



Community Impact Report

for 2022



**Southwest Michigan
Community Action Agency**

TABLE OF CONTENTS



01

Letter of Impact

02

Our Story So Far

03

Key FY22 Impacts

04

Specific Impacts of FY22

07

Financials

08

Acknowledgements

09

Contact SMCAA

LETTER OF IMPACT

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.

This impact report celebrates all SMCAA accomplished as we responded to the struggles and challenges in our service area. We also recognize that far too many people are still struggling and 2023 will be another difficult year. As we face more of the unknown, I'm encouraged by the SMCAA staff and Board, and the passion, hard work, and resilience they continue to bring to the communities we service.

The pandemic has changed our way of thinking, living, and working. Our communities have pulled together to get through these challenging times as evidenced when we faced the unique challenge faced during the City of Benton Harbor's water crisis following the finding of elevated lead levels. SMCAA was the first organization with "boots on the ground" to assist the City residents with water bottle distribution beginning September 29, 2021. Since that start, SMCAA has acquired additional warehouse space to house the packs of bottled water for distribution. SMCAA collaborated with MDHHS, Berrien DHHS, EGLE, United Way, local churches, Absopure Water, the City of Benton Harbor as well as various local vendors in order to bring clean drinking water to those in need throughout the City.

Furthermore, each staff member has worked hard to help our communities with rental assistance through programs like the Coronavirus Aid, Reliefs and Economic Security (CARES) and COVID Emergency Rental Assistance (CERA) programs. Through the

team's dedication, 1,018 households avoided eviction during Fiscal Year 2022. Our commodity food programs and pantries continued to provide nutritious food to families and individuals in need. We also assisted 374 households facing water and sewage shut off with the new Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP). This was all in addition to the continued services of SMCAA's existing programs across Berrien, Cass and Van Buren Counties.

Through the many challenges we have faced over the last two years, it brings me joy to know that the Agency was recognized for our work in the community. Last year I mentioned that SMCAA received the 2020 Non-Profit Excellence Award and the 2020 United Way Impact Choice Award for the wonderful hard work we accomplished during the COVID pandemic. In FY22, SMCAA was honored to receive the 2022 Best Places to Work in Southwest Michigan Award as well as the 2022 National Community Action Promise Award, which we accepted at the National Community Action Partnership's award gala in New York City.

On behalf of SMCAA's staff and Board of Directors, this 2022 Impact Report highlights key areas of focus for targeted services and programs, provides a detailed snapshot of our community needs, and recognizes the efforts of some amazing community partnerships. SMCAA will maintain its commitment to addressing the causes and conditions of poverty by helping change the lives of low-income families and empowering individuals and families in their journey towards economic security. We invite you to review this report and consider joining us in our mission, as together – we work to "Help People and Change Lives" in our community.



Kim L. Smith Oldham, CCAP
Executive Director

OUR STORY SO FAR

About Community Action

The history of Community Action dates back to the early 1960s when President John F. Kennedy announced the “War on Poverty”. Upon Kennedy’s assassination, Lyndon B. Johnson ascended to the Presidency. On January 8, 1964, President Johnson declared his intention to carry on with this war during his first State of the Union Address. Following this declaration, Johnson recruited Sargent Shriver to lead this war and named him the Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity. On August 20, 1964, Johnson passed the Economic Opportunity Act, which began a multitude of programs designed to help economically disadvantaged people work toward self-sufficiency, including Community Action.

SMCAA is a private, non-profit Community Action Agency - part of a state and national network. There are 27 Community Action agencies in Michigan and nearly 1,000 across the country. The agency started servicing Van Buren County in 1982. Four years later the agency incorporated and began providing human services to both Cass and Van Buren Counties. In 1992, the service delivery area officially added Berrien County, and created the Southwest Michigan Community Action Agency.

Today, SMCAA brings 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 number of Organizational Standards in order to meet funding requirements. This funding and additional grants or donations are directed into a number of core and special programs and services that aid the low income, vulnerable, and otherwise disadvantaged individuals and households residing in Southwest Michigan.

SMCAA does not and shall not discriminate based on race, color, religion, gender, gender expression, age, national origin, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status, in any of its activities or operations. These activities include, but are not limited to, hiring and firing of staff, selection of volunteers and vendors, and provision of services.

Our Mission

SMCAA is dedicated to empowering diverse people in need and supporting their journey towards economic security. Our vision is to be a beacon of support in a strong, thriving community by helping people and changing lives.

Our Core Values

SMCAA abides by the following core values in all its services and programs:

- **Action:** We are committed to setting goals for our programs, and working persistently and sensibly towards meeting benchmarks and facilitating impactful economic and social change.
- **Respect:** We acknowledge and appreciate the dignity, humanity, experience, intelligence, and potential of each member in our community.
- **Stewardship:** We believe we have an obligation to be good stewards and to utilize our resources strategically and thoughtfully.
- **Integrity:** We take responsibility for our actions and the results of those actions with honesty and transparency.
- **Community:** We believe in developing active partnerships in order to build effective solutions and high quality programs for the community we service.

FY22 Board of Directors

A tripartite Board of Directors consisting of nine members governs SMCAA. Each county serviced by SMCAA is represented by members either residing or working within the county he/she represents, and there is representation from the public, private, and community sectors.

Robert Benjamin, Cass Public

Corey Christopher, Berrien Community, Vice Chair

Michael Franks, Cass Community

Kathy Lyons, Van Buren Private, Treasurer

Gerrod Moore, Berrien Private

Gail Patterson-Gladney, Van Buren Public, Secretary

Meagan Underwood, Van Buren Community

Minnie Warren, Cass Private, Chairperson

Julie Wuerfel, Berrien Public

KEY FY22 IMPACTS

Due to increased grantor support following the COVID-19 pandemic, Fiscal Year 2022 reported the highest counts of programs facilitated and individuals assisted for the past several years.

With federal programs such as the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Support (CARES) and COVID Emergency Rental Assistance (CERA), SMCAA administered millions of dollars more in funding to support these increased counts. Increased State and Local funding also provided key funding sources for FY22-specific programs such as the City of Benton Harbor Water Distribution (WADIS) Program, which SMCAA was called to action beginning on September 30, 2021 to provide clean drinking water to City residents following reports of elevated lead levels in the municipality-supplied water.

As new community needs arose throughout the year, SMCAA answered with unique programming and need-specific services. The following four areas are where the Agency saw its Key Impacts for FY22:

1



FY22 boasted the highest number of individuals assisted through SMCAA programs in 5 years.

Last year, SMCAA’s programs serviced 4,995 unduplicated individuals and 2,518 unduplicated households. On average, SMCAA assisted 4,800 individuals each year over the past 5 years. In FY22, SMCAA serviced **7,621** unduplicated individuals and **3,960** unduplicated households.

3

SMCAA facilitated over 40 programs to help the vulnerable residents in our service area.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, SMCAA administered about 25 regular programs (27 in FY19) to those in-need throughout Southwest Michigan. This number has steadily grown since 2020. As additional funding allowed and more community needs arose, SMCAA facilitated **42** programs and services in FY22.

2



Volunteer hours nearly doubled in FY22 from the previous year.

SMCAA relies on volunteerism to pack food commodity boxes and distribute cases of bottled water at our warehouse. In FY21, the community contributed 6,588 volunteer hours to our Agency. This year, that number nearly doubled as **12,232** volunteer hours were provided to SMCAA by numerous dedicated community residents.

4

SMCAA excellently administered over \$2,425,000 more funding this fiscal year than last.

SMCAA is able to administer program services and cover operational costs through a variety of funding sources each year. In FY21, the Agency expended about \$5,097,472 to service our clients. FY22 saw **\$7,523,112** expended, amounting to about \$2,425,640 more in funding administered since last year.

SPECIFIC IMPACTS OF FY22

“As a disabled elder, one who worked her life away, it’s been heartbreaking to be in financial ruin. A life-altering illness three years ago tore my savings away, to find myself trying now to survive upon a thin Social Security payment. I was overwhelmed by every day debts, especially those to the utility companies.

Last winter, I had no propane and was forced to use space heaters throughout my home. This caused my electric bills to become insurmountable. Even trying to offset my debts during the summer, I was fighting a battle I could not win alone. My research to find help brought me to SMCAA, where my plea for assistance was granted. SMCAA paid my electric bill – yet did so much more.

There are no words to express my gratitude. SMCAA did not just pay my debt, but renewed a very tired spirit. These past several years have been so sad and overwhelming; SMCAA gave me hope again to go on.”

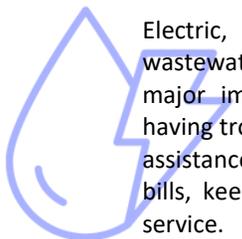
-Emergency Utility Assistance Testimony

Community Services

To address food insecurities in Southwest Michigan, SMCAA provides monthly food commodities to older adults and quarterly food commodities to in-need families, as well as supplying product 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.



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 persons pay their bills, keep utilities in-service, and/or restoring the service.



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 including rent and mortgage assistance, property tax payments, and temporary housing. In FY22, the COVID Emergency Rental Assistance (CERA) Program was driving force to high numbers of clients able to be assisted with rental payments.



20,005	Low-income seniors over the age of 60 received food boxes monthly
15,335	In-need individuals and families received food boxes quarterly
5,248	Visits made to SMCAA and its partnering pantries for food
2,032	Low-income households received utility or deliverable fuel payments
373	Water and/or wastewater arrearages paid for struggling families
65	Additional assistance such as vehicle repairs or payments, gas cards, and internet stipends provided
832	Rental payments made in order for low income households to avoid eviction
10	Low income homeowners received mortgage or property tax payments
2,048	Bed nights in a safe, temporary shelter (homeless shelter and/or hotel room) to homeless individuals or families



Community Development

Through housing programs like Permanent Supportive Housing and Rapid Rehousing, SMCAA empowers clients by recognizing they are capable, have strengths, and have resources that can help them take control of their lives. The intent of case management is to help families become self-supporting while assisting them with basic needs. The outcome of case management is to increase stability and self-sufficiency through individualized case management.

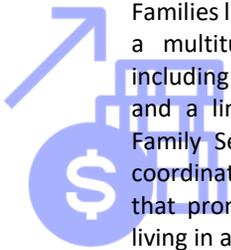
- 1,333** Clients requiring housing placement received Case Management
- 45** Renters educated on landlord/tenant rights in order to deal with legal rental questions and problems
- 164** Households obtained and/or maintained permanent housing

A man, his wife, and a special needs high school-aged daughter became homeless due to a plant closure and exposure to COVID-19. Due to the need to quarantine for fourteen days, the family requested a hotel voucher through SMCAA’s Emergency Shelter Grant. After quarantining, the family was transferred to SMCAA’s homeless Family Shelter.

This move happened right before the holiday season. Knowing the family needed to be uplifted, the shelter staff reached out to numerous community partners requesting Christmas gifts for the family, especially the daughter. The response was immediate and overwhelming, and the daughter said, “This was the best Christmas ever!”

As the family’s time in the shelter neared its end, shelter staff provided case management to them in order to find stable, affordable housing. SMCAA also provided vehicle repairs to the father’s car so he could continue to apply and interview for a new job. To date, this family has moved out of the SMCAA shelter and into a rental house, and the father is finding fulfillment through new employment.

- Homelessness Assistance Success Story



Families living in assisted housing are often subject to a multitude of personal and financial troubles including dependence on social service programs, and a limited ability to change their status. The Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program provides for coordination of local, community-based resources that promote economic independence for families living in assisted housing.

It is Community Action’s role to take immediate action when a critical community need is identified. In FY22, such programs included the Whirlpool Appliance Donation Program, which provided new appliances to low income households needing working and/or more energy-efficient appliances; the Summer Youth Employment Program that supported job training and employment of youth; and the City of Benton Harbor Water Distribution Program, which provided free clean drinking water to residents after reports of elevated lead in the City’s water.

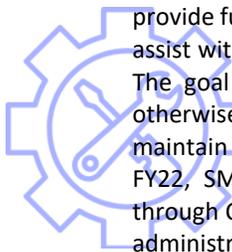
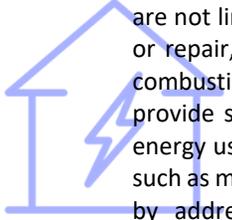


- 8** Unemployed FSS participants obtained employment that pays up to or more than a living wage
- 10** Individuals improved their credit scores
- 25** Individuals who engaged with the FSS Program reported improved financial well-being
- 6** Low income homeowners in Berrien County received new Whirlpool Corporation brand appliances
- 24** Youth obtained job training and summer employment with the City of Benton Harbor
- 783,336** Cases of bottled water distributed to City of Benton Harbor residents for cooking, drinking, brushing teeth, rinsing foods, and mixing baby formula

Weatherization and Housing Rehabilitation

SMCAA provides weatherization (WX) services for low-income families whose income is at or below 200% of the poverty level. The services 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. In FY22, SMCAA facilitated emergency home repairs through CARES funding, but also acted as third-party administrator for housing rehabilitation programs in the City of Benton Harbor and Van Buren County.



45 Individuals improved health and safety within their homes due to home improvements

35 Individuals improved home energy efficiency for cost-burden reductions

27 Home repairs completed (i.e. structural, heating systems, etc.)

65 Individuals improved health and safety within their homes due to home improvements

1 Individuals with improved physical access to their living space (i.e. wheelchair ramps, tub/shower grab bars, etc.)

52 Home repairs completed (i.e. structural, heating systems, etc.)

“My health isn’t the greatest, but I still maintain going to work every day. However, I could not seem to keep up with everything. I lost my husband in June 2020. At that time, I had just had the second surgery on my face for cancer. It took five surgeries to finally remove and somewhat repair that area on my face. With his passing, the cost of cremation and funeral, time off from work to recover myself, it really set me back financially. Then the pandemic hit.

Thank you so much for the help with my furnace, and then the unexpected help replacing my hot water tank.”

- Weatherization Testimony



FINANCIALS

Use of Funding by Program Services



CSBG \$ 465,509
Community Services Block Grant (core federal funding for Community Action)

CARES \$ 583,623
Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act

Food Assistance \$ 888,382
Senior commodity (CSFP), low-income food assistance (TEFAP), and special distributions

Utility Assistance \$ 1,667,842
Metered fuel assistance, deliverable fuels, CERA – Utilities, water and/or wastewater arrearages



Housing Assistance \$ 2,041,071
Rent or mortgage assistance, Permanent Supportive Housing, Rapid Rehousing, homeless shelter, Emergency Solutions Grant, CERA – Van Buren

Weatherization \$ 807,753
Energy conservation measures through Weatherization Assistance Program, Low-Income Heat Energy Assistance Program, and WX Deferral Program

Housing Rehabilitation \$ 89,004
Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for City of Benton Harbor, Allegan County, and Van Buren County

Other Programs \$ 754,453
City of Benton Harbor Water Distribution (WADIS), Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP), and other FY22-specific programs



Donations \$ 91,410
In-Kind Hours \$ 134,065

TOTAL \$ 7,523,112

Net Assets at Start of Year \$ 492,634
Net Assets at End of Year \$ 551,334
Change in Net Assets \$ 58,700

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special Recognition of SMCAA

2022 Volunteer of the Year: Marletta Seats

Marletta Seats has been a volunteer of SMCAA for over a decade. From her church, Abundant Life, she offers monthly commodities and special TEFAP distributions. She also stepped up to assist with clean drinking water in the City of Benton Harbor by being the first faith-based host site for water pick-up. *Awarded by Michigan Community Action Association.*

2022 Best Places to Work Awardee

Best Places to Work recognizes the type of business that everyone would like to work at – they're the businesses that are going above and beyond for their team and the community, setting the gold standard for others to aspire to. These companies clearly stand head and shoulders above all others in the region and have been able to excel at what they do regularly. *Awarded by Moody on the Market.*

2022 National Promise in Action Awardee

The Promise in Action Award recognizes Community Action agencies that have been diligently caring for the entire community and remain dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other amidst catastrophe. SMCAA was presented this award at a gala in New York City hosted by NCAP. *Awarded by National Community Action Partnership.*

Leadership and Staff Training

In FY22, the SMCAA team consisted of **22** hardworking and dedicated staff members. Each team member has a unique passion that allows him or her to bring excellent customer service, great teamwork, and innovating ideas to the table to enable SMCAA to meet its mission year after year.

Some noteworthy accomplishments of staff members in FY22 included:

- (1) BPI Certified Energy Auditor
- (1) BPI Certified Quality Control Inspector
- (1) Certified Community Action Professional

Overall, staff participated in **2,457** training hours.

Since 1982, SMCAA has developed programs based on the individual needs of each community we serve. Our staff stands ready to serve the tri-county area no matter if our focus remains on established programs or shifts to other needs determined through emergency or other circumstance. Our motto **“Helping People, Changing Lives”** continues to influence SMCAA to look at new opportunities and innovating practices in order to make a lasting and better impact in Southwest Michigan.

Thank You for Your Support

SMCAA actively works with **272** community partners to expand resources and opportunities to achieve community outcomes. These partnerships are critical to ensure that 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.

Special acknowledgement to the following:

- Senior PGA and Whirlpool Corporation employees volunteers their time and energy to hand out over 400 turkeys and holiday dinners during the Holiday Food Share Program.
- Berrien DHHS and United Way of Southwest Michigan assisted in the distribution of clean drinking water throughout the City of Benton Harbor, alongside numerous faith-based organizations such as Abundant Life Ministries and Harbor of Hope Church.
- Midwest Family's continued support of SMCAA through the annual Personal Hygiene Project and Stuff-a-Truck fundraising events.
- Landlords, tenants, and SMCAA staff continue to build positive relationships to ensure community members have options when overcoming housing obstacles.
- Various faith-based organizations pool finances and refer clients to SMCAA programs, which allows our Agency the ability to track clients' progress better.
- Whirlpool Corporation and UWSM collaborated to donate new appliances to SMCAA clients.

CONTACT SMCAA

Administration Office

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

Warehouse

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

Office at Van Buren DHHS

57150 CR-681
 Hartford, MI 49057
 (269) 605-4145

Office at Cass DHHS

325 Hwy M-62
 Cassopolis, MI 49031
 (269) 605-4210

Family Shelter

210 E. Delaware St.
 Decatur, MI 49045
 (269) 605-4526

South Berrien Office

13 S. Fourth St.
 Niles, MI 49120
 (269) 635-3636



www.smcaa.com
 www.facebook.com/swmicaa
 www.linkedin.com/company/swmicaa

Thank You for Your Continued Support!

As long as low-income residents of Southwest Michigan need assistance and support, Community Action promises to assist people in economic need and enable our clients to achieve and sustain self-sufficiency all while respecting the vast diversities present in our service area.

Curious as to how you can support SMCAA and our mission in 2023? Here are a few ideas:



**Advocate for
 Community Action**



Leave a Legacy
 smcaa.com/legacy



Volunteer with Us
 smcaa.com/volunteer



Donate to Us
 smcaa.com/donate

Send a Donation

You may help SMCAA in maintaining a high quality of programs and services by making a donation today. Simply fill out the form below, cut on the dotted line, and mail the form 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!**

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Donation Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

**Please return this portion with
 your check made payable to:**

SMCAA
 185 E. Main Street, Suite 303
 Benton Harbor, MI 49022

