

October 19, 2000

MEMO

To: CAO Board of Directors

From: Jerralynn Ness 

Subject: Letters to the Editor

There are many opportunities for board members to submit opinion letters to our local newspapers regarding issues of concern for CAO. These letters can have the effect of educating the public about poverty and actions that can be taken, as well as raising awareness of Community Action's work. I hope that all of you will consider submitting a letter of the course of this year. To help facilitate this, I will occasionally provide the board with information about issues and topics that opinion letters could address. In addition, attached to this memo is information regarding each newspapers guidelines for submitting such letters.

As we have discussed, the county public safety levy is of great interest to CAO. This levy, if passed, will provide annual funding for four local shelter operations: CAO's Family Shelter (\$150,000), the Domestic Violence SHELTER (\$150,000), the Good Neighbor Center (\$200,000) and the Interfaith Hospitality Shelter Network (\$35,000). These shelters rely on a variety of funding sources and are all experiencing financial difficulties. A strong public funding partner is needed to stabilize operations. Annually, over 8,000 people become homeless in Washington County. Currently, there is bed space to shelter about 10% of those seeking shelter. If new funding isn't identified to support existing shelter services, the county will lose some of its current shelter bed capacity. The majority of homeless people in Washington County are children and their families.

Attached is a page that will appear in the Washington County's Voter Pamphlet. I would urge you all to consider submitting a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. Please let me know if you have any questions. We are also willing to assist anyone who is interested in submitting a longer soapbox or opinion piece; please contact Sharon Bosserman-Benson at 503-693-3255. Thank you for considering this request.