

2022/2023

NEWSLETTER



"committed to improving our communities...one life at a time"



A Year in Review....

Each year as the signs of summer fade and the blistery winds and cold November rain begin to fall individuals turn to Bell-Whitley Community Action Agency for assistance with their home cooling and heating cost. With inflation on the rise over the past year, families are seeing an increase in their home cooling and heating cost; making the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Programs even more crucial than before. The Summer Cooling Subsidy and Crisis components of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) brought assistance to families in Bell and Whitley counties with the cost of cooling their homes during the hot and humid summer months. The Fall Subsidy and Winter Crisis heating components provided assistance to all eligible households who fell below 130% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. During the Subsidy component those households with the lowest income that have the highest heating season cost will receive the highest benefit. During the Crisis component those households who are in a "crisis" situation (disconnect notices, within 4 days of being without heating source) are eligible to apply for assistance. Benefits are different and based on the minimum to alleviate the crisis of each individual household.

During the fiscal year (July 1, 2022- June 30, 2023) the following services with benefits have been provided to individuals in need within Bell and Whitley counties, through the various Low Income Home Energy Assistance Programs that were in operation during the fiscal year there were a total of 7,979 applications completed and a total of \$1,602,827.79 spent assisting clients. Other programs include:

- CSBG (rent, deposits, utilities)—19 applications; spending \$7,375.00
- CARES CSBG (rent, deposits, utilities)—87 applications; spending 22,777.63
- CSBG Scholarships—3 awarded; spending \$1,600.99
- Goodwill Voucher Program—75 applications; spending \$7,106.00
- Summer Cooling Subsidy 2022—412 applications; spending \$139,876.00
- Summer Cooling Crisis—248 applications; spending \$62,891.46
- Fall LIHEAP Subsidy 2022—3,349 applications; spending \$446,059.00
- Winter LIHEAP Crisis 2023—2,891 applications; spending \$810,914.33
- Spring Cooling Subsidy 2023—1,079 applications; spending \$143,087.00
- WinterCare 2022-2023—12 applications; spending \$2,029.29

The Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program was authorized by the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021. The Cabinet for Health and Family Services requested that the remaining LIHWAP funds from the 2021 program be utilized in the counties that were declared a disaster in Eastern Kentucky due to the recent flooding. Whitley county was one of the those "declared disaster" counties. BWCAA received LIHWAP funding to assist Whitley county residents only with water/wastewater services. This program began on November 15th and will go until June 30, 2023 or until funds are expended. There were a total of 210 households assisted, spending a total of \$53,050.00 in funding.

Helping People, Changing Lives

The promise of Community Action is to change people's lives, embody the spirit of hope, improve communities and makes America a better place to live. This simple promise is attained each and every day by the services and programs BWCAA provides as well as the partnerships within the community that we create. Each October, during fall break, the University of Tennessee Cross Ministries partners with Bell-Whitley Community Action Agency to invest in the lives of some of our most vulnerable citizens.

This group of volunteers made up of Engineers, Contractors, Skilled Laborers and Students spend their fall break building handicap ramps for elderly and disabled individuals across Bell county. There were a total of 5 handicap ramps built during the UT Cross Ministries Team's 3-day stay in Bell county. These ramps have proved beneficial in improving the quality of life for not only the individual but the family as well. Bell-Whitley Community Action Agency is honored to partner with and work alongside this amazing group of individuals who make it their mission to develop intentional outreach relationships and serve their communities.

Developing partnerships with organizations such as the University of Tennessee Cross Ministries is just one way that we strive to improve the conditions in which low-income families live as we remain "committed to improving our communities...one life at a time".



Bell Countian Tessa Caldwell Begins Nursing Career with Help from Bell-Whitley Career Center

Jan 18

It's early afternoon and rain is falling in Pineville as Tessa Caldwell enters the Bell-Whitley Kentucky Career Center. She is not far removed from an all-night shift at her job, but her smile widens as she starts to talk about the work she does.

A Bell County native, Caldwell is a nurse at Middlesboro Health and Rehabilitation. It's a job that marks the beginning of a career that she spent the past couple of years preparing for, and one which not only allows her to earn a living close to home, but to do so while doing what she loves.

"I think it's really rewarding to work there," she says.

Becoming a nurse was something Caldwell wanted since working first as a certified nurse aid (CNA) and realizing then what she wanted out of her professional life. The career services at Bell-Whitley played no small part in helping her reach that goal, she says.

"I just realized I really do love to take care of people," Caldwell says. "I know that sounds so cliché, but I really do enjoy it. After that, I decided I wanted to go to nursing school, so I did."

In 2021, Caldwell applied for acceptance into Southeast Kentucky and Community Technical College's (SKCTC) nursing program. It was then that an acquaintance who works at Bell-Whitley Community Action Agency told her about career and employment services there that may be available to help her with certain costs of enrolling in and continuing her education at SKCTC.

A partner in the Kentucky Career Center JobSight network of workforce centers, Bell-Whitley provides Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) services in Bell County under contract with Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program (EKCEP). Those services include programs for adults, dislocated workers, and youth who may need assistance honing skills such as résumé building or networking with local employers, or who need assistance being retrained or going to school.

For Caldwell, those services proved valuable as they covered different costs she would incur while enrolled at SKCTC.

"I make my own money, do things for myself, so it's pretty expensive to get all the supplies you need to go to nursing school," she says. "Honestly, this is a really great program to help people better themselves."

Working with the WIOA staff at Bell-Whitley was an easy process, Caldwell adds. When she applied for the program in 2021, she was able to work closely with her first career advisor, Rudelle Greene, who later retired, and then with her current advisor, Tina Campbell. In both instances, Caldwell says they remained in touch with her and helped ensure issues she was having were addressed.

"So, anything that came with the nursing program they covered," Caldwell says, adding that the WIOA program covered costs for items ranging from scrubs and shoes to a tuition fee, books, and a fee for a required certification exam.

Having a local program with the kinds of services available at Bell-Whitley was an important component for Caldwell's success as she balanced her time between work, school, and taking care of everyday needs. She maintained that balance over two years, successfully graduating in December 2022.

It wasn't long before Caldwell began working at Middlesboro Health and Rehab, and says now she's looking forward to not just a job, but a career where she can use the skills she gained to help others in her community in a meaningful way. She's thankful for the assistance she received from Bell-Whitley, and would recommend others who may be looking for a new job or training for a career like she was to look into those services as well.

"I think with a program like this it's just opening up opportunity for a lot of people in this area," she says. "If it was not for this program, there's no way I would have been able to afford to go to nursing school."

If you're interested in applying for career and employment services at the Bell-Whitley Kentucky Career Center JobSight, or just want to learn more, call 606-337-3044 or visit jobsight.org.





Head Start / Early Head Start

Success and opportunity are always within reach. Bell-Whitley Head Start is here to give that helping hand to our families and assist in making dreams come true. Bell Countian, Franklin Jordan made the first step by enrolling his daughter, Luna, into Head Start in 2021, where she spent two years learning and growing in our classrooms. Franklin expressed to his Family Advocate, Mary Liford, that he wanted to be more involved in his daughter's education.

In 2021, Franklin did just that, when he became a Policy Council parent representative for his daughter's school. In 2022 Franklin took on more prominent roles in our program where he served as Vice Chairperson on the Policy Council Committee, attended Active Parenting Classes, and served as Chairperson on the Parent Involvement Committee at Middlesboro Elementary Head Start/ Preschool Program.

Franklin set a Family Goal with Mary to purchase a house for his family to grow in and somewhere to call home. Mary explained that he could meet those ambitions and she would help him along the way. Franklin expressed in April that he wanted to obtain his CDL to better himself and give Luna a better life. Mary supplied him with information he had inquired about and she referred him to Bell-Whitley Community Action Agency's WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) department to obtain assistance enrolling in and funding his new career path.

Mary worked diligently checking the status of his case during the process. Franklin was approved for the program and enrolled at Lake Cumberland CDL Training Center at Southeast Community & Technical College on the Middlesboro, KY Campus. Mary also supplied him with studying materials and websites that she had previously used while obtaining her CDL.

Franklin began studying for his CDL permit test. He passed his permit test with excellency. He began the skills course shortly after and successfully achieved his CDL permit. Mary reached out to Franklin the day of his Skills and Driving portion of his test, and both were excited to learn that he had obtained his CDL. They began to discuss what a career might look like with his new trade school achievement.

She also explained that he needed to stay in contact with his WIOA worker for assistance with his resume and help with the job search.

A few weeks later, Franklin called Mary with excitement to tell her he had accepted a job as a CDL truck driver with Mid-West Logistics in London, KY. He has not met his goal of purchasing a house but is working diligently to achieve this goal in the near future. Even though Luna graduated from our Head Start/ Preschool Program in May, Mary and Franklin still communicate in hopes to be able to see Franklin meet his goal of owning his on home. Franklin's success is one of many success stories that began with our Bell-Whitley Head Start Program.



Weatherization



Weatherization Works

For the fiscal year 2022-2023, the Bell-Whitley CAA weatherization department completed work on 14 homes spending around \$208,500.00 averaging close to \$14,900.00 per home. Of the 14 homes completed the department was able to install 10 new heat pumps in those homes. All of the homes that were completed received measures that reduce the energy consumption in each home therefore reducing the burden of energy costs for each of our client's. The measures installed include: attic insulation, floor insulation, wall insulation, air and duct sealing and a host of other measures including installing new LED light bulbs, low flow showerheads, water heater tank and pipe insulation and some refrigerators.

We also installed health and safety measures such as new bathroom exhaust fans, smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, dryer venting and vapor barriers in the crawlspace.

Also, during the fiscal year we brought on a new employee, Tucker Fuson. Tucker started with the department in May of 2023. To date Tucker has earned his certificates in Leakage, envelopes and ducts and combustion appliance zones. Tucker will earn his certificate for retrofit installer technician in October and is working towards taking the crew leader training as soon as possible.

Housing Initiatives Program

The Housing Department at Bell-Whitley offers several different ways to assist clients. There are four main areas within the department, that clients may receive assistance; housing counseling, home buying, home repair, and mortgage assistance.

Housing Counseling is a one-on-one counseling program that coaches and provides clients with supportive tools to meet the goal of home ownership. Bell-Whitley offers pre-purchase, post-purchase, loss mitigation, and foreclosure/default counseling. Bell-Whitley has added 18 new pre-purchase clients within the past year, who are seeking to become homeowners.

The home buying program is a program that assists first-time homebuyers purchase a new home. Clients apply for the program and their information such as their income, debt, and credit are reviewed. When it is determined that all of these are within program guidelines, a client may be approved to have a house built for them. One house was completed for a client this past year.

The home repair program helps with much needed repairs to client's homes. These new repairs include roofs, windows, HVAC, and porch repair, etc. This past year, we have had two different home repair grants to assist clients. First, we have had the AHTF Home Repair program, which is a grant provided through the Kentucky Housing Corporation. We received approval to do repairs on 10 homes, and we are in the process of completing all of the repairs on those home. Next we also received the Carol Peterson grant. We received approval to provide repairs to 8 homes through this grant. We are currently working on completing those repairs.

Finally, Bell-Whitley provides mortgage assistance through the Homeowner's Assistance Fund, which is administered by Kentucky Housing Corporation. This program provides relief to homeowner's experiencing financial hardship on or after January 21, 2020. Homeowners can go to the website www.protectmykyhome.org to apply for this program. All applications are completed online and all documents are uploaded into the application. The maximum assistance that a client can receive through this program is \$60,000, which can be used to catch them up if they are behind on their mortgage. To qualify, clients must have had a reduction in income, job loss, illness, or caregiving. Since the program began, Bell-Whitley has helped 25 clients receive approval for assistance through this program.

In conclusion, the Bell-Whitley Housing Department strives to provide programs and resources that help address the needs of the community.



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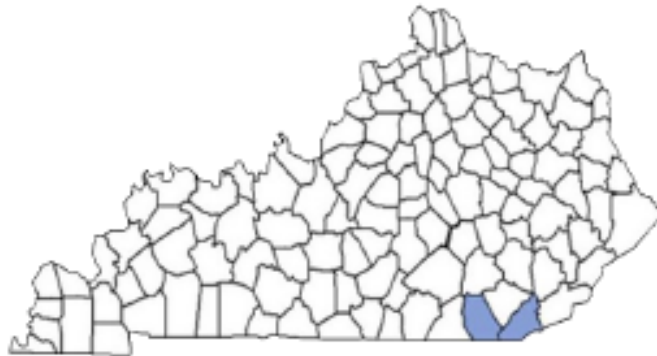
"Community Action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope,
improves communities,
and makes America a better place to live.
We care about the entire community,
and we are dedicated
to helping people help themselves and each other."



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