

Bell-Whitley Community Action Agency

WINTER/SPRING NEWSLETTER



“committed to improving our communities ...one life at a time”



Community Service Block Grant

On June 11th, 2021, after 15 long months, the Governor of Kentucky gave his last COVID-19 update to thousands of Kentuckians. For fifteen months, Kentuckians struggled and sacrificed while enduring the effects of COVID-19. In his final daily address, the Governor stated that “*while COVID-19 remains a threat, we are no longer in crisis*”. Bell-Whitley Community Action Agency has been on the forefront impacting the lives of individuals and families in Bell and Whitley county while providing services to assist during one of the most unprecedented seasons that we, as a nation have faced.

The trickle-down effect of the COVID-19 pandemic did not discriminate. Many people lost jobs, leaving them with the inability to pay for basic necessities such as utilities including; water, electric and gas. This also included being forced to choose between rent/mortgage payments, car payments, insurance or food. Bell-Whitley Community Action Agency received \$487,791.79 through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Since July 1, 2020 when the agency received CARES Act funding the following individuals and families have been assisted:

<u>CARES Funding Services</u>	<u>Number of Households Served</u>	<u>Total Amount Spent</u>
Rent Deposits	79	\$25,192.00
Rent (arrearages, evictions, first month)	267	\$225,381.78
Mortgage (past due/foreclosure prevention)	21	\$19,097.15
Utility Deposits	52	\$7,936.03
Utility Payments (Past due/disconnections)	254	\$82,191.00
Minor Car Repair (Employment Security)	1	\$483.40
Car Insurance Payment (Employment Security)	2	\$507.35
Food Assistance	18	\$2,996.41

The impact of COVID-19 has been detrimental. The loss that some families have suffered can never be replaced. Bell-Whitley Community Action Agency has worked diligently to provide resources and relief where possible to the citizens of Bell and Whitley counties. As the number of cases decline and vaccines become more readily available for Kentuckians, new hope emerges on the horizon. The hope that the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic is behind us and the bright possibility that we will begin to see a new form of normalcy. As we take steps to venture forward, Bell-Whitley Community Action Agency is embracing the promise of community action and will continue to impart it into the communities that we serve. Emerging from this pandemic we will continue to provide services that demonstrate that we are dedicated to the community action promise that says “*Community Action changes peo-*



Bell Countian Darrell Estep Steps into New Job with Help from Bell-Whitley JobSight

Darrell Estep was 20 years old, had recently completed rehab, and ready for a new start with a new job.

A resident of Bell County, Estep was also a participant in the local Drug Court program, which provides an alternative to incarceration for individuals charged with drug-related offenses. As a requirement of his participation, Estep needed to find a job and was referred to Bell-Whitley Community Action for employment assistance, a service he was unaware the agency offered at the time.

“I didn’t even know what they did up until that point,” he said.

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.

In Estep’s case, he began working with WIOA Director Alex Barnett, who determined his eligibility for the JobSight’s Opportunity Youth program, which provides employment services to eligible individuals between the ages of 18-24 who face certain barriers to employment. In just a week, he said, Barnett had secured a work experience position for him at Blue Diamond Industries in Middlesboro, which manufactures conduit products for a variety of purposes including power utility, cable TV, and broadband.

Estep’s new position would help him gain valuable on-the-job experience while Bell-Whitley provided funds that would allow him to begin earning a salary at the same time. And Barnett made the process of enrolling for services and getting back on track with a new job an easy one to complete.

“The first time I went in there to talk to Alex, it was specifically about the job and trying to find me a job,” Estep said. “I told her I wanted to try and get on at Blue Diamond, and she said give her a week. I had to go back and see her a week later and she said, ‘You got the job, and you start this day.’”

“Alex was really good about it,” he continued. “She took the time out of the day to meet me at Blue Diamond in Middlesboro to take a tour of the factory before I ever started.”

By November 2021, Estep had completed 480 hours of work experience funded by Bell-Whitley and his work at Blue Diamond was going so well that he received an offer for a full-time position as a reel kicker. It wasn’t long after that Estep received a promotion to senior line trainer, and he’s currently in training for another move up.

While Estep’s work experience helped him progress quickly to full-time employment, it wasn’t the only assistance Barnett was able to provide, he noted. In the latter part of 2021, while looking for an apartment, he needed to come up with the initial funds that would allow him to secure his own housing.

“I made enough money to get an apartment, but the only thing that was hard was trying to get the deposit and first month’s rent,” Estep said. “I texted Alex one day about six months ago, and within a two- or three-week period she had the money I was needing approved and ready to go.”

The services available at Bell-Whitley played a significant role in ensuring that Estep landed a job quickly and was able to begin earning a living, he said, adding that he would recommend anyone in a similar situation to reach out to Barnett and her staff to see what assistance might be available.

“Everything I’ve gone to get help for, Alex helped me out a lot,” he said. “She made it easy.”

For more information about the services available at the Bell-Whitley Kentucky Career Center JobSight, visit jobsight.org or call 606-337-3044.

Head Start/Early Head Start



Ms. Carol Ann Sellers was recently recognized in Atlanta Georgia. As the Region IV Head Start Teacher of the year.

Carol Ann's application was first submitted to the Kentucky Head Start Association where she competed with other Head Start teachers within the state of Kentucky. She was selected as the Kentucky Head Start Teacher of the year. (She will be recognized in March at the Kentucky Head Start Association Conference in Louisville.) Being the state winner, the Kentucky Head Start Association submitted her application to the Region IV Head Start Association, where she was selected as Region IV Teacher of the year. Region IV consists of state level winners from Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, North Carolina and South Carolina.

This award recognizes exemplary teachers who have strong long-range potential for leadership and the ability to inspire a love of learning in young children. This honor was established to elevate the status of the teaching profession at the state and regional levels by creating opportunities for recognizing the most accomplished members of the profession.

Carol Ann is a great asset to our Head Start Program and it is a great honor to have her a part of our program. I am thrilled that she was chosen as the best of the best out of our state, as well as our 8-state region.

Carol Ann has been in Early Childhood for 30 years. She has been in Head start for the past 15 years. She began working with Bell Whitley Community Action Agency in self-contained Head Start Center in Williamsburg, Kentucky. She is currently at North Elementary in a blended program with the Whitley County School District.

Ms. Sellers has unique and engaging talents that come to life in her classroom. All educators bring something to the table, but it is teachers like her that set the standard for excellence. She is definitely gifted when it comes to teaching. Her teaching has impacted several early learners.

Carol Ann's passion and charisma for innovation and engagement are always evident. Given the rigor of her classroom environment, she never loses sight of what matters most; PLAY! She enables her students to explore and learn through developmentally appropriate means. Her students excel while displaying, growth, confidence and independence! She works to foster skills that are both beneficial and necessary. Equipping young learners with readiness for Kindergarten and beyond.

Combining social emotional learning, emerging math, and literacy, the onlooker can clearly view Ms. Sellers as a facilitator. Her classroom belongs to her students. That shared bond is one that sets her apart from other teachers. Her students thrive.

Carol Ann has influenced so many lives. She is such a wonderful teacher, mentor and a friend. She is an epitome of early education. She embodies every aspect of what an educator should be, or should ever aspire to be. She is a leader, a risk taker, an advocate. One would find themselves hard pressed to find another quite like her.

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Weatherization Department **Wins Award**

At the most recent KHC annual weatherization meeting, the Bell-Whitley weatherization crew received an award for the best air infiltration reduction on a dwelling. The air infiltration award was awarded to our crew for reducing the air leakage in a home by the greatest volume of air flow or leakage into the home from outside. The reduction of air leakage was verified through blower door testing before and after work was completed on the home by both the BWCAA weatherization crew and our state monitor. A blower door test depressurizes a house and simulates a 20 mph wind on all sides of the home and allows the energy auditor to locate where the air leakage in a house is located. Air flow is measured in cubic feet per minute (CFM) and the house is depressurized in pascals, which is a measurement of pressure. Once the blower door is set-up and running, the energy auditor can locate areas of the home where there is air leakage and direct the crew how to complete the work to air seal the home. During the initial evaluation of the home, the blower door test revealed the client's house to be very leaky. The blower door test revealed air leakage at a rate of 7,350 CFM @50 pascals. To put this number in perspective the expected/targeted air flow rate for this home was 2,000 CFM @50 pascals. After the work was completed and the final blower door test was completed the weatherization crew had reached an air flow rate of 1,800 CFM @ 50. This was a reduction of 5,550 CFM or 76% of the air leakage in the home. This will greatly help the client with reducing their current and future heating costs.

Housing Initiatives Program

Team Kentucky Homeowner Assistance Fund

Bell-Whitley CAA, Inc. is working with the Team Kentucky Homeowner Assistance Fund to provide homeowners help with their mortgage and housing related expenses, so they can avoid foreclosure. To qualify for the program, applicants must meet certain guidelines. The guidelines are as follows:

- The homeowner must have experienced a COVID related financial hardship on or after January 21, 2020.
- The hardship must result in a loss of income of at least 10% or material increase in housing.
- Household income is within program limits
- The home must be owner occupied
- The home must be in the state of Kentucky
- Homeowner's liquid assets cannot exceed six months of housing payments.

Qualifying homeowners may receive up to \$35,000 in assistance to repay delinquent mortgage bills, utility payments, insurance premiums, property taxes and homeowner's association fees.

To apply for assistance, applicants can go to www.protectmykyhome.org. All applications are done online and all documentation must be uploaded into the application.

Once an application is completed, a counselor will be assigned to help the applicant through the process.

It can take 30-60 days for applications to be processed.

Applicants can contact Bell-Whitley at 606-337-3044 or 606-549-3933, with any questions about the program.



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The Community Action Promise

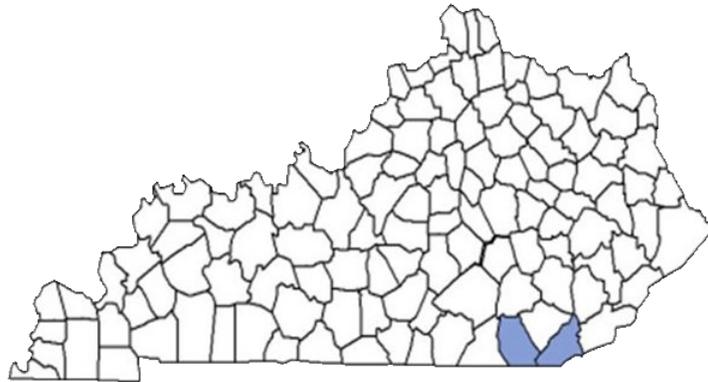
*Community Action changes people's lives,
embodies the spirit of hope,
improves communities,
and makes America a better place to live.
We care about the entire community,
and we are dedicated
to helping people help themselves
and each other.*



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**EQUAL HOUSING
OPPORTUNITY**

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