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April 2, 1999

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to present to you a summary of our recent accomplishments at Community Action Organization. As a respected donor and friend to our organization, I hope that the enclosed letter will illustrate how your gifts were used and the difference they made in so many lives this past year. I've enclosed my Executive Director's report, along with some financial information, and a story from one of our clients that tells in her own words how your support and our services transformed her life.

May is National Community Action Month. To celebrate, we are hosting our 1999 "Celebration of Community Spirit" dinner on May 6<sup>th</sup> at the Embassy Suites in Tigard. You will soon be receiving an invitation in the mail, but I wanted to add my personal note to encourage you to come. Our "Celebration" brings annual public recognition to businesses and individuals who have given leadership, volunteer time or financial support to create positive change for our most vulnerable neighbors. In addition, it is a chance to learn more about the work of Community Action and the moving stories of lives changed and people making a difference. It promises to be an inspiring evening. I hope you can join us.

You will also find an enclosure describing gift opportunities for continued support to our services. These are just some of the ways your contributions benefit those in need. Your ongoing interest and support of Community Action is deeply appreciated. Thank you for joining us in changing lives and making a difference!

Sincerely,

Jerralynn Ness  
Executive Director

## **COMMUNITY ACTION ORGANIZATION**

### **Creating Bridges: Executive Director's Report To Donors And Friends**

*Through philanthropic gifts, government collaboration, local leadership and hundreds of volunteer hours, Community Action Organization (CAO) is creating new hope and opportunity for low-income families in our county. On behalf of our Board of Directors, I am proud to report on the impact our work has had over our 1997-98 fiscal year. Return on your investment can be measured not only by the number of people served, but also by the crises prevented and lives stabilized. We cannot underestimate the positive effect that each person's economic security has upon the whole of our society. From all of us at CAO and on behalf of those who benefited, I want to thank you for your encouragement and generosity.*

#### **A BRIDGE TO OPPORTUNITIES**

Community Action Organization is unique. No piecemeal approach to poverty will do. At the heart of CAO's mission is the promotion of collaborations and understanding, as well as policies that allow us to get at the causes and conditions of poverty. CAO's Board structure and philosophy of empowerment put us in a unique position to give voice to the concerns of our low-income constituents. Community Action has inspired understanding and compassion among the people of Washington County, creating a rainbow of innovative and successful programs. Your support has provided us the flexibility to respond to emerging needs, such as:

*Healthy Start, Inc. asked CAO to become the new parent organization for Opening Doors, a maternity outreach program that improves birth outcomes for low-income women and increases their access to the health care system. We were able to respond positively, thus assuring the continuation of these critical services.*

#### **A BRIDGE TO PREVENTION**

By giving children a stronger start in life and in school, keeping low-income families in their home, or teaching basic life skills, your gifts to CAO's prevention programs are a bright hope for breaking the cycle of poverty.

- 386 pre-school children, enrolled in our 13 *Head Start* sites, were brought to a level of health, social and educational readiness to help assure their success in school.
- Over 18 in-home child care providers and child care centers received on-site training to promote preschool children's literacy and a love for books through our *Learning Circle* program. As a result, over 200 children received enriching, age-appropriate activities to support their successful entry into school.
- 523 childcare providers planned and served nutritious meals due to the support provided by our *ABC Soup* program. As a result, 5,257 children received balanced meals, which improved their readiness to learn.
- *Rent assistance* prevented homelessness for 249 families. With our support, over half of the families remained in their housing six months later.
- 110 homeless or low-income people are now better prepared to obtain and maintain housing through participation in our *Tenant Education* classes and receipt of a certificate of completion, which tells potential landlords that they understand their rights and responsibilities as tenants.
- Illness, suffering and economic crisis were prevented for 154 Washington County low-income households because CAO *weatherized* their homes and instructed them in ways to conserve energy.

## BRIDGE TO PROTECTION

At Community Action Organization, we are reminded every day that the line between a stable, self-sufficient existence and destitution is very thin. One layoff, one illness, one injury can set off a series of events that puts lives in jeopardy. For most low-income families, there is no cushion of savings to rely upon in crisis; for many, family support is unavailable. Their most basic needs may go unmet as money to pay rent, utilities, health care and food can quickly disappear.

CAO reduces the cause and effect of crisis by linking families to critically needed services. Through your support, our *Homeless Services*, *Information and Referral* and *Emergency Assistance* programs prevented destitution and the effects of poverty for thousands of low-income people in need.

- Through collaborations with the community, 119 homeless families were sheltered and received the basic necessities, as well as encouragement and support. After five weeks at the *CAO Family Shelter Home*, over half of the residents moved into stable housing.
- We significantly reduced hunger by screening and linking families to food pantries, which provided 2,432 *emergency food boxes*.
- Our *Information and Referral* staff responded to 9,576 calls for assistance. Each referral given provided a link to immediate help and hope for the future.
- Faced with high heating bills, families are forced to make the choice between heating their home, paying rent or buying food for their families. Our *energy assistance* prevented 829 households from losing their heat and utilities.
- Over 1,400 low-income parents found safe, affordable and convenient childcare so they could go to work with peace of mind through our *Metro Childcare Resource & Referral Service*.
- 110 children had a fun, secure place to go after school while their parents were at work, thanks to *A Kid's Domain*, our before and after-school child care program. Half of the families received full or partial scholarships to ensure that the care was affordable.
- Over 10,000 items of clothing and small household goods were provided to low-income residents, thanks to the efforts of 24 energetic volunteers at "Play it Again," our free *clothes closet*.

## BRIDGE TO THE FUTURE OF CAO

The landscape and demographics of Washington County are rapidly evolving and growing. Throughout this whirlwind of change, our residents' greatest hope is to retain a sense of place and community. In this environment, CAO is committed to operating innovative programs that preserve community and encourage action for the common good.

CAO provides bridges for thoughtful people to reach out to others as individuals and through their businesses, religious organizations, service clubs, schools and government. Your financial support, involvement as advisor, focus group member, or leadership volunteer is so important to realize the kind of community we want for ourselves and future generations. I hope that you will continue to participate with CAO by considering new and meaningful opportunities. *Thank you* for being a caring member of our community.

Warmly,



Jerralynn Ness, Executive Director