2021-2022 Annual Report

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Family Services Report..............................Randi Jenson
Youth Intervention Program Report..............Madeline Waage
MnSure Report........................................Tammy Novacek
Team EPIC ............................................Stephanie Heppner
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Lake of the Woods
Edward Arnesen
Rachael Raschke
Jenny Moorman

Roseau County
Carol Rhen
Colleen Lorenson
Pamela Lovejoy
Roger Falk

East Marshall County
Gary Kiesow
Loren Lusignan
Orvis Haugen
Sharon Bring

Kittson County
Ardell Larson
Kathy Bernstrom
Leon Olson
Cindy Christopherson
NWCA Office Staff

Sharon Millner  Executive Director
Lonnie Vatnsdal  Fiscal/ Human Resources Director
John Wynne  Director of Housing and Planning
Anne Bertilrud  Energy Assistance Director
Jason Gohman  Weatherization Director
Stuart Weston  Energy Auditor/Housing Specialist
Randi Jenson  Family Services Director
Diane Hayes  Grants/Program/Case Manager
Tammy Novacek  Health Services Manager
Simone Erickson  Administrative Assistant
Cecelia Hendrickson  Bookkeeper/IT Technician
Madeline Waage  Youth Intervention Program Coordinator
Erica Maxwell  Family Services Worker
Stephanie Heppner  Drug Free Community/ Team Epic Director

Head Start Office

Beth Budziszewski  Head Start /Early Head Start Director
Jackie Stinson  Head Start/Early Head Start Family Service Manager
Jo Ann Christian  Health Services Manager
Brittany Babcock  Head Start Early Childhood Development Manager
Tessa Zimney  Head Start/Early Head Start Instructional Coach
Monica Byre  Health Services Assistant
Natasha Lee  Office Assistant
Pam Horntvedt  Head Start/Early Head Start Teacher Mentor
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Early Head Start—Home Visitors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sylvia Christianson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie Cole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara Lee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stacy Szczepanski</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilary Gram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle Knochenmus</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Head Start Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brittany Carpenter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelly Peters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crystal Peterson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer Olson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryanna Vacura</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angela Tierce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calli Westrum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannah Hill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunshine Dorow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melissa Kostrzewski</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Megan Larson</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Advocates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Susie Olson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda Blackburde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanya Lund</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Head Start Assistant Teachers and Paraprofessionals</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aspen Thompson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orpha Schaffhauser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasha Seydel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jody Johnson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chealsea Stanley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassie Stoldt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex Haugen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amber Craig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makaylah Lucek</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emily Sorenson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara Clinton</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tami Davy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amanda Forster</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jana Sistad</td>
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<tr>
<td>Darlene Danielson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tammy Harris</td>
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<tr>
<td>Erin Blazejewski</td>
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<tr>
<td>LaKeisha Umhauer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brittney Sletten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill Knott</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennie Olson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2021-2022 was a successful and challenging year for Northwest Community Action, Inc. As the pandemic subsides staff and clients worked to navigate this new normal. Positives in the post-pandemic era include embracing technology for training and connecting with both staff and clients. I am truly grateful for the dedication of our veteran NWCA employees and Governing Body. Together we will continue to embrace the change and endless possibilities that are inevitable with staff turnover and communities in transition.

Thank you to the foundations, counties, state and federal agencies that provide a wide range of funds to help meet the needs of low-income people in Roseau, Kittson, Lake of the Woods and Marshall counties. A special thank you to the Minnesota Office of Economic Opportunity for managing the federal Community Service Bock Grant and the additional state funded Minnesota Community Action Grant that make us a Community Action Agency. These flexible funds along with CARES dollars have helped us to fill in the gaps that other sources of funding are not able to fill. Our agency continues to collaborate with a wide variety of community partners to meet the needs of low-income children, families, and individuals. Partnerships include: social service centers, school districts, childcare providers, public health, energy vendors, contractors, energy vendors, local businesses and faith communities.

At the heart of all we do, we remember the Promise of Community Action: “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.”

As you review the 2021-2022 Annual Report, be mindful that the programs in the following pages and the staff that work diligently to administer them are making a positive difference within the communities that we serve throughout Northwest Minnesota. Please reach out to me at any time to discuss the services and mission of NWCA at 218-528-3258 Ext. 117 or smillner@nwcaa.org.

Sincerely,

Sharon Millner, Executive Director
REVENUE BY FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION

Community Services.................................$369,000
Conservation/Repair...............................$48,368
Emergency Services...............................$77,376
Energy Assistance.................................$155,068
Head Start..............................................$2,942,529
Health Insurance Services.......................$100,426
Homeless Prevention.............................154,606
Housing and Rehabilitation.......................$185,753
Live Well at Home.................................$1,119
Weatherization........................................$426,936
In-Kind....................................................$170,386
Youth Services........................................$171,049
General and Administration.................$1,976

Total Revenue including In-Kind..............$4,804,592

EXPENDITURES BY FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION

Community Services..............$378,161
Conservation/Repair..............$50,795
Emergency Services..............$105,439
Energy Assistance...............$155,068
Head Start..............................$2,942,529
Health Insurance Services.........$100,426
Homeless Prevention.........$154,606
Housing and Rehabilitation......$156,590
Live Well at Home...............$20,076
Weatherization....................$426,936
In-Kind...............................$170,386
Youth Services......................$169,604
General and Administration....$22,125

Total Expenditures including In-Kind........$4,852,741

Change in Net Assets   (48,149)
### EXPENDITURES BY COST CATEGORY

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Fringe Benefits</td>
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<td>Travel</td>
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<td>Supplies</td>
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<td>Equipment</td>
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<td>Maintenance of Equipment</td>
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<td>Consultants</td>
<td>$119,475</td>
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<td>Direct Services</td>
<td>$469,024</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>$220,068</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-Kind</td>
<td>$170,386</td>
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</table>

Total Expenditures including In-Kind $4,852,741

### CHANGE IN REVENUE (INCLUDING IN-KIND) FOR THE LAST FIVE YEARS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year Ending August 31</th>
<th>Revenue</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>$4,804,592</td>
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<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>$4,044,891</td>
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<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>$5,720,653</td>
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<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>$5,810,643</td>
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<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>$5,834,031</td>
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</table>
Northwest Community Action Badger, MN

Head Start / Early Head Start Annual Report - Program Year 2021-2022

Northwest Community Action (NWCA) provided comprehensive Head Start services to 219 children and their families in our four-county service area: Lake of the Woods, Roseau, Marshall and Kittson county. A total of 195 families were served, including children with special needs and those needing individualized series. These services were provided in collaboration with their school districts. Head Start services include home visits and centers located in area schools providing nutritious breakfast, lunch and snacks. Additional services include medical screenings done with each county’s nursing service, oral health screenings, and follow-up work. Head Start may help with payment if the child is not covered by MA, MN Care, or other private insurance.

NWCA Head Start and Early Head Start promote parents as their child’s first, and most important teacher. Head Start parents have many opportunities to participate in educational activities in their individual service area. Parents participated in Policy Council both in person and virtually, attended local parent meetings, and worked with a teacher and their child on home visits. Additionally, conferences are held with each family throughout the year.

In Early Head Start, weekly home visits of 1.5 hours are done with each enrolled child and a parent. Typically, a Buddy Group get-together is held twice a month for all EHS families in each local area in which activities, education, and information is provided for the children and parents. Parent engagement is emphasized. Literacy activities, budgeting education, mental health consultation, and crisis assistance are a few of the parent support services provided.

Within these families, Head Start connects, supports, educates pregnant moms and children birth to 5 years old. Our families and children are directly supported by 6 Early Head Start Teachers, 3 Family Advocates, 11 Head Start Teachers and more than 20 Assistant Teachers/Paras.
Our health-related services are well-received with staff and community professionals collaborating to complete health and developmental screenings. During the screenings, children are assessed on dental, vision and hearing as well as developmental screening test designed to identify young children who need further testing or who need help with academic skills.

Head Start is funded with federal, and state dollars. Our recent financial audit ending August 31, 2021 had two findings. NWCA has implemented the recommendations noted in our audit.
Early Head Start teachers utilize COR Advantage to provide a complete picture of each child's development. COR Advantage allows teachers to view children’s development through play and naturally occurring activities.
Head Start teachers utilize Teaching Strategies GOLD® an authentic, ongoing observational system for assessing children from 3-5 years. Teachers observe children in the context of everyday experiences, which is an effective way to learn what they know and can do. Teaching strategies refer to the methods, techniques, procedures and processes that a teacher uses during instruction.
School Readiness Goals

School readiness is foundational across early childhood systems and programs. It means children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children's learning, and schools are ready for children.

**Physical Development and Health**
1. Children will acquire and maintain a high level of physical health, including being up to date on physical and dental checkups and immunizations.
2. Children will demonstrate an increased ability to care for their own needs appropriately. They will become more independent and resourceful getting needs met.
3. Children will demonstrate increasing control of large muscles for movement, navigation and balance consistent with their chronological and developmental level.
4. Children will demonstrate increasing fine motor strength, coordination and agility for use in self-care, manipulation of materials and exploring their environment.

**Social Emotional Development**
1. Children will be able to manage feelings appropriately and self-regulate with regard to their emotions, attention span and behavior.
2. Children will demonstrate positive, appropriate social relationships with family members, peers and other significant adults.

**Approaches to Learning**
1. Children will demonstrate a positive approach to learning through persistence, attentiveness, engagement and curiosity.
2. Children will show an increasing ability to express themselves through sound, movement, visual media and role play.

**Language and Literacy**
1. Children will demonstrate increasing skills in comprehension and use of more complex and varying vocabulary.
2. Children will demonstrate increasing proficiency using language to communicate needs, wants and for self-expression.

**Cognition and General Knowledge**
1. Children will use math skills in everyday routines as appropriate for their developmental level with increasing competency in counting, comparing, relating and problem solving.
2. Children will engage in exploring their environment through observation, imitation, manipulation, and curiosity.
3. Children will demonstrate use of skills to solve problems, find multiple solutions and answer questions.
Northwest Community Action has been a regional leader in developing housing programs which provide housing opportunities for the low and moderate income households of our area. The Agency has been actively involved with the delivery of program funding through several housing programs including:

1. The Down payment Assistance Program
2. The MURL Program
3. The Small Cities Program

**Down Payment Assistance Program**
In the mid 1990’s Northwest Community Action developed a Down Payment Assistance Program for Roseau County. This program was in response to a critical problem that the local manufacturers were having obtaining employees. Prospective employees had no place to live and did not have the necessary funding to meet lender down payment requirements. To address this need a down payment assistance program was developed using funding from Minnesota Housing and from local jurisdictions, employers and lenders. This program proved to be so popular that it was replicated by neighboring counties and eventually throughout the region. Today virtually all of the counties of Region 1 having revolving loans from which down payment assistance is provided. Although NWCA no longer administers the down payment assistance program it works closely with the Northwest Minnesota Multi-County HRA in the delivery of the program.

To date hundreds of households have been assisted with funding from this program and revolving funds have been established in each county with several million dollars in revolving funds existing. As indicated above Northwest Community Action no longer administers the program which was taken over by the Northwest Minnesota Multi-County HRA when the program became regional in scope and was established in counties that NWCA does not serve.

**MURL (Minnesota Urban and Rural) Program**
The MURL Program is one which Northwest Community Action has administered for over 20 years. Under the program Minnesota Housing provided funding to the agency to acquire and rehabilitate substandard properties and then re-sell the properties on a zero-interest contract for deed with no down payment required. Contract for deed payment amounts are determined by household income levels. Several years ago Minnesota Housing ended the active program so agencies were no longer able to purchase houses. NWCA continues to collect payments on houses which were previously sold, but we can only use funds which are paid back to undertake needed repairs on the existing MURL stock.

Northwest Community Action currently has 18 homes in our MURL program and we continue to collect contact for deed payments and to administer funds.

**Small Cities/Community Development**
Northwest Community Action assists jurisdictions in its service area with securing and administering Small Cities Block Grants. These grants have been primarily used by the recipient communities to improve/install public facilities, rehabilitate owner occupied and renter occupied housing, and rehabilitate commercial buildings. These grants are made available with funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and are awarded through the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) as part of their Small Cities Development Program (SCDP). Awards of up to $1,400,000 are made for comprehensive projects (generally those involving several activities) and up to $600,000 for projects involving one activity (such as owner-occupied housing rehabilitation).

During the past decade NWCA has become more actively engaged in working with the Small Cities Program as other administrators within the region have ceased or slowed their involvement in the program. During the past decade we have completed and closed out housing rehabilitation projects in Stephen, Warren and Argyle, Hallock and Roosevelt; commercial rehabilitation projects in Argyle, Hallock and Roosevelt and the construction of a community center in Lancaster.
During the past year NWCA has administered a number of projects which are shown in Table 1.

Several of the projects outlined in Table 1 are nearing completion and closeout, while a number of others were delayed during the COVID epidemic. Contractors are still experiencing delays in the supply chain (for example window orders have taken up to 6 months) and the cost of materials have substantially increased. These are obstacles that our staff is currently dealing with.

NWCA has also assisted in the preparation of applications for a number of communities which are currently under review with awards anticipated in the near future. If awarded Northwest Community Action will administer the projects. These projects are summarized in Table 2.

During the upcoming year we anticipate working with the Cities of Hallock and Stephen in the development of new applications for those communities. If a community is interested in applying for funding under the Small Cities Program it is encouraged to contact NWCA staff for assistance in preparing the application and implementing the projects.
Weatherization/Housing

Program Director—Jason Gohman

Weatherization

The goal of our Weatherization Assistance Program is to increase the energy efficiency of dwellings occupied by low-income persons whether they rent or own, reduce their total energy expenditures, improve indoor air quality, and address issues regarding health and safety. Starting with last year’s program we are allowed to upgrade furnaces and gas water heaters based on conservation. Households who are considered the highest priority are the elderly, disabled, families with children under 19 years of age, and those with high energy burdens.

Last year’s weatherization program spent $252,000. We weatherized 10 homes, and to spread the funding throughout our service territory more equitably we replace 37 stand-alone furnaces and water heaters by upgrading furnaces and water heaters from standard 80% efficiency to 94%+ as a furnace or water heater only event. Both electric and gas leaking or non-working water heaters were also replaced through this program.

Conservation Improvement Program (CIP)

Last year’s allocation was on par with past years. With Otter Tail Power, Roseau Electric Cooperative, North Star Electric Cooperative, City of Roseau and City of Baudette all participating. The combined allocation was $86,800. We are encouraging PKM and Red Lake Electric to rejoin the program after they chose to discontinue the program when they were no longer mandated to participate. Our efforts have been unsuccessful to this point.

With many folks already upgrading to LED light bulbs, our main focus has been replacing older major appliances like refrigerators and freezers with Energy Star models. Otter Tail Power customers are now also allowed to replace inefficient washing machines, dryers, and dishwashers with these funds.

The Energy Assistance Program helps eligible renters and homeowners living in Kittson, East Marshall, Lake of the Woods, and Roseau counties pay a portion of their home heating and electric bills. Homeowners may be eligible for repair or replacement of their nonfunctioning heating systems.

The Energy Assistance Program uses the prior three months of household income and/or last year’s federal tax forms for self-employment individuals for making eligibility determinations. The household income must be at or below 60% of the state median income or 110% of federal poverty guidelines, whichever is greater. With additional COVID funds, Commerce increased from 50% of the SMI to 60% for program year 2022. This is the highest threshold allowable by the Federal government.

EAP is federally funded through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

**PRIMARY HEAT ASSISTANCE**

The Primary Heat benefit addresses low income household’s ability to maintain affordable and continuous energy by providing grants to lower their energy burden. The Primary Heat benefit is paid directly to the household’s energy vendor. The grant amount is determined by using a matrix of income, household’s size, and the previous year heat costs.

Primary Heat assistance in the amount of $1,776,704.40 was distributed to 1,323 households thru their energy vendors. A total of 118 households were denied assistance due to lack of sufficient income verification, over-income, or applying after the end of our program year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTY</th>
<th>TOTAL SERVED</th>
<th>AMOUNT PAID</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kittson</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>$327,600.28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lake of the Woods</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>$321,354.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marshall</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>$264,576.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roseau</td>
<td>641</td>
<td>$863,172.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>1323</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,776,704.4</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CRISIS PROGRAM**

Crisis benefits are used to prevent shut-off of energy sources, to reinstate service of energy sources, to enable delivery of fuel, and also to assist senior households with current heat or electric bills. Crisis requests must be addressed immediately to avert life threatening and no heat situations.

A total of $738,548.95 was spent in the Crisis Program. This assistance was provided to 732 households, with 1899 processed crisis events.
ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Program Director—Anne Bertilrud

ENERGY RELATED REPAIR PROGRAM

The Energy Related Repair Program (ERR) is a crisis program that addresses hazardous and life threatening safety, or no heat problems due to malfunctioning or non-functioning primary and secondary heating systems. As a crisis program, ERR response to calls must be immediate, in compliance with federal law, and the purchasing process is expedited. Qualified installers make mechanical and safety repairs and installations, and 50% or more of the installation work must be inspected. NWCA spent $189,094.49 last year under the ERR program to assist 120 households. Occasionally numerous trips were required from contractors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTY</th>
<th>TOTAL SERVED</th>
<th>AMOUNT PAID</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KITTSON</td>
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<td>LAKE OF THE WOODS</td>
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<td>MARSHALL</td>
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<td>ROSEAU</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>$88,634.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>120</strong></td>
<td><strong>$189,094.49</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WATER ASSISTANCE

The Department of Commerce expanded the EAP program to pay water and sewer bills for Minnesotans who apply and qualify for energy assistance. Minnesota was the first U.S. state to receive federal approval on a plan to provide water bill assistance payments to households, with a focus on preventing households from being disconnected from water and sewer utilities. The $15 million in water bill funding is in addition to the $167 million in ARPA funds Commerce received for Energy Assistance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTY</th>
<th>TOTAL SERVED</th>
<th>AMOUNT PAID</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KITTSON</td>
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<tr>
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<td>MARSHALL</td>
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<td>ROSEAU</td>
<td>43</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>85</strong></td>
<td><strong>$28,471.00</strong></td>
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REACH OUT FOR WARMTH

Reach Out for Warmth (ROFW) is an emergency program for households facing a no heat situation. ROFW program is funded solely through local donations. During the 2021—2022 program year donations totaled $44,861.57, allowing NWCA to help 105 households. We have about $36,000 funds going into the 2022 heating season! A special “Thank You” to all who donated to the Reach Out for Warmth Program!
We are so proud of our family service department! It has been a very challenging year with many new changes to the agency.

We have continued to receive Family Homelessness Prevention Program, Youth Homelessness Demonstration grant, Long term Homeless grant and Transitional Homelessness program funds. We also got the opportunity to handle the Vehicle repair funds from Blue Cross Blue Shield and the four social service agencies of our counties that requested we facilitate the funds.

Our Covid funds have been depleted. Many families were helped through these funds. Our Jail Transition Program has been refunded through Roseau County. The unanimous vote from the Roseau County Commissioners provides $50,000 for the next two years to continue to lower the recidivism costs in Roseau County.

Another grant that was extremely helpful to our department was the HUB grant. This was an outreach program to ensure families got the resources needed to thrive in the community they live in with only one to two calls.

The United Way provided funds for two separate grants of Emergency Disaster Relief funds to be used for a multitude of things not written in any of our other grant narratives. Some needs included dental X-Rays for a child needing oral surgery, broken/frozen pipes, utilities in the off season, and extended hotel stays for people in domestic violence situations or furloughed clients with nowhere to go. The housing shortage has been hard on our funds. Motel stays are very expensive. We have also purchased tickets to get people back to their supportive people or families.

All in all, we have had a very productive year and hope to continue the work and services we have in the past and future to come.
Emergency Disaster Relief
We have helped 10 people
5 with rent assistance = $2834.00
1 with deposit = $725.00
4 with unique situations
• Shut off Utility bill paid
• Frozen pipe repair
• Minor child’s dental x-rays
• Youth child’s Internet modem, router, hook up, and service

We received a referral about a juvenile at the Bemidji Detention Center, child was not able to come home due to no Internet for his ankle monitor. Both parents work with a household size of 7 things are still tight. We were able to connect with Sjoberg’s to get a modem, router, hook up, and service paid for in advance so the child could be home.

Emergency Food and Shelter Program Phase 39 and Arpa-R
We have helped 21 people
Phase 39-
• 9 with rent assistance = $4640.00
Arpa-R –
• 9 with rent/mortgage = $6243.40
• 1 with utilities = $395.48
• 2 with emergency shelter = $3037.21

Blue Plus Flex Housing – Inmate Discharge Planning
We have helped 17 people
• 13 with rent assistance = $13,240.00
• 2 with deposit = $900.00
• 2 with hotel/motel stay = $2898.15

Blue Plus Vehicle Repair
We have helped 57 people
Lake of the Woods - 8 people = $9,457.95
Roseau - 33 people = $32,045.98
Kittson - 10 people = $10,391.52
Marshall - 6 people = $5,471.59
Total of $ 57,367.04
Remaining balance $2,632.96

Client reached out about helping get her a new key fob. Client and her boyfriend got into an argument and he threw the key fob in the snow bank. Client looked many times also, lost her job due to not being able to start her vehicle. We were able to get a towing company to tow vehicle to the dealership for new fob.

Client called looking for help fixing his dodge caravan because it was the only vehicle that would fit his child’s car seat. We were able to get the heat and a few other issues fixed so they could safely transport their child around.
TEEN JOURNEY

Program Director—Randi Jenson

TEENS BETWEEN THE AGES OF 14-18 REFERED BY PROBATION OR SOCIAL SERVICES IN ROSEAU COUNTY

Teen Journey is funded through Roseau County Social Services. The program runs January 1st through December 31st each year utilizing $25,000 of funding for staff and supplies. Teen Journey has been facilitated by NWCA for 5 years. We work closely with probations officer Kelsey Keimig and Roseau County social service workers who have youth in compromised situations. All Teen Journey clients are referred. Teen Journey is a sixteen week course and must be completed by the client for certification. NWCA is honored to hold and facilitate this program for the youth in Roseau County.

The purpose of this program is to meet weekly with the youth who demonstrate issues with truancy, alcohol related issues, drug and other problem behaviors. Due to the number of clients going through the court system there have been many attempts to try and figure out a better system that works and they have fallen back to the Teen Journey program. This at times affects the number of referrals to us. We currently have 2 youth on the program now and they will both be completing the program in mid to late December if they don’t miss any classes. We have 5 clients who gained their certification in the past year. The program is highly based off of a motivational interviewing setting, and allows youth to develop healthy coping mechanisms.

Teen Journey is facilitated through NWCA and funded by Roseau County Social Services. We use a highly recommended curriculum: Forward Thinking.
Program Director—Madeline Wagge

The Little Brother Little Sister Program continues to impact our area youth in the Counties of Kittson, Roseau and Lake of the Woods. Madeline Waage is the coordinator for all three counties.

Our area youth need healthy places and activities to engage in positive behavior and grow as individuals. The mentoring component of the Little Brother Little Sister Program enables high-risk children to develop relationships, goals and skills necessary to break negative cycles within their lives. There to come alongside our youth have been caring adults willing to volunteer their time as “Big Brother” and “Big Sister” mentors providing that place of acceptance and positive reinforcement. Through these friendships our mentors are able to provide a consistent, positive influence with valuable teaching moments from their time spent together.

Throughout the year fun group activities and free passes to attend events are provided for the Little Brother Little Sister Program participants. We offer a variety of events for the participants to attend such as at 567 Designs to make customized tumblers, ROAR Rentals, Doc’s Harbor Rentals, the Corn Maze, Blazin’ Saddles Horse Ranch, Archery and more. Group events are a great way for mentors to come and enjoy a free activity with their “Littles.” It also provides an opportunity to connect and meet others involved in the program.

The Little Brother Little Sister Program received a grant from the Minnesota Office of Justice Programs. The grant is for two years and began on January 1, 2021. Additional support has come from the counties of Kittson, Roseau and Lake of the Woods, local businesses, and community members.

The program coordinator is encouraged by the support from the community and its continued growth as mentors step forward to build friendships and guide our area youth. During uncertain times and heightened emotions, it is most crucial that our youth are surrounded by the presence of a reassuring voice in their lives.
Program Director—Tammy Novacek

Northwest Community Action, Inc. currently has three Certified Navigators, Tammy Novacek, Randi Jenson & Monica Byre. Currently, Tammy is available to help assist clients in our service area with signing up for a plan, renewing their current plan, or helping with any follow up questions at the state or county level. The other two staff members work in other areas of NWCA and will help with a backlog if needed.

Northwest Community Action Navigators assisted more than 900 clients with health care questions, and over 150 people successfully enrolled in some kind of a health care plan. This was accomplished throughout the entire year. These numbers may seem lower from past years, because of the Federal Emergency & the Public Health Emergency which are still in effect. Due to Covid – we have had to change our whole way of doing things, such as meeting with clients virtually or over the phone. Additionally, information is requested to be sent via email, fax, or U.S. mail. This can make the application process slower. MNsure would prefer that clients are not met face-to-face, however our agency is meeting in-person on a case to case basis.

Open enrollment ran from November 1st, 2021 – January 15th, 2022. During open enrollment people with Qualified Health Plans are able to make changes to their current plans or change plans completely. This is also the time that Minnesotans who are without insurance and did not have a qualifying life event change, called “special enrollment” can enroll with a January 1st, enrollment date. Clients who qualify for Minnesota Care or Medical Assistance can apply and make changes year-round.

MNsure extended the current grant a 1-year extension, this funding allows Northwest Community Action and its partners, Tri-Valley Opportunity Council and Inter County Community Council, to bring free health insurance services to nine different counties in Northwestern Minnesota for another year. The service area covers 11,325 square miles, and a total population of 97,537 people. This past year NWCA alone signed 182 people up for healthcare. Of those 43 were Medical Assistance, 24 was Minnesota Care and 115 were Qualified Health Plans with an Advance Premium Tax Credit. Due to the “Public Health Emergency”, no changes or ending of any person’s current insurance was permitted – which means no renewals. Due to the Public Health Emergency, the higher advance premium tax credits will be extended into 2027, along with Minnesota Care premiums rather than 0 - $80.00 per person it has been and will continue to be until 2026 0 - $28.00 per person, depending on gross yearly income & family size.

NWCA also has an In – Navigator grant, this grant pays NWCA $70.00 per successful applicant who is enrolled or renewed. Without any renewals, this number is also down, but we still received $12,740.00, for the 182 clients that successfully received health insurance.

Tammy Novacek has been part of the Navigator Coalition Board and also the MNsure Stakeholders Board. These two boards meet virtually to promote an increase of knowledge and skills of MNsure Navigators. Navigators sign clients up for insurance, complete certain population applications, update incomes, and also provide outreach. Currently, word-of-mouth has been the best form of outreach. Recently a couple clients shared their thanks for the wonderful service that they received from our Navigator:

"We sure received a "Godsend" when Tammy helped us with our application for MN CARE. She was very caring, professional and came to us with lots of integrity."

"She was knowledgeable, efficient and most helpful with problems and questions. We are fortunate enough to have had her assistance."

Looking ahead 2022 - 2023 open enrollment for Minnesota will be November 1st, 2022 – January 15th, 2023 which is 6 weeks longer than the federal open enrollment.
The table below shows qualifications - depending on household size and income.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People in household</th>
<th>Medical Assistance for adults over age 18 (up to)</th>
<th>Medical Assistance for children (up to)</th>
<th>Medical Assistance for pregnant women (up to)</th>
<th>MinnesotaCare Annual income** (up to)</th>
<th>Tax credits for private health plans Annual income** (above)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>$1,506 / $18,074</td>
<td>$3,114 / $37,372</td>
<td>does not apply</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>$6,359 / $76,312</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
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<td>$7,522 / $90,266</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>$4,121 / $49,462</td>
<td>$8,522 / $102,272</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>$4,645 / $55,740</td>
<td>$9,604 / $115,252</td>
<td>$9,709 / $116,509</td>
<td>$80,240</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>$5,168 / $62,017</td>
<td>$10,686 / $128,232</td>
<td>$10,802 / $129,631</td>
<td>$89,320</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>each additional person add</td>
<td>$523 / $6,277</td>
<td>$1,081 / $12,980</td>
<td>$1,093 / $13,121</td>
<td>$9,080</td>
<td>$9,080</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TEAM EPIC

Program Director—Steph Heppner

Team EPIC (Encouraging Positive Impact for Change) is a Drug Free Communities (DFC) Coalition that is made up of adult and youth members of Roseau County who share the common goal of increasing community collaboration to reduce youth substance use and abuse and related problems as well as improve mental wellness among youth.

During this year Team EPIC had 54 active and 18 inactive adult members and 35 active and 30 inactive youth members and received $125,000 DFC Funding from the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP); with management by the Center for Disease Control (CDC).

With all of this year’s projects combined, nearly every student in all four Roseau County school districts was reached with Team EPIC messaging or interactions by Team EPIC youth and adult volunteers. The number of interactions with youth was over 1,700 and interactions with adults was over 3,600.

Team EPIC started the year with new Billboard designs going up. These billboards have the Team EPIC Logo with positive messaging. The east-facing billboard next to the Badger Cenex on Highway 11 says, “I’ve Got Your Back! You Matter!”. The west-facing billboard on the S-curves east of Roseau on Highway 11 says, “Encourage - Inspire - Connect”.

Members of the Team EPIC Youth Coalitions in Warroad and Roseau High Schools helped to plan and implement four larger projects this year, and both Badger and Greenbush/Middle River School Advisors worked with groups of their youth to implement each of the school-based strategies and activities into their schools.

- “Red Ribbon Week” is a week recognized nationally for promoting prevention of youth substance use. Students planned a week of activities in the schools to spread the message of Red Ribbon Week and encourage students to live substance-free. This year at lunch, the Team EPIC youth members asked all students in grades 6-12 to write down activities they would rather do than use substances. These ideas were then hung in the hallways of the schools.

- “Countdown to Christmas Break” was developed this year by students to help lighten the stress and improve wellness for all staff and students during the last week before break and also to remind students to be substance-free over break.

- “Prom Week” where again they arranged a fun week of activities and reminders for students to be substance-free during the Prom and Graduation seasons. Students in 6-12th grade were asked to sign a poster stating that “Most Roseau County Students would support a friend who chooses not to use”. Team EPIC also donated post-prom prizes to all the schools in Roseau County.

- Roseau County Fair booth - this year Team EPIC had a double booth at the fair. On one side was the prize wheel and question geared towards youth. Before spinning the wheel, participants were asked to write on a paper that said, “Our Choices Matter…Here’s Why” These were then hung all around the booth. The other side of the booth asked participants to enter their name for a prize drawing of Team EPIC Cornhole boards that say, “You Are Someone’s Role Model”. On the table were resources for parents and youth as well as sign up sheets to join Team EPIC and a QR code bringing people to the Team EPIC website where they could find additional resources for parents and youth around wellness and substance use prevention.
Other projects the Youth Coalitions did this year include:

- “Be a Leader at Recess” to role model positive behaviors to younger students
- “Mix it Up at Lunch Day” to encourage inclusion and kindness
- “Good, Good Day” to improve mental wellness and increase a sense of community among students
- Presented to 3rd, 5th and 6th grade students about making healthy choices, vaping prevention, as well as what Team EPIC is and why they are part of it.
- Engaged with community members at Team EPIC booths to tell others about Team EPIC and share the messages of Youth Substance Use Prevention and Mental Wellness
- “Be the Voice” Suicide Awareness Community Event
- Max Foundation Wellness Fair
- Northborn Days Community Event

Two adult Coalition members, one youth Coalition member, and two staff from Team EPIC had the opportunity to travel to the Montana Summer Institute for a week-long training on Positive Community Norms, the Science of the Positive, and other prevention topics. The skills and knowledge they attained at the training conference was and will continue to help effectively shape the messaging and projects of Team EPIC.
Mission Statement

To stimulate a focusing of all available resources upon the goal of enabling low-income families and individuals of all ages to attain skills, knowledge and motivations and secure the opportunities needed for them to become self-sufficient.