve knowledge and skills so that they can learn how to improve or provide better care for the health needs of the family. As a result of training parents and caregivers will be more

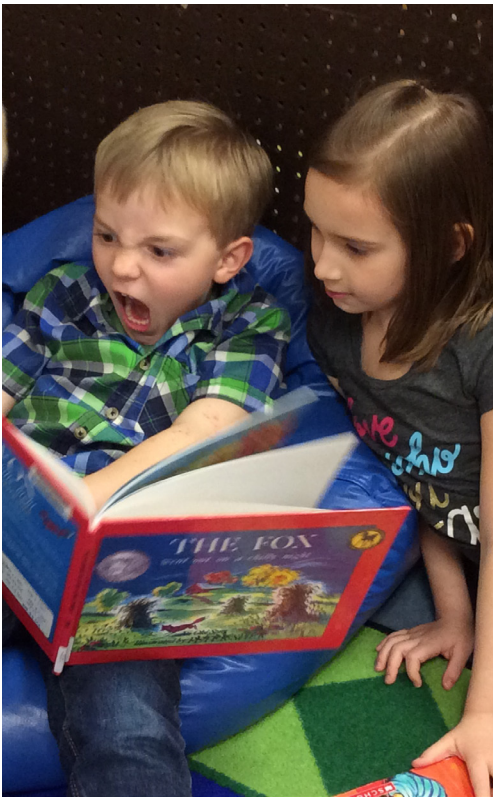
engaged, better informed, empowered decision makers, and gain an overall boost to their self-esteem and confidence as caregivers.

Last year the focus was on what to do when children are sick, safety measures to practice in the home, and tips to keep the family safe while reducing injuries and accidents. This year, the focus is on Oral Healthcare. A copy of the book, *What To Do For Healthy Teeth*, is provided to all participating families.

68 families participated!

As part of the training, families participated in an activity to learn about the amount of sugar in drinks.

Families reported that after receiving the training and the book, they would be: looking closer at labels to see how much sugar was in a drink before purchasing, encourage their family to drink more water, floss more frequently so all surfaces of the teeth were better maintained, and attend regular oral healthcare appointments every six months.



NEW THIS YEAR!

This year the Head Start program implemented *Practice Based Coaching* which is a professional development strategy that uses a cyclical process. This process supports our teachers' use of effective teaching practices that leads to positive outcomes for our children.

10 of 12 teachers participated in the professional development process

The Head Start program also implemented and introduced a parenting education program. ReadyRosie is a research based parenting curriculum that builds on parents' knowledge. ReadyRosie utilized the power of video and mobile technology to empower families and schools to work together to promote school readiness.

152 parents have enriched their parenting skills

HEAD START (YEAR 38) REVENUE & EXPENSES

Actual for FY 2017-2018

REVENUE

Federal Revenue	\$1,769,027.00
Donations	\$1,150.00
Non Federal Contributions	\$488,844.19
USDA Reimbursement	\$120,789.43
CSBG Support to Programs	\$47,930.42
TOTAL REVENUE	\$2,427,741.04

EXPENDITURES

Salaries	\$906,066.30
Fringe Benefits	\$382,029.29
Indirect	\$245,916.37
Classroom Supplies	\$46,792.02
Child / Adult Food	\$154,707.93
Transportation	\$47,597.33
Training	\$24,868.16
Insurance	\$16,033.18
Space Costs	\$85,796.13
Match (In Kind)	\$489,993.60
Communication (Phone & Post)	\$13,608.06
Computers / Software	\$5,403.69
Equipment / Vehicle (bus) Purchase	\$0
Other	\$8,928.98
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$2,427,741.04

The 2017-2018 annual audit, conducted by the firm of Mauthe, Yutzey, Gabler, and Troxell, LLC, showed no material findings, and/or deficiencies.

PRE-K SCHOLARSHIP

The Warren-Forest Counties Economic Opportunity Council is an approved pre-kindergarten scholarship organization. Our contributors for the 2017-2018 program year were:

- Highmark Health Plan West
- UPMC Health Plan
- Whirley Industries
- Northwest Bank

Total Contributions were:

\$35,500



37 families in Warren County received scholarships to cover preschool tuition costs

STATEMENT OF AGENCY REVENUE & EXPENSES
Actual for FY 2017-2018 / Estimated for FY 2018-2019

REVENUE

Federal Revenue	\$2,977,916.75
State Revenue	\$1,093,256.10
Local Revenue	\$333,923.47
Interest/Dividend Earned	\$389,319.75
In Kind Contributions	\$514,405.16
USDA Reimbursement	\$129,423.81
Donations (Cash & Carry Items)	\$105,431.61
Rent & Security Deposits	\$197,219.84
Other Income	\$3,282.76
TOTAL REVENUE	\$5,744,179.25

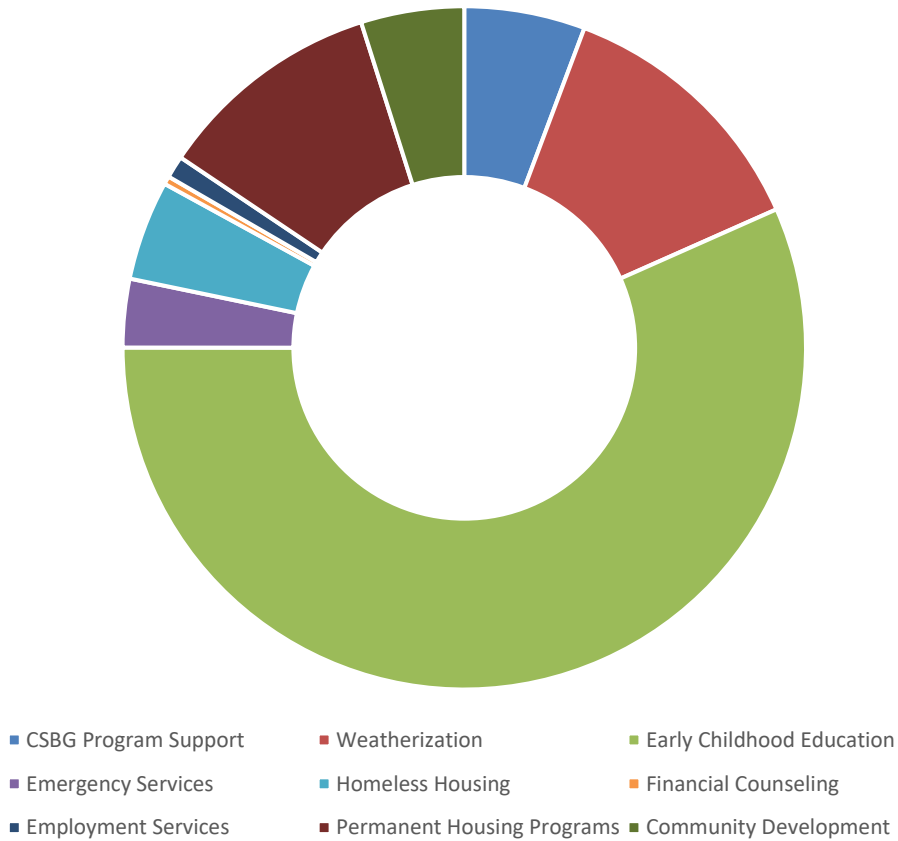
EXPENDITURES

Personnel	\$2,396,505.30
Consultants	\$70,382.11
Audit	\$30,985.00
Travel	\$29,276.05
Supplies	\$260,699.57
Training	\$37,130.66
Insurance	\$41,806.89
Advertising/Printing	\$5,368.02
Equipment/Vehicle	\$11,707.82
Playground	\$0.00
Household Furnishings	\$31,701.88
Fleet of Vehicles	\$54,514.15
Materials-Labor-Rehab	\$393,350.81
Space Costs	\$272,775.17
Inkind / Match (Donated Items)	\$556,175.65
Direct Aide to Families	\$141,623.31
Telephone/Postage/Cable	\$37,721.43
Acquisition Costs/Taxes/New Construction	\$0.00
Construction / Renovations	\$492,698.24
Gain on Investment / Bank Fees	(\$4,259.61)
Depreciation	\$0.00
Maintenance & Repair	\$47,124.95
Other Costs	\$21,543.59
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$4,928,830.99

OBLIGATED FUNDS

Deferred Revenue	\$291,352.80
Due to Grantor (Includes Interest)	\$0
Closed to Fund Balances	\$523,995.46

Spending By Program Type



The chart shown above provides a basic representation of Agency funding by program / service type. The CSBG (Community Services Block Grant) supports all grant programs in some capacity. The Block Grant is specifically for the support of projects which lessen poverty, address the needs of low-income individuals and families, and to provide services and activities addressing employment, education, financial literacy, housing, nutrition, and emergency services. The largest portion of spending is Early Childhood Education which includes PreK Counts, Head Start, and the PreK Scholarship program. Housing is divided between “Homeless Housing” and “Permanent Housing Programs.” Community Development includes renovation, the Beech Street duplex (new construction), and the County Roofing program which is offered through a partnership with Warren County. In this program the

Agency provides construction management and oversight for approved roofing projects that are first reviewed and referred to the EOC by the County. Weatherization programs are the next largest category for spendings while Community Service programs which include financial counseling, foreclosure intervention, homebuyer educations, Work Ready, and emergency programs like the Homeless Assistance Program, Columbia Gas CAP applications, and Neighbor-for-Neighbor grant applications account for the smallest portion of all combined program costs.

2017-2018 AGENCY BOARD OF DIRECTORS & STAFF LISTING

OFFICERS OF THE BOARD 2017-2018

- President** | Father Matthew Scott
- Vice President** | Heather Cathcart-Norris
- Treasurer** | Marina Burch
- Secretary** | Teresa Wolfgang

PUBLIC OFFICIALS

- Barbara Beach
- Barb Litten
- Commissioner Cindy Morrison
- Honorable Judge Maureen Skerda
- Commissioner Norman Wimer
- Teresa Wolfgang

BUSINESS SECTOR

- Marina Burch
- Alice Fadale
- Diane Groszek
- Father Matthew Scott
- Heather Cathcart-Norris
- Alyssa Renninger

TARGET AREA REPRESENTATIVES

- Patricia Lewis
- Judy Silves
- Emily Hecei
- Colleen Fitzgerald
- Erica Kridler

BOARD COMMITTEES: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- Father Matthew Scott, Chairperson
- Heather Cathcart-Norris
- Marina Burch
- Teresa Wolfgang

PROGRAM COMPLIANCE AND EVALUATION

- Teresa Wolfgang, Chairperson
- Patricia Lewis
- Alice Fadale
- Emily Hecei
- Barb Litten
- Diane Groszek

GOVERNANCE/NOMINATING

- Honorable Judge Skerda, Chairperson
- Commissioner Cindy Morrison
- Diane Groszek
- Marina Burch

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

- Father Matthew Scott, Chairperson
- Honorable Judget Maureen Skerda
- Erica Kridler
- Alyssa Renninger
- Judy Silves
- Barb Beach

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND FINANCE

- Marina Burch, Chairperson
- Commissioner Norman Wimer
- Commissioner Cindy Morrison
- Colleen Fitzgerald
- Heather Cathcart-Norris

THE 2017-2018 AGENCY ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

- Executive Director** | Robert A. Raible
- Housing Director** | Brandy Ambrose
- Head Start Director** | Roxanne Carifo
- Grant Administrator & Community Services Directo** | Jeanne Fralick
- Weatherization** | Brittany Spicer
- Community Development** | Lyn Pryor
- Fiscal Director** | Dawn Turner

STAFF (ALPHABETICALLY)

- Brandy Ambrose
- James Babcock
- Nancy M. Birt
- Julie Blum
- Carilee Branstrom
- Sheredith Briggs
- Shelly Brown
- Sherry Brzezinski
- Roxanne Carifo
- Jane Chapman
- Jeannie Christman
- Casey Courtney
- Kasaundra Cressley
- Wayne Curry
- Daniel Dart
- Debra Dunn
- Jonilyn Eck
- Samuel Erickson
- Jeanne Fralick
- Laurel Gardner
- Roger Genberg
- Roxanne Gilliland
- Shannon Godfrey
- Diane Graham
- Cynthia Gray
- Caitlin Hammersley

- Amanda Jespersen
- Mara Johnson
- Gail Jones
- Ryan Kaputa
- Jennifer Keyes
- Stacey Kilhoffer
- Tim Kinander
- Christopher Korbar
- Kristy Kuzminski
- Nicole Long
- Patricia Mack
- Barry McElroy
- Kimberley McElroy
- Karissa McKown
- Sheri Miller
- Annabel Moats
- Monica Morgan
- Laura Myers
- Suzanne Painter
- Heather Passmore
- Nicole Phillips
- Amy Pierce
- Lyn Pryor
- Robert Raible
- Shelly Ristau
- Misty Roos
- Diane Sivak
- Kerwin Smith
- Loraine Smith
- Wendy Smith
- Tami Sorensen
- Brittany Spicer
- Nokomis Stanton
- Paul Streich
- Melanie Swab
- Tressa Sweeney
- Shelly Teska
- Shelle Tubbs

- Dawn Turner
- Rick Wagonseller
- Nancy Walters
- Donna Wilcox
- Amy Willsie
- Jacob Wolfe
- Janene Zaffino

A huge thank you to all our board members and staff who have made all of our many accomplishments this year possible!



The Warren-Forest Counties Economic Opportunity Council, Inc. (EOC) is a Community Action Agency sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The EOC is supported by the Warren County and Forest County Commissioners as well as municipalities, agencies, and organizations in North-western Pennsylvania. This project was financed by a grant from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development.

Warren-Forest Counties EOC is a private, 501(c)3 non-profit organization established in 1965. As such, donations to the Agency are tax-deductible. We appreciate the community's generosity in helping us fulfill our mission. The agency utilizes available funds to operate programs designed to reduce poverty in Warren and Forest Counties through various programs offered to low-income families and individuals. Since its' inception, the agency has ventured to move individuals to a higher economic position through services provided and by instilling a self-reliant and self-sufficient attitude in each client. This is and will continue to be the Agency's highest priority.

If you are interested in donating, please make checks or money orders payable to WFCEOC, 1209 Pennsylvania Avenue, West, PO Box 547, Warren, PA 16365. Donations of gently used clothes and housewares such as furniture, dishes, etc. are always greatly appreciated.

Please contact us at (814) 726-2400 for more information about our various programs and services.

The Warren-Forest Counties Economic Opportunity Council, Inc. is registered as a Charitable Organization with the Department of State, Bureau of Corporations and Charitable Organizations under The Solicitation of Funds for Charitable Purposes Act, 10 P.S. § 162.1 et. seq., and is authorized to solicit charitable contributions under the conditions and limitations set forth under the Act.

