

COMMUNITY ACTION AN NUAL REPORT



2017-2018

WATAUGA

31.3% live in poverty

AVERY

16.7% live in poverty

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MITCHELL

18% live in poverty

YANCEY

21.3% live in poverty

NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I am honored to present WAMY Community Action's 2017-2018 Annual Report. I first want to thank our Board of Directors for their commitment to the agency, their confidence in me, their support of the staff, and their dedication to the communities, the individuals, and the families we represent. I also must thank our staff. It is their hard work, dedication and passion for the work that we do that makes community action really work.

On the next few pages, you will read about some amazing successes; families whose lives have been forever improved through Community Action.

Families who are now learning to walk on their own with their heads held high, families who are well on their way to paying it forward and helping others. This past year has been one of growth for many. WAMY moved into a more spacious office in Spruce Pine to allow us to grow and expand. We added staff to reach more individuals in our western most counties. In addition, WAMY was honored to be one of five community action agencies across the State that was considered Centers of Excellence.

Despite this growth and success; however, we are reminded every day that there is still much work to be done. We need more funding in our housing programs so that we can do repair work on homes to make them safe before we can work on their energy efficiency and heating needs. We need to find a way to provide transportation for all of our after school children in Avery County so that everyone can have access to this amazing resource. The loss of grant funding is a huge obstacle for our Mountain Adventure Days summer camp in Watauga County.

Nevertheless, we will continue to move forward, always remembering the promise of community action:

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

Melissa Scto

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INTRODUCTION

OUR MISSION

Partnering with families and communities to provide the disadvantaged the support and tools they need to become self sufficient.

OUR VISION

WAMY is a catalyst to communities working together. WAMY nurtures families in an environment that promotes quality of life and we provide hope through opportunity.

OUR HISTORY

In 1964, a group of twelve citizens came together to fight against poverty in Watauga, Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey counties. They received funding from the NC Fund which deemed them one of seven community action agencies in North Carolina. WAMY was chartered as a private 501-c3 nonprofit agency and have been at the forefront of the fight against poverty for the past 54 years.

Community action agencies are unique as they are able to adapt to the needs of the community. Our funding comes from Federal and State grants, community foundations, and private contributors. Our board is equally comprised of elected public officials or their representative, private sector representatives, and low-income representatives which offers a better understanding of how to use our funding effectively to meet community needs.

Our previous initiatives include community centers, rural transportation systems (AppalCART), Head Start centers, summer youth programs, and the adult day and health care center of Yancey County.

Current initiatives include family development, weatherization services, youth development, and food and nutrition services.

OUR 2017-2018 ACHEIVEMENTS

688

People served

62

Had
warmer &
safer
homes

350

Enrolled in after school & summer camp

76

Worked
toward
selfsufficiency

120

Received garden vouchers

800

Referred to proper community organization

HOUSING & ENERGY

We work to make low-income family homes safer, more accessible and energy efficient. Our services help families save money now and in the future.

According to economists, energy and utilities should not cost more than 6% of a household's annual income - this is not the case for low-income families. Many low-income families in the four counties we serve are paying nearly half of their annual income on energy and utility bills. In Yancey County, some low-income families pay as much as 44.2% of their income on utility bills.

Meet The Franklins

Tina and Bill have been married for decades.

They live in a century old farmhouse nestled

into the mountains of Yancey County. The Franklins have overcome many hardships throughout their time together - including simultaneously battling cancer. Bill was diagnosed with prostate cancer while Tina was in the midst of yet another battle with breast cancer. These diagnoses put immense physical, emotional, and financial strain on their family. Thankfully, they both overcame their health problems; but were left financially and emotionally drained. When the time came to do repairs on their farmhouse, they had to look for outside resources before cold weather set in.



The Franklins were a good fit for WAMY's Housing Program and soon, work began on their house.

WAMY was able to make the Franklin's home more energy efficient by replacing the insulation and the heating system - among other things. This not only

reduced their utility bills, but also took the financial burden of home repairs off of them. Now, the Franklins will be able to enjoy each other's company in a warm and toasty home for years to come.

FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

We help families who want to increase their education or their employability by providing scholarships for higher education, financial literacy skills, and emergency financial support.

A self-sufficiency standard is how much it costs to live in a certain area without financial assistance. Each of our counties have self-sufficiency standards that fall significantly above the federal poverty line leaving many families wondering what they are going to do to fill the gap. For example: the federal poverty line for one adult and one preschooler in Mitchell County is \$16,460 while the self-sufficiency rate is \$33,547. This is over a \$17,000 gap which leaves families struggling to make ends meet

Meet Sarah

Sarah is a woman from Mitchell County. She has not had an easy or cookie-cutter life. When she was young, Sarah experienced the sudden loss of her mom who used drugs. Soon after, her father fell ill and died unexpectedly. She got married and found herself raising three young kids - one who had special learning needs. She used so much of her energy



growing up and taking care of everyone else that she never pursued her dream of being an LPN. Despite financial and emotional strain, Sarah decided to go back to school - that's when she found WAMY. As an ambitious and driven individual, Sarah was a perfect fit for WAMY's Total Family Development program. Throughout her difficult journey, WAMY was able to help with gas, utility bills, car repairs, and nursing uniforms. But it was Sarah that put in the long hours - waking up and leaving before her kids woke up and commuting an hour each way. After graduation, Sarah sought employment and was hired immediately at one of the local prison facilities making more than \$50,000 a year!

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Our programs provide a safe, structured after school programs for youth and also a low-cost summer camp program for families. After school programs are proven to increase child learning engagement while simultaneously decrease risky behavior. North Carolina parents strongly support after school. 65% of parents reported that kids in after school were more excited to learn. In addition, 75% of parents reported that kids in after school are less likely to engage in risky behaviors.

Meet Leah

Leah is a young girl from Avery County. For years, Leah had been bounced around from foster home to foster home. This constant movement and lack of stability had huge effects on Leah's academics. She was distracted in school, and had lost all motivation to learn.



When Leah began attending WAMY's Community Kids after school program, she was at least one grade level behind her peers in every subject. Her self-esteem was low and she was withdrawn. The mentors and tutors in after school worked with her one-on-one to give her the attention and care she desperately wanted and needed. Then, slowly but surely, she began to catch up to her peers. In fact, she excelled! After her first semester, Leah made the

honor roll and was recognized in front of the school at their awards ceremony.

Thanks to WAMY's youth programs, she now knows that she is capable of doing anything she puts her mind and efforts into.

FOOD & NUTRITION

We help low-income families, including seniors and the disabled, have a home garden by providing them with a voucher to purchase seeds, plants and other supplies.

Food security is one of the leading problems in America - especially among older adults. In fact, North Carolina's rate of food insecurity among the 60+ population is significantly higher than the national average leaving 1 in 5 older adults food insecure. For low income families, food insecurity is especially present as many have to choose between food and other living needs. In Watauga County alone, 78% had to choose between medicine/medical care or food.

Meet Phyllis



Phyllis is an older woman that lives in Watauga County. After getting married, she and her husband Wayne settled into the rural mountains of Vilas, NC where they built their lives together. As the years went on, Wayne's health declined. With impending medical expenses and living on a fixed income, they were no longer able to afford enough food for their family -

that's when we met Phyllis.

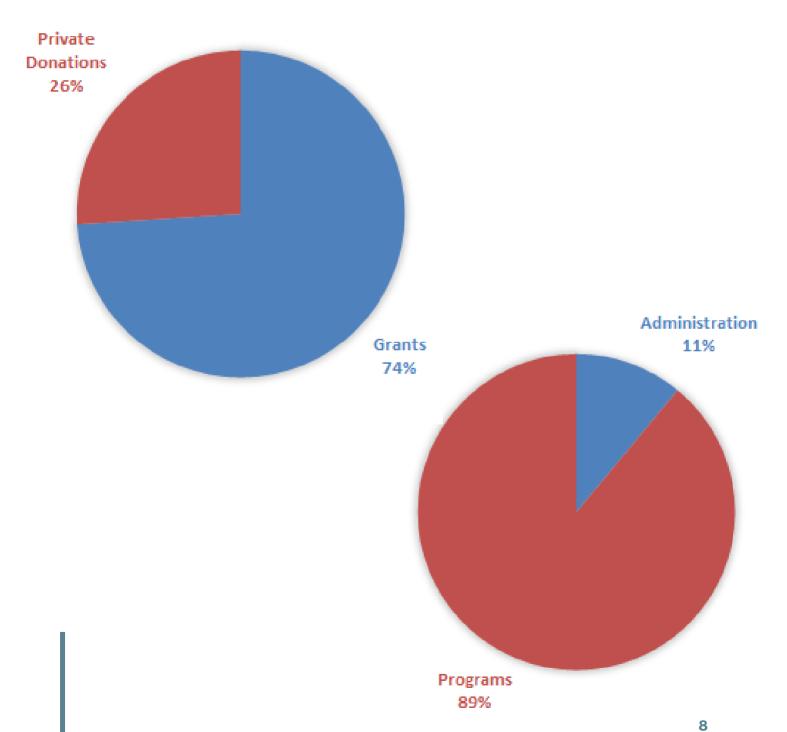
Due to lifelong gardening experience, Phyllis knew just what to do to make her garden voucher worthwhile. Since Wayne was physically unable to help in the garden, Phyllis began passing on her love and tradition of gardening on to her grandson, Jacob. As she taught him about gardening, he was able to help not only maintain the garden, but to grow more and thus yield a larger crop to feed the family.



Because of WAMY's gardening program, Phyllis was able to save money, increase her and Wayne's food security, and build strong family ties.

OUR FINANCIALS

WAMY Community Action is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that is funded by multiple grants alongside private donations. The majority of our funding goes directly to programs in order to make as large an impact as possible in our community.



2017-2018 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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