

Red River Valley Community Action

2008 Annual Report

March 2009

Air Force
Print News **Today**

Air Force news from around the world

Airmen give back to giving community

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319th Air Refueling Wing Public Affairs



Senior Airman Kimberly Duenas, 319th Medical Group, gathers packages of food to be placed in bags that will eventually be delivered to the elderly as part of the Red River Valley Community Action's commodity supplemental food program. More than 60 base Airmen and family members have donated time to the project, which helps more than 600 elderly citizens monthly. (U.S. Air Force photo/Staff Sgt. J. Paul Croxon)

10/9/2008 - **GRAND FORKS AIR FORCE BASE, N.D.** -- A volunteer creates boxes out of pre-cut supplies. As soon as a box is complete another volunteer takes it to a staging area. Dozens like it, stacked to the ceiling of the garage like miniature, cardboard skyscrapers, await their turn to be filled with various food supplies, moved further into the garage, and sent on their way to their final destination. The entire process is a streamlined dance with no wasted movements. Most of the nearly 20 volunteers have danced this dance before.

The boxes of food supplies are donated as part of Red River Valley Community Action's commodity supplemental food program to nearly 600 people throughout the area who are unable to procure their own food.

For Senior Airman Chavis Wright, 319th Communications Squadron, this is the first time he has volunteered, and he's thankful for the opportunity to help.

"It feels good to give back to the community," he said noting how welcome he feels despite having only been stationed here for a few months.

In a different part of the garage, Senior Airman Kimberly Duenas, 319th Medical Group, fills bags with food as they parade down a set of rollers. Like Airman Wright, she is here to give back to a community that has given her so much.

"I've gone to free sporting events as part of Operation Enduring Friendship," she said referencing a popular program that gives free tickets to base members. "Helping here gives me a way of saying thank you. It also gives base volunteers the chance to work together."

This is the sixth time volunteers have helped RRVCA prepare the food bags and boxes. The opportunity began with a simple phone call.

"I was looking for a place where Airmen could help the community," said 2nd Lt. Christine Williams, 319 CS. "I picked up a phonebook and started calling places to see if they could use some help. Word got out among the squadron and beyond."

The opportunity is a win for all parties. Though volunteers don't see the end result of their labor, the actual delivery of the bags and boxes, they all find it rewarding.

"This really boils down to service," said Lieutenant Williams. "As Airmen, we serve our country every day, but it's extremely satisfying when you can touch the local community like we do through this effort."

WEATHERIZATION DAY

On October 22nd, Red River Valley Community Action had the opportunity to host a Weatherization Day in Grand Forks. Multiple events occurred throughout the day featuring several important guests. Congressman Earl Pomeroy, Grand Forks Mayor Michael Brown and National Community Action Foundation Executive Director David Bradley were not only key participants but also people who can create awareness of energy conservation programming and create the changes necessary to expand such services. The Home Weatherization Program, funded through the Department of Energy, was the focal point of the day's activities. A press conference at which Congressman Pomeroy announced an increase in the yearly funding for the program was attended by state and local officials as well as several media outlets. Mayor Brown spoke of the need for weatherization more homes in Grand Forks and also provided fact sheets on simple things that homeowners can do themselves to conserve resources and money.

David Bradley spoke about the new Stimulus Bill in Congress and the fact that Weatherization would be included in the Bill. After the press conference, participants went to a local home and observed the Red River Valley Community Action's weatherization crews applying energy-saving measures to the house. Pomeroy, Brown and Bradley all interacted with crew members and were informed on the proper procedures for the installation of the measures. They also visited with the homeowners and, as is the case when we visit many of our clients, were able to sample some delicious homemade desserts. The day concluded with a round-table discussion of suggested changes to the Weatherization Program in order to make it even more effective. Congressman Pomeroy and David Bradley requested a Policy Paper from the North Dakota Community Action Association to summarize the changes so that they could bring those views to Washington D.C. Representative Pomeroy is a leading proponent of the Weatherization services and has been working to strengthen the program.

The activities conducted on October 22nd provided useful information to the general public as well as elected officials.





2008 CSBG Narrative

Nearly 2,000 individuals were served in Region IV in 2008 by Red River Valley Community Action. And although funding sources were numerous it continues to be the Community Services Block Grant which leverages other federal, state and private resources.

Budget counseling, daycare assistance, self reliance, individual development accounts, VITA, emergency services, energy share, the Ernie J. Norman Center, food gleaning, sportsmen against hunger, commodity supplemental program, market express, SHIC, shelter plus care and many, many other programs are either funded directly with CSBG funds or use CSBG to leverage other funding for these services. The flexibility of CSBG funds is crucial to smaller community action agencies like the seven in North Dakota. The grant is the primary source of funding for planning, research, grant writing, administration, auditing, legal representation and other crucial everyday costs associated with administering a private non-profit. Without CSBG, we would lose the “umbrella” of stability which allows us to attract other funding sources and partners in the fight to alleviate poverty in our four county region.

CSBG is vital for not only funding but also the linkages we develop with new collaborators every year as well as those that have carried over for a number of years.

An example of these multiple partnerships was evident throughout the Holiday Season in 2008. RRVCA united with Applebee's Grill of East Grand Forks and Scheels' All Sports to create Trikes for Tykes. Applebee's raised the funds to fix up donated bikes and Scheels fixed them up at a reduced price. Our agency then delivered 28 bikes to low-income children during the week of Christmas.

On December 16, 2008, RRVCA held Santa Day for low-income families. A staff member was dressed as Santa Claus and 190 children visited with him and received toys. The toys were given to us by several different entities including Northern Valley Transportation Coalition who's employees in Grand Forks, East Grand Forks, Minto and Larimore all donated items. Local businesses Bremer Bank, Italian Moon, Gate City Bank and the Fireman's Auxiliary Board all donated toys and/or cash to Santa Day. Area churches Holy Family Catholic, First Presbyterian, Sharon Lutheran, Calvary Lutheran and Faith Evangelical Free all donated gifts and food baskets that went to 38 low-income families for Christmas. Bethel Lutheran donated several boxes of hygiene products for the families living in our Ernie J. Norman Shelter House. Wesley Methodist members made quilts for the shelter families for Christmas.

Events like these take place because of staff that are paid with CSBG funding. Without that source of funding there is no coordination of events; no money donated; no gift-giving possible and no chance for many of our low-income families to have a Merry Christmas.

Thanks to the Community Services Block Grant, hundreds of families were able to enjoy the Holiday Season. In total, RRVCA partnered with 15 local entities to make all of this possible. It is those types of partnerships that CSBG sustains!

Without community involvement many agency activities/programs simply wouldn't exist. Community Action Agencies throughout the state and country experience the same examples. The key word in caa's is *community*. And defined by Webster's Dictionary it means, “a unified body of individuals; people with common interests living in a particular area”.



2008 ROMA STATISTICS


ROMA

In 1994, congress decided that community action agencies needed to be more accountable for the services that we provide. ROMA (Results Oriented Management & Accountability) was developed to track the outcomes of our services. We track services and the outcomes of those services in three areas: promoting self-sufficiency, family stability, and community revitalization. A ROMA report is developed each year to help RRVCA staff re-evaluate the effectiveness of our programs and plot a course for improvements in agency capacity and performance. This report is monitored at the agency, state and federal level to preserve the anti-poverty focus of community action and promote greater effectiveness between state and local agencies. The following information is a snapshot of the 2008 ROMA report measurements of our program and activities.

RRVCA continues much of the programming as it was in the 2007 Annual Report. However, the staff has since seen an increase in a couple of areas. We have seen more participation by single parent, female head of households and an increase in two adults with no children households at our agency. Food assistance requests have increased and emergency cash assistance for unpaid rent and utilities have increased from 418 to 463 households. We have seen an increase from 60 to 89 families applying for temporary shelter. Daycare assistance grant funds helped 30 families retain their daycare and their employment, but we ran out of grant funds sooner than anticipated. We continue to work with 658 other businesses, churches, civic groups, classes/schools, individuals, air base personnel and many more in the area to do all that we can for our clients. Referral calls have increased to approximately seventeen (17) calls per day. RRVCA staff prepared 128 income tax returns through our VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) program with an emphasis on finding those households who qualify for Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit and the new Economic Stimulus Rebate payments. Our IDA (Individual Development Accounts) program, which assists participants in purchasing a home or starting a business or attending post secondary education, added five more participants in 2008. This helps our clients learn saving habits and achieve their self sufficiency goals. This doubled our participants from the previous year and continues to be a goal in the coming years. Volunteer hours in 2008 totaled 8,400 hours. The Food Fellowship, food gleaning program, increased in 2008. In 2007, we gleaned 411,000 pounds of food and in 2008, we gleaned 455,000 pounds. Households assisted for weatherization, furnace tuning and cleaning, home rehabilitation, set-back thermostats, furnace repairs, plastic window kits and helping hand funds increased from 489 households to 546 households.

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.





RED RIVER VALLEY COMMUNITY ACTION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- ◆ Rosie Black —Grand Forks County — Board Treasurer
- ◆ BJ Brazil —Walsh County
- ◆ Gwen Crawford—Grand Forks County
- ◆ Judy DeMers—Grand Forks County
- ◆ Lloyd Fosse— Nelson County —Board Secretary
- ◆ Michelle Hardy—Pembina County
- ◆ JoAnn Hjelseth — Nelson County
- ◆ Ralph Honda—Grand Forks County
- ◆ Robert Kilichowski—Walsh County—Board President
- ◆ Rebecca Heigaard McGurran—Grand Forks County
- ◆ Spud Murphy—Grand Forks County—Board Vice President
- ◆ Hetty Walker —Pembina County



RED RIVER VALLEY COMMUNITY ACTION STAFF

- ◆ Katie Collette—Tech Support
 - ◆ David Ellefson—Weatherization Crew Technician
 - ◆ Mike Fruetel—Weatherization Crew Foreman
 - ◆ Rich Geringer—Weatherization Crew Technician
 - ◆ Julie Hovde—Case Manager (Walsh / Pembina Counties)
 - ◆ Kathie Johnson—Co-Administrator, Housing and Energy Programming
 - ◆ Kent Keys—Executive Director
 - ◆ Chris Loveless—Co-Administrator, Housing and Energy Programming
 - ◆ Lora Machart—Senior Case Manager
 - ◆ Shelly Scholand—Case Manager
 - ◆ Tracy Meagher—Case Manager
 - ◆ Bridgette Schwartz—Receptionist
 - ◆ Kaye Seibel—Finance Manager
 - ◆ Cody Severson—Weatherization Crew Technician
 - ◆ Kevin Severson—Housing Program Coordinator / Certified Lead Inspector
 - ◆ Terry Steinke—Administrative Assistant / Nutrition Coordinator
 - ◆ Mike Sullivan—Estimator/Inspection
 - ◆ Stephanie Trottier—Shelter Caretaker
 - ◆ Chet VerHoeven —Weatherization Crew Technician
 - ◆ Lolly Wohlfiel—Market Express Coordinator
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