



NASCSP Newsletter

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Message from our Chair: 45 and Still Kickin'

by Vaughn Clark



Every time we pass another historical milestone in the War on Poverty, I get a bit wistful. I think about the commitment and vision of those who launched the nation toward a concerted commitment to address poverty. The seeds of this wisdom and commitment can be traced far back in our nation's history, but it was really set in motion by the Civil Rights movement and summed up so pointedly by the profound words of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in his 1963 speech at the march on Washington, D.C., *"The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges."*

Regardless of your politics or views about the success (or lack thereof) of the War on Poverty, from where we sit as state directors of programs that originated with this 1964 policy, I think it's hard not to feel a sense of purpose and inspiration from the words of President Lyndon B. Johnson, which always bear repeating, *"This administration today, here and now, declares unconditional war on poverty in America ... because it is right, because it is wise, and because, for the first time in our history, it is possible to conquer poverty."*

Since those historic words were spoken, we've developed into a network of nearly 1,100 local agencies funded by a block grant administered by states. And while we've certainly had our share of accomplishments and we continue to generate successful anti-poverty strategies, the fact remains that Community Action hasn't really generated any visible, national, high-impact strategies in recent years. I strongly believe we're still very much committed to our original mission to conquer poverty, but a look at the current U.S. poverty rate is disheartening, especially compared to other developed nations.

In the United Kingdom, they've made real progress toward the goal of cutting poverty in half in as little as 10 years. There, the government was able to garner broad public support for ending poverty. I have a strong suspicion that this is a clue to our own nation's lackluster progress related to poverty; there simply has not been sufficient public will to end poverty.

Until now. With the signing of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) by President Obama

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earlier this year, the tides may finally be shifting. According to Timothy Smeeding, Director of the Institute for Research on Poverty, ARRA “signals a new revolution in American social policy.” The ARRA is unique in that it’s not focused on specific programs or government aid. In fact, the majority of the initiatives contained in it are aimed at boosting the economy by supporting individuals and making work pay. According to Smeeding’s research, about 80 percent of government tax and spending can be classified under one of the Big Three types of payments: health (Medicare, children’s health insurance, etc.), education (job training, youth programs, etc), or welfare (cash or near-cash benefits, earned income tax credits, child tax credits, etc.). These spending programs are expected to successfully prevent millions of families from falling below the poverty line.

Federal support and resources can only go so far, of course. A large burden remains on states and localities to carry out the mandates of the new stimulus package. At the same time, as we all know too well, our state resources are strained to the limit just trying to get out the stimulus funds and monitor their impact. But our success and in fact, our very survival, may now be irreversibly tied to the success of the ARRA in addressing poverty. According to Olivia Golden, a Fellow at the Urban Institute in Washington, DC and a former assistant secretary for children and families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services,

states, are suffering from the juxtaposition of great demand and reduced resources. Yet this watershed moment is too important to miss. [...This is] an opportunity to leverage policy innovation and significant benefits for low-income families with relatively modest investments and to avoid missing the most significant moment in decades for domestic social policy.

In an exclusive commentary conducted by, The Spotlight on Poverty (www.spotlightonpoverty.org/), Olivia Golden suggested 3 practical strategies for success with ARRA implementation. Although her comments were directed at foundations, I find they lend themselves nicely to the work of CSBG and Weatherization State Managers.

I. Document everything. In order to ensure the benefits of

ARRA funds can continue after the 2 year grant period is up, we need to document carefully what works and what doesn’t. As we journey into uncharted territory of innovative and massive projects, we’ll inevitably make mistakes. But as we use innovative solutions and redesign outdated methods in order to produce quicker results, the lessons learned will be invaluable going forward. Local agencies need to know that you want and need this information.

2. More of the same won’t fly. This is the time to take advantage of the fact that we’re starting to see a shift in public will around alleviating poverty in the US. The public’s tolerance for poverty seems to be waning and there is a widespread belief that working families shouldn’t have to live in poverty.

What we need is an open mind to use the new information gathered to develop innovative policy ideas related to poverty, child well-being, green jobs, etc. States can take the lead on encouraging local agencies to think beyond what they’ve always done. And don’t forget to share what innovative things you’re doing with NASCSP so we can spread the word!

3. Spit-shine your data. I feel like a broken record saying this but, honestly, time spent analyzing data will reap a large return on investment. For a little of your staff time collecting and checking agency data, you’ll have a picture of what’s working and what’s not. At the national level, NASCSP can compile the states’ data and work with all of you to generate innovative policy ideas. Once we know what our best strategies and some successful new solutions are, we will be better able to support these projects beyond the 2 years of stimulus funding. Things that work can be taken to scale and states and local agencies will be well positioned to significantly impact poverty.

As we enter the 45th year of an ongoing struggle against poverty in this nation, we’re at a crossroads. We can continue to do business as usual in Community Action or we can seize the unprecedented opportunity that is in front of us in the form of both public will and federal funding to eliminate poverty. This requires nothing more or less than what we’re good at in Community Action—attention to detail, close scrutiny of data, new monitoring and oversight efforts, and of course, some creative solutions. If

we're truly committed to the world of Dr. King's dream for this nation, we'll embrace our historic mission and seize

this chance to finally make poverty history.

In Praise of the Office of Community Services

by David Bradley

I had a role in establishing the Office of Community Services (OCS). In working with the Congress in 1981 to create the Community Services Block Grant, I gave considerable thought to how to and who would administer what is essentially a federal categorical block grant. An independent federal agency, like the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) or its successor, the Community Services Administration (CSA) would be out of the question. But an office specifically charged with administering the Community Services Block Grant, and eventually a number of small national discretionary programs housed within an existing federal agency such as Health and Human Services, would be an attractive option. Congress agreed; thus the Office of Community Services was established.

I must admit when OCS was established I had visions, unrealistic ones as they turned out, of the new OCS recapturing some of the past glory and responsibilities of OEO, or at least CSA. Of course, this did not happen. The downgrading of OCS and its near orphan status within the Department of Health and Human Services for much of the 1980s was but the first of many disappointments I had concerning the CSBG program.

Perhaps nothing disappointed me more than the 2006 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report faulting OCS for ineffective policies, procedures and controls in the CSBG program. Many of us had known about these weaknesses for years. Now however, with the issuance of the GAO report in June 2006 to Congress, serious weaknesses in accountability were highlighted at a time when some in the Congress and many in the Administration favored terminating CSBG all together. Quite a few members of Congress, both Republicans *and* Democrats, expressed disappointment in the federal administration of the core community action program. I felt that among even our best congressional supporters, confidence in the entire CSBG system; federal, state and local was shaken and harmed.

It is now however, time to praise the Office of Community Services. With each new Administration comes an opportunity to start anew. New impressions of programs will be formed and hopefully many of the past misimpressions will be thrown out. This is true of local programs as well as federal agencies. Accountability and results by everyone are important in this Administration.

Now the good news. On August 12th, the Inspector General's office at HHS issued the results of their investigation as to whether OCS has addressed concerns cited by GAO in their 2006 report. If under-addressed or not fully corrected, the Obama Administration's confidence, or more specifically lack of confidence, in the CSBG program could seriously harm CSBG reauthorization as well as funding.

However, it is very apparent that OCS has taken decisive and aggressive action in successfully addressing all of the GAO concerns. Congress, the Administration as well as the Community Action network now have the assurance and proof that the expertise, effectiveness and accountability needed by our federal partners at OCS are in place and working.

For CSBG to prosper and be the effective anti-poverty tool we all know that it can be, we simply must have a truly outstanding Office of Community Services. I know first hand how hard the team at OCS has been working at improving their performance. The Inspector General issued a report card on their progress and it read A+!

I sincerely hope the effort that OCS has put in to make their share of the community action partnership the best that it can be should serve as an inspiration to all of us to aim higher in our performance. To the band of brothers and sisters at the Office of Community Services a hearty congratulations at strengthening the CSBG program, but more importantly helping give the CSBG network a real opportunity to finally perform a significant and growing

role in helping this country combat the evils of poverty.	<i>necessarily represent the opinions of NASCSP.</i>
<i>The views of contributing writers to this newsletter do not</i>	



LEGISLATIVE CORNER

by Jovita A. Tolbert and Rebecca Stewart



Both the House and Senate are now in recess and will return to work Tuesday, September 8th. Before adjourning for recess, the House achieved its goal of passing all 12 fiscal year 2010 spending bills while the Senate passed only four of its fiscal year 2010 spending bills. Over the August recess, House and Senate staff will begin informal conference negotiations on the four bills that have passed both chambers, with the hope of enacting a handful before the October 1st start of fiscal 2010. According to Senate Appropriations Chairman Daniel K. Inouye (D-HI), either Commerce-Justice-Science or the Interior-Environment spending bill will be the first on the floor when lawmakers return.

The Energy and Water Appropriations Bill has gone into conference and it has not been reconciled as to whether the House funding level of \$220 million or the Senate funding level of \$200 million minus two pilot programs of \$70 million will remain in the end. NASCSP remains

dedicated to fighting against the lower funding level as well as the duplicative and unnecessary pilot programs which have been proposed.

Congressional leaders remain intent on avoiding an omnibus and enacting all 12 annual spending bills individually. This effort may stretch into November, if not December as lawmakers are expected to remain in session late into the year as they work on a health care overhaul, climate change legislation and financial services regulation, in addition to the spending bills. Consequently, a continuing resolution may be needed to fund most government agencies when the new fiscal year arrives.

We continue to expect the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) to be level funded at the conclusion of FY 2010 appropriations process. We will keep you informed as things progress.

CSBG Spotlight: The CSBG Network at 45: A Relevant and Reliable Vehicle to Economic Security

edited by Jovita A Tolbert

According to the United States Census Bureau, in 2007, 37.3 million Americans were living in poverty. Since 2007, this unsettling statistic has no doubt increased due to the current U.S. recession. However, even without a recession, many families are just one illness, death, job loss or divorce away from experiencing a brief or extended period of economic insecurity.

That's why the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) is so important. CSBG supports a state-administered, nationwide network of local organizations whose purpose is to reduce the causes and consequences of economic insecurity in the communities they serve. The broad authority the CSBG statute confers enables CSBG-funded state and local agencies to effectively carryout their mission

by customizing initiatives to address local social and economic disparities. Its terms are flexible and allow for rapid, appropriate responses that prevent periods of economic insecurity from creating long-term dependency. Below are several examples of how the CSBG works to move America's families from economic insecurity to stability.

When Work Doesn't Pay Well Enough—El Paso Community Action Program - El Paso, Texas

In April 2007, a male customer who was the sole provider for his wife and two sons enrolled at our agency to receive assistance. At this time, he was working as a waiter in a small restaurant for minimum wage while having to pay for a mortgage and the necessities of his family. His wife

took care of the children at home and attended college in the evenings (majoring in Nursing). The family's annual income was a meager \$11,018.64 which left them at 40% of the federal poverty level. After receiving intensive case management services that provided job training as well as energy and nutrition assistance for eight months, the family completed 90 days with their income level at or above 125% of the poverty income guidelines. As a result of the El Paso Community Action Program's services, funded by CSBG, the client became employed as a Customs Officer and his wife obtained her nursing license and obtained a job in a medical clinic. By the time our agency closed their case, the family's annual income was \$78,653.52, putting them at 380% of the federal poverty income guidelines.

When Illness Strikes—Monticello Area Community Action Agency - Charlottesville, VA

After his leg was shattered in an automobile accident, Lewis Nye faced surgery and a long-term period of recovery leaving him unable to work. Mr. Nye's employer provided no short-term disability or other leave compensation. After contacting the Monticello Area Community Action Agency (MACAA) in Charlottesville, the Nye family was assigned to a case manager. Mr. Nye's case manager provided emergency rental assistance, secured grocery store gift cards from a local church and referred the family to the area foodbank. The case manager also contacted the city utility company and secured help from their gas assistance program. Similarly, MACAA's case manager contacted Dominion Virginia Power committed to pay part of the utility bill on behalf of Mr. Nye, negotiated a payment plan that prevented a disconnection. Thanks to the work of the staff at MACAA in networking with a number of community resources and the CSBG funds MACAA utilized in administering its emergency assistance program, the Nye family avoided becoming homeless and Mr. Nye was able to return to work, returning the family to a place of economic security.

When the Economic Landscape Changes—United Migrant Opportunity Services – Berlin, WI

Jose and his family migrated back and forth to Wisconsin for many years. In July of 2008, Jose and his wife Rosa, realizing that the bleak employment opportunities limited the family's future in Eagle Pass, Texas, traveled to Berlin, Wisconsin, with their two

young daughters, to find more work. On July 25, 2008 they visited United Migrant Opportunity Services (UMOS) offices in Berlin where Supportive Service Caseworker Maria Zuñiga assisted the family with several job leads. She was also able to assist the family with emergency lodging, gasoline and referrals to food pantries in the Berlin/Ripon area. These resources were available to the family as a result of CSBG funding and the National Farmworker Jobs Program, Workforce Investment Act (Section 167) funding received by UMOS.

Through the job leads provided, the family quickly found employment and housing with Leach Farms in Berlin, Wisconsin working in the celery and carrot harvest. Jose's daughters were cared for by UMOS Child Development Programs while he and his wife worked full-time in the harvest. At the end of the harvest season, Jose registered once again for the National Farmworker Jobs Program with UMOS and was qualified. Consequently, Jose was enrolled in a Job Club activity where he worked on a customized job search. Through his assisted job search, a move to the Beaver Dam area proved to be well-planned. Once there, Jose began an on-the-job training contract on December 1, 2008 with Saputo Cheese in Waupun, WI as a Cheese Plant Crew person at \$13.50/hour. Jose now works in the Warehouse Department of Saputo Cheese receiving \$14/hour plus full benefits. Through the funding provided directly from the CSBG, this hard working family of four was able to settle out of the migrant stream, find employment with benefits to assist them in becoming self-sufficient, and receive supportive services to continue and maintain their employment.

The aforementioned stories provide only a snapshot of how and who the CSBG network helps. However, they are a testament to the relevancy and reliability of the CSBG and CSBG network. For 45 years the CSBG has provided states with a guaranteed network of designated agencies which change the conditions that perpetuate economic insecurity, especially unemployment, inadequate housing, poor nutrition, and lack of educational opportunity. While much has been done, there is still more to do and the CSBG Network is up to the challenge!

Source: NASCSP's 2008 CSBG IS Survey

WAP Corner:

Debunking Bad Press with Positive Information

by Bob Scott

At the recent DOE National Weatherization Training Conference, the agenda focused on addressing the training needs of various positions in the Weatherization workforce, including administrative staff, program managers, fiscal staff, installers, crew chiefs, auditor/estimators, technical monitors, and trainers. Notably absent was a position dealing solely with media relations. When WAP offices are contacted by the media, they usually handle the request the best they can and then hope that their comments are not misquoted or taken out of context and that the ensuing story sheds a positive light on the program. Of course, this is not always the case.

With the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and subsequent bumps in the road in implementation, media scrutiny of the Program has been at an all time high, and the complexity of the WAP has led to some less well-informed articles, finger pointing, and confusion. Since the ARRA was first discussed before it was passed, the WAP network understood and has accepted the fact that the huge funding increase would provide both unprecedented opportunities and unprecedented challenges.

The Weatherization network should realize that there are critical perception problems with the fact that ARRA WAP production and expenditures have not escalated as quickly as the Obama administration, DOE, the press, and the WAP network believed it would. The WAP network also understands how complicated some of the implementation issues have been, particularly the prevailing wage requirements written into ARRA. Both states and local agencies have worked diligently to ramp up for the huge funding increase and production demands. The network is getting some negative press even though we have been very successful in the past, and are working harder than ever to make the ARRA WAP work.

The best way to combat any negative press is to respond with your own positive stories. In spite of the fact that

ARRA production has gotten off to a slower start than anticipated, there are still many success stories throughout the network. The WAP network must be much more proactive in getting out the message of what has been accomplished. Listed below are some facts that tell a positive story about WAP. Specific numbers and incidents should be used when possible.

- Although the prevailing wage issue has delayed ARRA work, it is being resolved and the network is ready to go and weatherize more homes than ever before.
- Many states and agencies have hired new staff during the ramp up, starting the creation of thousands of new green collar jobs anticipated through WAP.
- There is a boost to local economies through newly hired workers and purchased vehicles and equipment.
- Although ARRA implementation has been slow, homes are still being weatherized with DOE 2009 grant funds, LIHEAP funds, and other leveraged resources. In some areas, production may already have increased compared to previous years since the network has ramped up in anticipation of ARRA.
- New and innovative training initiatives and partnerships have been formed and are being developed based on ARRA, including some with community colleges, trade schools, and workforce labor boards.

Low-income homes are still being weatherized using state-of-the-art technology and are providing the residents significant savings on their fuel bills. Similar success stories to those in the past, where a HVAC Technician discovers and repairs a carbon monoxide problem in a home where the residents complained of constant headaches, or the energy efficiency repairs enabled an elderly person or a single mother to remain in their homes, still occur on a regular basis. Those stories need to be told.

NASCSP believes we play a very important role in telling the Weatherization story. NASCSP receives many inquiries from program stakeholders, the press, and other interested parties concerning the status of

ARRA implementation. We take seriously our responsibility to represent the WAP network by accurately and positively disseminating information.

We understand that our membership (State WAP offices) is overwhelmed with information requests, and that must prioritize their time and to whom they can respond. In our role as an advocate for State WAP offices, NASCSP needs factual information to talk to stakeholders and the press. We need all the information we can get from our members about their efforts. We can only provide that information if the states are willing to respond to our requests.

NASCSP's members expect us to explain and defend their

efforts, and we are more than happy to rise to the task. The information the membership provides is the foundation we need to successfully work on their behalf. When we have complete and thorough information, state offices can refer those seeking information to NASCSP, and we can greatly relieve the burden on the states.

At NASCSP, we are the advocates of the state directors, and to best represent them we need the tools to tell the Weatherization and ARRA story. The network knows that Weatherization Works, and we all must be willing to make sure the story is told so everyone else is also aware of the great work being done.



NASCSP NEWS

NASCSP is relocating to the North Tower in the Hall of States Building. As of **September 1, 2009**, our physical address will change. Please update your files to reflect this change from: 400 North Capitol Street, NW, Suite 395 to **444 North Capitol Street, NW, Suite 846**, Washington, DC 20001.

NASCSP Newsletter Online!



SPREAD THE WORD

Phase 2 of our transition from paper to electronic transmission is effective as of January 2009.

To continue receiving the newsletter, remind your colleagues to send their email addresses under the subject header "online newsletter" to tjoyner@nascsp.org.

Indiana's Statewide Needs Assessment

by Steve Hoffman, Director of Administration and Development, Community Action of Northeast Indiana

This year marked the completion of the second Indiana Statewide Needs Assessment conducted by Indiana's Community Action Agencies and the Indiana Community Action Association (INCAA). The first project was completed in 2006. The goals of the project are to standardize processes across the state, compare regions, improve the quality of the assessment process at each organization, meet CSBG requirements, and most importantly, provide reliable data and analysis for planning purposes. The idea originated out of the Program Committee of INCAA's Board of Directors. A review of the needs assessments from across the state showed varying degrees of quality and many different methods and forms of data. It was impossible to compare one organization's assessment to another, and agencies complained about difficulty with having the resources to conduct the assessments. The committee determined that a coordinated effort led by INCAA would be a way to meet all of the goals outlined above.

The players involved included INCAA and the program committee, but also the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority (through which our CSBG dollars flow), all 24 CAAs in the state (which represents 100% of the CAAs in our state), and contractors who would do much of the work.

INCAA contracted with Community Action of Northeast Indiana (CANI) to do the bulk of the work associated with the project. I have led the project for CANI both times. The first step was to design a survey instrument to administer to our clients all across the state. We designed a survey that measured agreed upon indicators of poverty through questions that were carefully crafted to be unbiased. The survey instrument was reviewed and approved by the program committee. Agencies were also allowed a certain amount of space to add their own, "custom" questions if they chose.

After that, CANI developed a database that would be used to compile the survey data. The database forms were designed for quick data entry, and multiple reports were added so agencies could pull information on their own, if they chose to. The database is also customizable, so that certain fields (such as "county", "city", etc.) with drop-

down choices could be entered for each CAA territory. And if agencies chose to add some custom questions, CANI updated the database to allow for those.

Training was provided to all CAAs on how to conduct the survey in their organizations. Topics included determining sample size, drawing random samples, survey distribution, and how to use the database. Agencies then went back and conducted the surveys with their families. CANI provided technical assistance to individual agencies throughout the process.

Agencies entered all their data into the database and then sent an extraction file of the data to CANI. We then compiled each agency's data into a statewide database. A total of 15,092 surveys were completed across the state and compiled into one set of data.

As the surveys were administered across the state, CANI compiled relevant primary (CSBG) and secondary data (such as Census, DOL, etc.) for each CAA. This was mostly done for each county, but in some cases at city and township levels as well. A secondary data chart was compiled of raw data, and the information was also utilized in the narrative analysis.

When all information was collected, I wrote needs assessment reports for each CAA and the state as a whole. The narrative of the reports is written in short, bulleted statements. This was done intentionally, as we determined that that style would be best interpreted by our readers, but also would be the most time and cost-efficient manner to produce the reports. And so, the reports outline key findings and analysis, but written with as few words as possible.

Because we standardized our process across the state, the narrative analysis included comparisons across CAAs. And because this year was our second time around, we were able to compare data across time as well. In addition, a shorter marketing type version of the report was developed as well based on the information in the narratives. This document was graphically designed by another consultant, and is a tool to hand out to a wider audience.

The project has not been without issues, of course. Working with various people at 24 different organizations is a difficult task. Staff turnover happens, and so re-training is always an issue. We had to work intensively with some organizations on the details of drawing samples and distributing the survey so they followed sound research methods. A few agencies did not meet their sample size, and some agencies did not meet deadlines. And as always in survey research, we found that some questions needed to be altered, and some needed to be added. But overall, this second project went more smoothly than the first.

We're really proud of the results of this project. While every organization conducted a needs assessment before, we feel we have improved the quality across the board.

And better yet, each agency has a needs assessment that looks like everyone else's, so state level comparison is now a reality. The project helps each agency meet CSBG requirements by either providing them with a capacity they did not have a more cost-efficient means than trying to do it on their own. Lastly, and most importantly, we have reports that strengthen our planning processes as we fight poverty in Indiana.

For more information, please visit: <http://canihelp.org/Resources.htm>.

The views of contributing writers to this newsletter do not necessarily represent the opinions of NASCSP.

Recognition of Excellence

2010 NASCSP AWARDS

NASCSP's membership will recognize extraordinary contributions made to NASCSP and to the programs that NASCSP represents during the NASCSP Annual Winter Training Conference in February.

The **Marjorie J. Witherspoon NASCSP Award** will be presented to a current or former NASCSP member for significant service or support of NASCSP and/or length of service to NASCSP. The **Ann Kagie CSBG Award** will go to an individual involved in CSBG activities at the national, state or local level and for significant technological or program contributions and/or tenure with the program. The **James Gardner Weatherization Award** will be presented to an individual in the Weatherization Program at the national, state or local level for significant technological or program contributions and/or tenure with the program.

Look for detailed information at the NASCSP's Annual Fall Training in Minnesota.

2ND ANNUAL NATIONAL WEATHERIZATION AWARDS

The Awards, sponsored by State & Local Energy Report, the National Association for State Community Services Programs (NASCSP), the National Association of State Energy Officials (NASEO), and corporate sponsors including Retrotec, PDS Consulting, Conservation Services Group (CSG), Fluke Manufacturing, and BPI, will be given to 2009's best projects in the following areas: single-family home weatherization or renovation, multi-family building weatherization or renovation, and new residential construction.

The Awards application and details are available at www.stateenergyreport.com. The NASCSP-selected panel of judges will announce the 2009 winning projects in February during the 2010 NASCSP Mid-Winter Conference in Bethesda, Maryland.

Quality is not an act, it is a habit.—Aristotle

Celebrating Our Success Together



Oklahoma Housing Finance Agency Honors CAAs for Affordable Housing Excellence

The Oklahoma Housing Finance Agency (OHFA) recently announced the winners of the 2009 Apex Awards at its July 15 Board of Trustees meeting. Three Community Action Agencies and one Community Action Board member were selected for their contributions and commitment to affordable housing in Oklahoma. The Apex Award recipients and their award categories were:

- Rural Housing - Little Dixie Community Action Agency**
Little Dixie Community Action Agency's housing efforts impact rural communities in the state. Last year, it developed two U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Section 202 Supportive Housing projects in Clayton and Antlers. It also revitalized the Terry Hill Apartments in Hugo by improving safety, appearance and energy efficiency. Lastly, it expanded its Self-Help Housing program to include Carter, Marshall and Love Counties. Learn more at: <http://www.littledixie.org/>.
- Friend of Affordable Housing - Leoma Caldwell**
 Leoma Caldwell has worked in the real estate business in Hugo for 30 years and has served on the board of directors for **Little Dixie Community Action Agency** for more than 10 years. She is a strong advocate of Little Dixie's low-interest home loan programs for low-income and first-time homebuyers.
- Rental Housing - Fletcher Northtown Apartments**
 The Fletcher Northtown Apartments located in Fletcher provide much needed housing for the small community. The \$3.5 million project developed by the **Great Plains Improvement Foundation, Inc.** consists of 24 two and three -bedroom apartments designed for families and seniors. Learn more at: <http://www.gpif-caa.org/>.
- Home Ownership - Deep Fork Community Action Foundation, Inc.**
Deep Fork Community Action Foundation, Inc., which serves Hughes, McIntosh, Okfuskee and Okmulgee Counties, created a 27-minute video called "Can You Keep It? The Foreclosure Game Show." It was designed as an educational tool to help low-income families understand foreclosure. It was produced with \$25,000 in Community Service Block Grant Discretionary Funds from the Oklahoma Department of Commerce. Deep Fork wrote the script, built the set, hired and directed the actors and co-edited the final product. It then distributed the video for free to all Community Action Agencies in the state. Learn more at: <http://www.deepforkcommunityaction.org/>.

Recognized as the industry leader, OHFA makes a difference in the lives of Oklahomans by fulfilling their housing needs and dreams. OHFA offers nine housing programs ranging from a homeless program and rental assistance to housing development and home ownership. Each spring, OHFA accepts nominations for the Apex Awards. To learn more, visit: <http://www.ohfa.org/ohfahome.html>.



Make Your Good Work Known!

Has your state or local agency recently been recognized for program excellence related to alleviating the causes and consequences of poverty? If yes, we want to hear about it! Send your stories to jtolbert@nascsp.org and let's celebrate the network's success together!

New Project Aids WAP ARRA Ramp-up

by Joan Harris

With the support of NASCSP, Stateline Energy Associates has been formed to create an innovative project developed specifically to meet the needs of ARRA ramp up for the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP).

What is the WBG?

The Weatherization Buying Group (WBG) is an online resource designed to streamline procurement and reduce costs of weatherization materials, supplies and equipment, and contractor services, through an array of web-based tools. This virtual service will enable WAP locals to benefit from access to:

- Simplified competitive bidding.
- A full range of WAP appropriate goods and services.
- Prequalified vendors and contractors.
- An online bid room that will serve to push down prices.
- Buying power through collaboration with local groups nationwide.
- Partnerships with national and local groups to better define weatherization agency needs on a national level.

To participate in this valuable service, participants must sign up to join; however *membership in the WBG is free!*

Home Depot Weatherization Program

One resource of the WBG has been negotiated with The Home Depot. The result is *The Home Depot Weatherization Program*, designed specifically for the WAP by this major retailer. The Home Depot's service to WAP locals will include specialized handling - from ordering to delivery, from selection to service - to provide invaluable resources to enhance efficiency:

- **Direct Service:** Weatherization agencies will have access to The Home Depot Pro Desk located in stores. In addition, they will each be assigned a

Pro Sales Manager (PSM) who will partner with each agency to address their unique needs and identify opportunities. Both the local Pro Desk Associates and the PSMs are committed to providing the Weatherization Agencies with assistance in ordering, delivery and quality assurance.

- **Multiple Delivery Options:** This service will include free Will-Call Service at each agency's local store, job-site delivery and truck-load delivery on qualifying orders.
- **Financing options:** Home Depot's Commercial Account will help agencies cut down on paperwork and stress by providing itemized billing and purchase tracking (down to the project and SKU level).
- **Nationwide Network of Contractors:** The Home Depot also has a nationwide network of licensed and certified contractors. All of their contractors have passed a series of background checks and are capable of working on Weatherization projects. The Home Depot is currently exploring training options in order to meet each state's best practices requirements.
- **On line information:** For more information on The Home Depot's specialized program, visit www.homedepot.com/weatherization.

The WBG Project, off to a great start, is a promising effort in facilitating and expediting use of ARRA funds. For more information about the Weatherization Buying Group, call (202) 333-5915 or forward your email to info@wapbuyinggroup.com.

Procrastination is like a credit card: it's a lot of fun until you get the bill.
—Christopher Parker

NASCSP IN MINNESOTA



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NASCSP

Timothy R. Warfield
Executive Director
warfield@nascsp.org

Tabitha Beck
Data Analyst
tbeck@nascsp.org

Jenae Bjelland
Director, Research, CSBG
bjelland@nascsp.org

Joan Harris
Director, Special Projects
jharris@nascsp.org

Arley Johnson
Director, Government Relations
ajohnson@nascsp.org

Terry Joyner
Director, Member Services
tjoyner@nascsp.org

Gretchen Knowlton
Special Assistant to the Executive Director
gknowlton@nascsp.org

Robert Scott
Director, Weatherization Services
rscott@nascsp.org

Rebecca Stewart
Program Assistant, Weatherization Services
rstewart@nascsp.org

Mark Schmeissing
Research Assistant, CSBG
mschmeissing@nascsp.org

Jovita Tolbert
Director, Program Services
jtolbert@nascsp.org



NASCSP Mission:

"Building capacity in states to respond to poverty issues."