



Spring 1997

## Who Is Poor?

Recently, we at CAO pledged to eliminate poor from our vocabulary. Katy, one of our Board members, has words of praise for the way we do our work, but also gently nudges us to advance our understanding about the ways our choice of words can be hurtful and stigmatizing. This is Katy's story:

*After being gone for a couple of days to attend a state Head Start Association meeting, I came home to find my young son, Tommy, in tears. I asked him what was wrong and he said nothing. I pressed him, and he finally said, "Billy said he can't play with me anymore because we're poor. Are we poor, Mom?"*

*I responded by asking him, "Are we poor because we don't have a home?" Tommy said no.*

*"Are we poor because we don't have enough food to eat?" Tommy said no.*

*"Are we poor because you don't have decent clothes to wear to school?" Tommy said no.*

*"Are we poor because we don't have enough love in our family?" Tommy said no.*

*I called my family together for a family meeting. I told my children that poor is apparently a word that some people use to describe others who are living on low incomes. I told the children that they live on a low income, but that they are not poor...in fact, they have many riches. Together, the family decided that "poor" is not a word that will be allowed in our home.*

# CONNECTIONS

A Quarterly Publication of Community Action Organization

## Community Action Works

In Washington County and Across the Nation

Join us in a special celebration! Community Action is sometimes referred to as America's best kept secret. The National Association of Community Action Agencies is hoping to change that by declaring May 4-10 this year National Community Action Week. CAO is one of nearly 1,000 Community Action Agencies (CAAs) serving communities nationwide. CAAs were established through federal legislation in 1964 and have a proud history of service. We continue to thrive and have reason to celebrate!

Just ask:

- the elderly woman who finally feels warm in her home since it was weatherized
- the single mother struggling to live on a small, fixed income whose life was made a little easier because of an energy assistance payment
- the family who turned to our shelter after a medical crisis caused them to lose their housing
- the four-year-old who will enter kindergarten in the fall ready to learn because of his experiences in Head Start

These people's stories provide proof

of the theme of the week: *Community Action works!*

While every CAA is different, we share some very special characteristics. All CAAs are dedicated to meeting the needs of low income people. We serve 98% of the nation's cities and counties and are a primary source of support for more than 38 million people living in poverty. Like CAO, all Community Action Agencies have a uniquely structured Board of Directors: one-third are representatives of the low income community, one-third are from the private sector, and one-third are publicly elected officials.

To celebrate National Community Action Week, we are inviting the public to tour two of our facilities. On Wednesday, May 7 between 1 and 4 P.M., you are welcome to drop by our new Multi-Service and Child Development Center (1001 SW Baseline) or the Family Shelter Home (210 SE 12th), both in Hillsboro. Staff will be available to give you a tour, and light refreshments will be provided.

Come by and see how Community Action works in Washington County!

NATIONAL  
COMMUNITY  
ACTION  
WEEK



MAY 4-10  
Community Action Works



Cindy Hirst  
Board Chair

## Message from the Board Chair and Executive Director



Jerralynn Ness  
Executive Director

We have just returned from a visit to Washington DC where we participated in the National Community Action Foundation (NCAF) 1997 Legislative Conference, Community Solutions for Better Government. While there, we had the opportunity to visit our congressional offices and the President of The Enterprise Foundation. We left very inspired and with a strong sense of hope.

At the NCAF conference, Republican and Democratic representatives from Congress spoke to us about their deep-felt belief that as a nation we will never truly move forward if we leave our less advantaged neighbors behind. They praised the work of Community Action, strengthening communities around the country, often family by family. They also

renewed their pledge to assure that every child and family will have the opportunities they need to live free of poverty and every low-income elderly and disabled person will live with dignity and security.

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Our visit to The Enterprise Foundation was a moving reminder of the power of private and public partnerships. Guided by the enlightened vision and leadership of the late James W. Rouse, corporate giant and noted

philanthropist, this foundation was established to assure that every low income person had a fit and affordable place to live. Mr. Rouse believed passionately that what ought to be, can be, if we have the will to make it so, and

that we share together the deep commitment to help lift the poor from poverty to the good life. Thank you, Jim Rouse, for leaving us such an inspiring legacy.

We came back strengthened in our belief that people fundamentally care about each other and want to contribute to building healthy, inclusive communities.

We look forward, with pride, to celebrating our first annual Community Action Week: *Community Action Works!*, May 4th through the 10th. We sincerely hope that you will join us and continue to support the work we do.

**Elizabeth Furse toured our CAO facilities in February.** In a thank you letter to Jerralynn Ness, Cindy Hirst and the CAO staff she wrote, "I am inspired by your patience, commitment, and persistence in helping others! You should be so proud of your accomplishments! I was...very interested to learn about some of the difficulties CAO faces in providing services to people in need. I will keep you updated on the Washington County Housing Summit I want to put together sometime in the spring....I look forward to working with you both in the future!"

*Elizabeth is pictured here with her staffer, Shelley Romero, and CAO staff.*

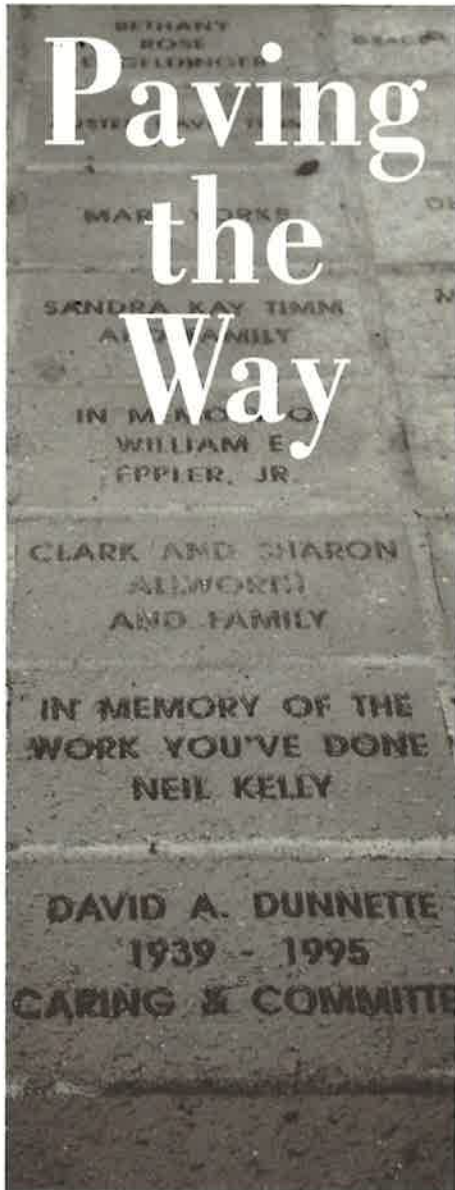
Community Connections is the quarterly newsletter of Community Action Organization, 1001 SW Baseline St., Hillsboro, OR 97123, and is published by the Development Office and Yvette Dyer, volunteer.

Community Action Organization is a private, non-profit corporation providing a wide variety of services to the needy in Washington County, Oregon.

**For further information:**  
Administration: 648-6646  
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(Neighborshare)







Each one of us probably has one special person who paved the way for us in our lives—that special person who believed in us, encouraged and supported us when it really made a difference. For some that may be a mother or father, and for others it may be a grandparent or teacher. Who was that special person in your life?

*"We bought bricks for family members all over the country, then invited them to come visit us and see the bricks. It meant much more to them than another sweater or floral arrangement would have. It benefited our community more than another sale rung up at the mall." (This family bought 14 bricks.)*

This year, Community Action is offering a way for you to honor that person and at the same time pave the way for someone in need in our local community. We have a brick pathway in front of our Multi-Service Center in Hillsboro and for a \$50.00 donation we will inscribe your personal message to the individual you wish to honor. In addition, we

will send a card to that person letting them know that a brick was purchased in their honor. If the person you are honoring has passed away, we will send a card to a family member informing them of this special tribute. Cards can be sent for a Mother's or Father's Day gift or on Memorial Day to honor that special person in your life. The bricks will literally pave the way for over 100 Head Start children who come into our center in Hillsboro everyday. The money raised from the brick sales will be used to benefit the work of Community Action in Washington County. To honor someone special in your life and help those in need, just fill out the form below and return in the enclosed envelope.

**YES**, I want to honor someone and help **Pave the Way** for others—

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Method of payment:

Check enclosed  MasterCard  Visa

Name as it appears on card: \_\_\_\_\_

Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration date \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to purchase \_\_\_\_\_ brick(s) at \$50.00 each Total \_\_\_\_\_

Inscription on brick(s) - (up to 3 lines, 17 characters per line)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

In honor of \_\_\_\_\_, please send a card to:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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