

## **CAAP BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

### **CEO REPORT ON CAAP ACTIVITIES**

#### **FOR THE PERIOD**

**JULY 15, 2020 – OCTOBER 21, 2020**

### **1) KEY FOCUS AREAS**

#### **a) Coronavirus**

We are holding bi-weekly Monday morning meetings for PA CAAs to share concerns and needs, and to ask questions; the call includes DCED. We have included our non-member agency, Delaware County, because We Are In This Together. The meetings have engaged the members on many aspects of running an agency during a pandemic. The meetings have now moved to the Zoom platform. Each meeting is recorded and placed in a shared One Drive folder for group members to access.

#### **b) Social Justice**

We have created a Social Justice Task Force to look at and determine what CAAs across Pennsylvania can do to make change in their agencies, communities, and systems so that bias – whether implicit, obvious or institutional - may be identified and addressed. The SJTF meets every other week. They are now working to set goals.

#### **c) New Hires**

Both vacant positions were filled and the new hires will begin on October 27. The number of applicants was astounding - over 200 applicants for each position; and while some were clearly inappropriate, most applicants were well qualified. The two people we ended up hiring are both excellent and I'm really looking forward to working with them.

**Education Director: Leslie McRobbie** has a Masters of Education. She is currently a high school classroom teacher in Solanco High School in Quarryville, PA, working there since 2007. Additionally, for the past two years, she has been an Instructor and Online Course Coordinator of Blended EMT classes, at Harrisburg Area Community College, Harrisburg, PA.

**Communications Director: Charlotte Leckow** has a double BA, one in Russian/German languages and the other in Advertising and Communications. She is currently employed as the Marketing Coordinator at Mental Health of America of Lancaster County where she handles communications, marketing, public relations, community outreach, social media, newsletters, event planning, website management, fundraising auctions, content writing, database management and media relations.

## **2) VISTA PROGRAM**

This report covers the fourth and final quarter of VISTA service for current VISTA members who started service in July and August of 2019. All VISTAs tele-served through the end of their service. Bi-weekly chats with each VISTA continued as did monthly VISTA/Supervisor conference calls. Because of the separation everyone experienced during this time, monthly Zoom calls were added for the VISTAs and the supervisors. The goal for adding the zoom calls was to allow both the VISTAs and Supervisors to share among their peers. These calls were not set up to discuss project updates but to just help with the isolation most of them were experiencing. Seeing each other definitely had a positive impact on everyone.

A summary of their progress during this quarter is listed below:

**CAAP:** Communications and Marketing Associate VISTA Carolina Nicholson completed the third and final year of the Toolkit project. At the time of this reporting all 42 toolkits have been completed and have been sent to the appropriate agency for review and feedback.

Provided in each toolkit are Word Document versions of each file allowing each agency to easily update their information and continue to use the toolkit for the foreseeable future.

Due to COVID-19, it is had been determined that no in-person trainings will be feasible by the end of the project. However, Carolina did her best to make the training document really thorough for our agencies.

Carolina was successful in securing full time employment once her service ended. She took a position with Keystone Services in Harrisburg.

**CAPLANC:** The biggest challenge in this timeframe was making sure everyone stayed on track to complete their tasks before the deadline. Each VISTA had a number of important tasks to complete

by the end of their term of service and the pandemic seemed to push back many of those which created even more of a challenge. Even with the challenges, the three VISTAs serving through the pandemic were able to accomplish the following tasks: creation of the first Virtual Neighbor to Neighbor Forum; designed the 3rd Annual Report; created two crisis communication plans; developed and presented a feasibility study for a commercial kitchen; helped the organization navigate the transition of the president and main driving force behind the organization; hosted the first Coalition strategic retreat; created numerous sustainability documents including charges for all 10 of the Coalition's action teams, and the communication plan.

**Holy Family Institute:** A consistent challenge that Keilah faced was that some students have only short stays with this program; some only 45 days. This made it very difficult to help make improvements in a child's reading skills.

One of the other tasks that Keilah had before her was to seek funding for materials that she had identified as necessary for student literacy improvement. Sources of funding had been identified since January. Keilah was not permitted, however, to write for these grants on her own. She was to work with HFI's development department so as to not duplicate requests to the same funders. The delay in moving forward was that the grant writer had responsibilities kept her attention away from this need at the time. We were reassured that this project was still on her workload. Then the COVID-19 pandemic took the grant writers attention completely away from this project and it was not completed. No grants were ever written seeking funding for this program. Keilah is looking into ways that this can still be done even though she is no longer a VISTA.

Material will still be purchased that will arrive after Keilah leaves. Keilah is working with her housemate on continuing this venture. Keilah had planned to accept a position at Seville School as a teaching assistant. This would further ensure the use of material that was created and purchased. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic funding for this position was cut, hence the job offer was rescinded.

However, all the material that Keilah created will be used by the teachers in the school as they were doing up until March of the 19-20 school year. Keilah is still part of Holy Family Institute as a service corps teaching fellow member now. She is still interested in helping to secure funding for material.

**FOTP (Friends of the Poor):** The greatest challenge was COVID-19. Our volunteers were out of the office from Friday, March 13, through the end of their service on Monday, August 17, 2020.

Prior to March 13, 2020, both Dane and Shayna assisted with volunteer recruitment events at Marywood University, Lackawanna College, University of Scranton, and the Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine. All recruitment stopped in March 2020 with the closing of schools due to COVID-19.

Shayna actively recruited volunteers for our pantry, Need-A-Ride program, Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners and food distributions and the Christmas Toy distribution. Due to COVID we suspended some operations, cancelled our Saint Patrick's Day Dinner, and closed our part time pantries. Our two full time pantries remained open.

**Tri County Community Action:** Isabel Blumenthal completed a very busy and successful year of service on September 1, 2020. Over the past year, Isabel was able to take initiative and build a vibrant and successful farmers market from the ground up. This included developing a business plan for the market, application materials for potential vendors, and market rules and regulations. Isabel also excelled at vendor recruitment by visiting other markets and farm stands as well as calls and emails, and meeting facilitation with organizational leaders and other members of the farmers' market steering committee. Because of Isabel's attention to detail and professionalism, we were able to host a successful first year of the Allison Hill Farmers Market that brought up to nine local farmers and a community that historically has little access for fresh foods together. As an essential business, the market initiative was able to continue despite COVID-19, however we did need to push back the opening day as well as make logistical changes to ensure safety, all of which Isabel was able to easily adapt to. In its first year, \$9,495 in fresh, local food was bought, including \$767 in SNAP, \$453 in SNAP matching dollars provided through the market, and \$210 in FMNP vouchers. During Isabel's VISTA year of service, she decided that she wants to go law school for environmental law. While she is applying to law schools, she has taken a position in New York City with the law firm Weitz & Luxenberg as a paralegal.

**Union-Snyder:** Nicole spent this past year of her VISTA service taking careful time in building (or, in some cases, rebuilding) key relationships with community volunteers and service agencies. In doing

so, she has laid a crucial foundation of trust and collaboration to continue into our overall project goal of establishing a food coalition to ensure equal food access to all residents of Union and Snyder counties. An immediate proven success story of this work came just weeks after her VISTA term ended and CAA received a message from a local community partner asking for help with an opportunity presented. Due to COVID-19, the local community recreation center closed its café, leaving a large industrial kitchen space available for use. The new owners of this center, which are local hospitals and the YMCA, expressed an interest in using this space as a community resource. The space comes with invaluable assets, such as a state-of-the-art industrial kitchen and walk-in freezer/refrigerator space. This inspired the CAA food team – now Nicole as a staff person and the new VISTA, Rachel Herman – to develop a proposal to the center for the first Union County Food Hub, with the intention to use the space as a central storage and distribution operation to provide fresh, quality foods to existing distribution programs as well as families in need. This proposal pitch will occur in mid-October and has potential to significantly impact the direction and opportunity for food distribution in Union County. If successful, we hope to inspire a similar model in Snyder County.

Additionally, Nicole’s first year of service made an undeniable impact on the streamlining of operations of CAA’s food pantries. Again, Nicole spent careful time re-establishing relationships with our four volunteer food pantry coordinators, which helped build trust to shift fiscal and logistical operations to be more suitable for our customers’ needs, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. With Nicole’s work, CAA is now able to use our pantry resources more efficiently to create a stronger impact for the hundreds of families served by these pantries each year.

### **3. OTHER:**

#### **Regional Performance & Innovation Consortium (RPIC) Grant**

We completed our 6-month report that covered activities through September.

Given the year, this was mostly limited to attending virtual conferences (unusual) and meetings (usual).

T/TA was limited to what we could provide above.

#### **CSBG DATA Task Force**

OCS has still not been responsive on documents the task force had submitted for review and approval during the latter part of 2019. The task force decided not to do more work until we have feedback from

OCS. Just before this report was written we have learned that the task force will continue one more year.

#### **DCED Services Contract**

We have submitted our work plan (attached) for the CARES funding. We will commence with planning the 2021 work plan for the third year of the contract. We also intend to begin working on a new contract in January to have all in place for execution in the fall of 2021.

#### **CAAP Community Needs Assessment Tool**

We are planning on providing training on the tool's use and features. A refresher would be good for those who have used it in the past and for new staff who will need an introduction.

#### **Work Ready**

We held our last meeting in September. Most programs ended as September closed out. For the few program agencies that remain, DHS's Bureau of Employment Programs will hold the monthly calls.

#### **Community Action Toolkits**

Our VISTA, Carolina Nicholson, completed the task of creating a toolkit for each agency right before she left at the end of August (as planned). The toolkits may be used and updated by the respective agencies to publicize programs and accomplishments to their communities.