

# Community Impact Report

# 2024



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# Letter of Impact



Dear Friends of Community Action,

We are pleased to share with you the 2024 Annual Report from Southwest Michigan Community Action Agency (SMCAA). In the following pages you will find highlights from our agency’s activities and accomplishments.

*SMCAA is dedicated to empowering individuals and families in need and supporting their journey towards economic security.*

SMCAA has been helping people and changing lives across Southwest Michigan since our inception in 1982. In 2024, SMCAA provided aid to more than 4,605 unduplicated individuals within our tri-county service area of Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties.

In 2024, SMCAA conducted a Community Needs Assessment (CNA), a survey of those representing the public, private, and consumer sectors within our service area. Collectively, these groups identified a number of needs. Analysis of the responses clearly indicated five (5) main core barriers to self-sufficiency:

*Community, Food & Nutrition, Housing, Medical & Health, and Transportation.*

SMCAA’s Board of Directors approved the 2024-25 CNA on October 16, 2024. You can view the full report on our website, [www.smcaa.com](http://www.smcaa.com).

With food insecurities at an all-time high and accompanied by crippling inflation, our clients needed our services more than ever this past year. As these economic challenges continue to impact the communities we service, our programs are increasingly critical in ensuring that individuals and families have access to the support they need to overcome these challenges.

This is also the time to thank our volunteers, program partners, grant administrators, the community, and key stakeholders, because SMCAA’s impact on the community - as well as our ability to fulfill our mission - are dependent on each of you.

On behalf of our Board of Directors, administration, staff, and our program participants, we want to express our deepest appreciation for all you do in support of our community.

Please join SMCAA on this journey to support the children, families, and seniors of Southwest Michigan, and help move them from surviving to thriving. Together we truly make a difference by Helping People and Changing Lives!

Sincerely,

Kim Smith Oldham, CCAP  
Executive Director



Kim is pictured with Senator Aric Nesbitt, who attended our Stuff-a-Truck event

# About Community Action



Community Action came to being in 1964 during President Lyndon B. Johnson’s State of the Union message. Johnson had just stepped into the presidency following the assassination of John F. Kennedy. In his first formal address to Congress, Johnson vowed to continue the anti-poverty initiatives begun by his predecessor.

“Let us carry forward the plans and programs of John F. Kennedy, not because of our sorrow or sympathy, but because they are right.... This administration today, here and now, declares an unconditional War on Poverty in America...”

It is this “war on poverty” that birthed the movement of Community Action. Johnson envisioned an American future based on a plan called “The Great Society,” which would improve the lives of all Americans regardless of their circumstances. This began with the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 which included a variety of now-familiar initiatives such as Head Start and Job Corps.

Community Action handed control to the local level to gear programs toward specific population needs. This concept, “maximum feasible participation,” was an innovative movement in government at the time. It allowed local Community Action Agencies to target their specific community’s basic emergency needs, driven by a community needs assessment process and stakeholder engagement.

Today there are over 1,000 Community Action Agencies in the United States and Puerto Rico. The State of Michigan has 27 CAAs, including SMCAA. Southwest Michigan Community Action Agency is responsible for three counties of Michigan—Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren.

Community Action Agencies are governed by a board of directors structured by federal statute and consisting of at least one-third low-income community members, one-third public officials, and up to one-third private sector leaders. This is known as a tripartite board.

2024 Board of Directors  
Minnie Warren - Chairperson  
Corey Christopher - Vice Chair  
Chokwe Pitchford  
Kathy Lyons - Treasurer  
Gerrod Moore  
Meagan Underwood - Secretary  
Gail Patterson-Gladney - Member at Large  
James Lawrence  
Diane Siefert

The purpose of Community Action is, and always has been, to help those in need gain a foothold so they can help move themselves toward economic security. By providing “bridges” of support, Community Action Programs can lessen those burdens which may hold some individuals and families back from economic security. Programs help with expenses and emergencies such as affordable housing and homelessness prevention, weatherization to improve safety and lower utility costs, assisting with utility arrearages, providing USDA commodity food for seniors and families, supplying local food pantries, and more. By providing support for emergencies, and aiding in basic needs, those who may be struggling find themselves able to move forward toward self-sufficiency.

The demand for social services ebbs and flows, but never goes away. Today, Community Action and the essential services it provides to our community, neighbors, friends, and family is more important than ever.



# Programmatic 2024

Total Programs Offered

18



4,320  
Eligibility determinations

Total Unduplicated Individuals Served

4,605

Total Unduplicated Households Served

3,302

## Community Services

To address food insecurity in Southwest Michigan, SMCAA provides a monthly USDA food program to adults aged 60 and over, quarterly food commodities to families, and also supplies products to food pantries throughout the tri-county service area. A selection of dry goods, canned goods, fresh fruit and/or vegetables, dairy, and meat items are available to satisfy dietary needs.



3,915  
Households referred to other agency programs

5,151

Households serviced through our food pantry

21,222

CSFP senior food boxes distributed

27,716

TEFAP family food boxes distributed

Electric, natural gas, deliverable fuel, water and wastewater, and other essential utility bills have a major impact on households' budgets. For those having trouble paying their utilities, SMCAA provides assistance by helping low-income people pay their bills, keep utilities in-service, and/or restoring the service.

1,450

Utility payments issued, including water and sewer



3,813  
Households referred to other SMCAA programs



*I wanted to let you know that I have now been able to save enough money to live independently. I appreciate your hard work and helping me to learn to prioritize, organize, and budget.*

*I couldn't have accomplished any of that without your help, and the other resources you provided me to help me be successful and to live, supporting myself.*

*As of Sept 1, I can pay my own rent.*

*It's been an amazing, difficult, but mostly empowering.*

*You have my deepest gratitude.*

*Thank you.*



I want to thank Weatherization and all the fellows that worked on my house. I am so grateful for all the things that got done. I want to thank you for the time you spent getting me into this wonderful program, and thank you for checking on the things to be done, and making sure everything was done.

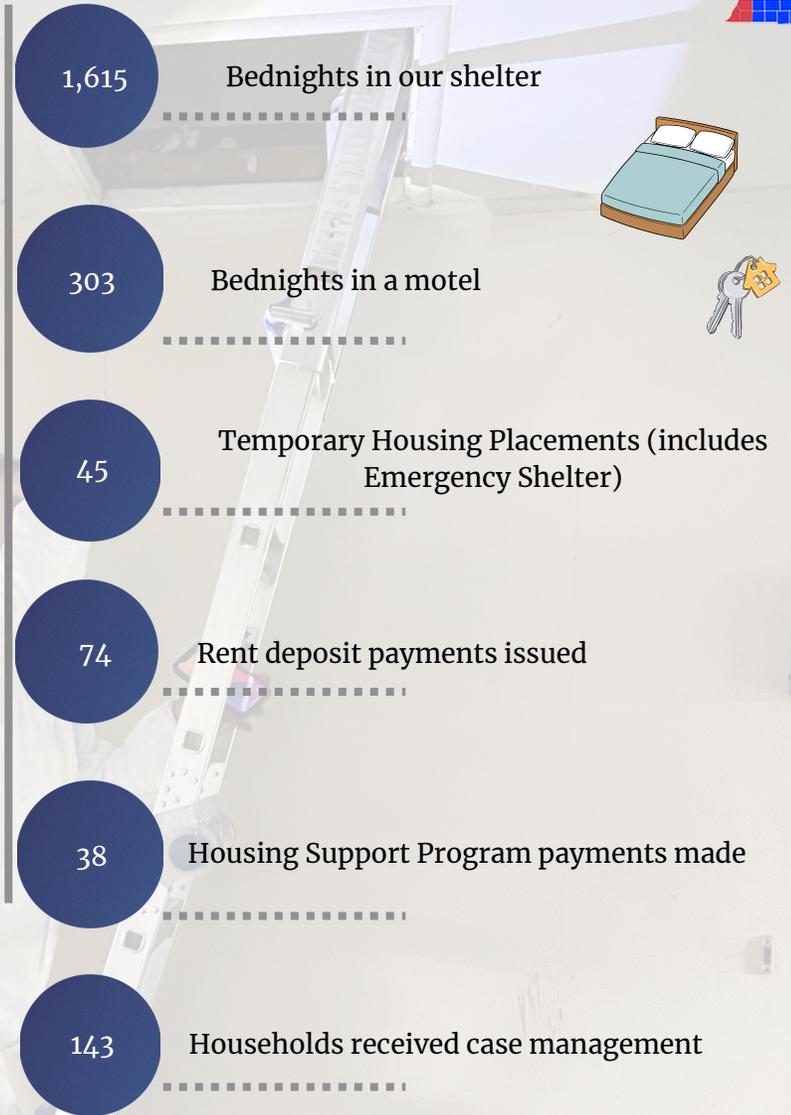
Serving Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties



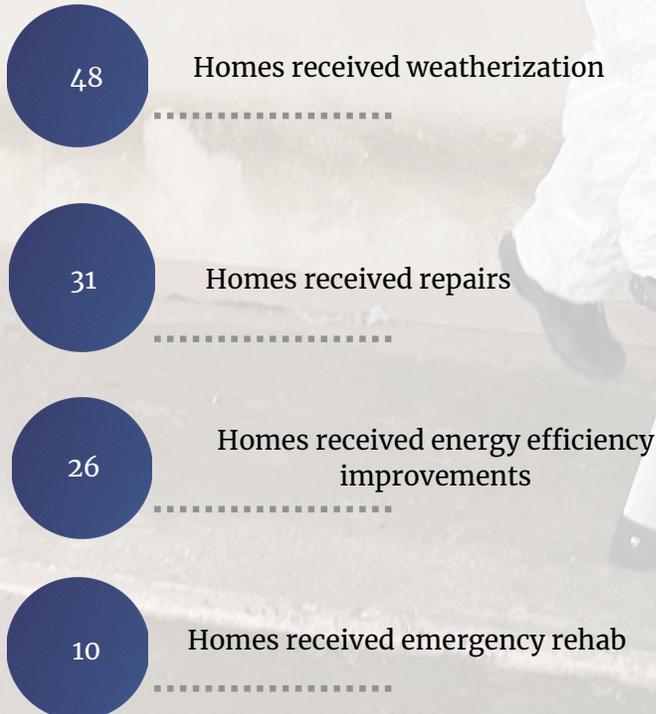
## Housing Services

SMCAA believes safe, affordable, and quality housing should be available and accessible to every member in our community. Through a number of housing assistance programs, the Agency offers critical housing support and assistance services in Van Buren and Cass Counties including rent and mortgage assistance, and temporary housing.

Programs like Permanent Supportive Housing, MSHDA ESG, Rapid Rehousing and our Homeless Shelter in Van Buren County empowers clients by recognizing they are capable, have strengths, and have resources that can help them take control of their lives. With case management SMCAA is able to help families become self-supported while assisting them with basic needs. The outcome of case management is to increase stability and self-sufficiency through individualized case management.



## Weatherization and Housing Rehabilitation



Weatherization services for qualifying households include, but are not limited to: *insulation, air sealing, duct sealing or repair, and mechanical replacement or repair of combustible appliances.*

Weatherization services provide savings in utility costs by reducing gas and energy usage, combats environmental contaminants such as mold and dust, reduces physical health issues by addressing health and safety problems from malfunctioning, damaged, or faulty appliances, and keeps homes cooler in summer and warmer in winter.

Homeowner Rehabilitation Assistance Programs provide funds to income-eligible owner-occupants to assist with repairs and rehabilitation of their homes. The goal is to allow homeowners who might not otherwise be able to afford necessary repairs to maintain a safe and healthy living environment.

SMCAA is third-party administrator for housing rehabilitation programs in the City of Benton Harbor and Van Buren County.

# Financial Breakdown 2024



At SMCAA, we bring together federal and state grant funds and donated dollars from local, private, and public sources. Our core funding is the U.S. Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), and we must fulfill a total of 58 Organizational Standards in order to meet funding requirements.

## CSBG

\$770,843

Community Services Block Grant - Core Federal Funding for Community Action

## Food Assistance

\$1,288,973

Senior Commodities (CSFP), low-income food assistance (TEFAP), and special distributions

## Utility Assistance

\$446,209

Metered fuel assistance, deliverable fuels, water and/or wastewater arrearages

## Housing Assistance

\$284,154

Rent or mortgage assistance, Permanent Supportive Housing, Rapid Rehousing, homeless shelter

## Weatherization

\$1,335,161

Energy conservation measures through Weatherization Assistance, Weatherization Deferral, Low-Income Heat Energy Assistance Program

## Housing Rehabilitation

\$123,626

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for City of Benton Harbor, Allegan & Van Buren County

Donations

\$65,450

In-Kind

\$136,384

**TOTAL**

**\$5,074,193**

Net assets at start of year: \$537, 148

Net assets at end of year: 630,244

**Change in net assets:**

**+\$93,096**



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“SMCAA is small but mighty!”

In 2024, our team was made up of 20 extremely hard working and dedicated staff members who worked together to administer 18 programs and services across the tri-county area.

Each team member has a unique passion that allows him or her to bring excellent customer service and great teamwork to the organization. They enable SMCAA to meet our mission year after year.

## 2024 Special Recognition

SMCAA actively works with over 277 community partners to expand resources and opportunities to achieve community outcomes.

These partnerships are critical to ensure the clients are receiving the widest range of assistance, maximizing resources in the community, and that there are coordinated efforts to reduce the causes and conditions of poverty.

Our own Yvonne Vidt, Program Manager, was honored with a recognition as one of the Region IV Area Agency on Aging "50 over 60!"



Yvonne has been a hard working member of SMCAA for over 27 years and we've been lucky to have her for every single one of those.



SMCAA believes that developing and implementing effective staff training can benefit its team members and the agency.

In Fiscal Year 2024 staff participated in 1,159 hours of programmatic training.



SMCAA was fortunate to receive funding from MDHHS, MSHDA and the Salvation Army to assist with much needed rehab on our Homeless Shelter in Van Buren. Over the last two years SMCAA has been able to invest over \$320,000.00 into this project.



Our shelter received a new: roof, gutters, siding, windows, doors, furnace, air conditioner, backup generator, 3 bathrooms, 3 porches, laminate flooring, and all new appliances!  
Thank you to Greenspan Construction, who facilitated as the lead contractor.

## SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT TO THE FOLLOWING:

Indiana Michigan Power (AEP) for their contribution of funding to reverse electric arrearages/shut offs.

Whirlpool Corporation employee volunteers for their continued support and time in handing out over 400 turkeys and holiday dinners during the Holiday Food Share Program.

United Way for their continued support and assistance to help fund food insecurity and utility assistance programs.

Mid-West Family Broadcasting for their continued support of SMCAA through the Stuff-A-Truck fundraising event.

Wolf Financial Advisory for their contribution and partnership toward our Stuff-a-Truck event, which included a \$15,000.00 donation and 3 shopping carts full of food and personal hygiene products.

Berrien Foundation for their continued support of the agency, their partnership in the Berrien County Backpack event, and their contribution to the Food for Good Program.

Meijer of Benton Harbor for their continuing support of food cards and donations for our food pantry, and for volunteering at our food distributions.

2-1-1, Area Agency on Aging, Salvation Army, and various faith-based organizations which pool finances and refer clients to SMCAA programs and services, which allows our agency the ability to better track clients progress.

# Contact SMCAA

smcaa.com

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT!

**Administration Office**  
185 E Main St., Suite 303  
Benton Harbor, MI 49022  
(269) 925-9077

**Cass Office**  
(Within Department of  
Health and Human Services)  
325 Hwy M-62  
Cassopolis, MI 49031  
(269) 605-4210

**Family Shelter**  
Decatur, MI 49045  
(269) 605-4526

**Van Buren Office**  
(Within Department of  
Health and Human Services)  
57150 CR-681  
Hartford, MI 49057  
(269) 605-4145

**Warehouse**  
331 Miller St.  
Benton Harbor, MI 49022  
(269) 605-4188

As long as residents of Southwest Michigan need assistance and support, Community Action promises to be there to help.  
We work with people in economic need and enable our clients to achieve and sustain self-sufficiency.

Want to help support SMCAA and our mission? There are many ways to get involved! Find out more at smcaa.com.



# DONATE



Follow us on Social!

@smcaa

Help SMCAA in maintaining high-quality programs and services by making a donation today! Simply fill out this form, cut on the dotted line, and mail with a check to the address provided.

All donations are tax deductible under section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Service tax code.

THANK YOU



Please return this portion  
with your check made  
payable to:  
SMCAA  
185 E Main St., Suite 303  
Benton Harbor, MI 49022

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

DONATION AMOUNT ENCLOSED \_\_\_\_\_