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.

In 2021, Tri-CAP will continue to navigate the uncharted waters of COVID-19 in order to fulfill our mission of enhancing and expanding opportunities for the economic and social well-being of our residents and our community. Over the past ten months, Community Action Agencies across this country have been providing assistance to our communities as the economic needs resulting from COVID-19 have become apparent. As an agency and a network, Community Action has sought the opportunities to be of service in new ways to respond to the economic hardships wrought by this pandemic. Following our heritage of grass roots advocacy, Tri-CAP has worked to identify and understand the consequences of the pandemic in central Minnesota and we have and will continue to direct available resources to provide assistance and support to the residents of our communities.
Over the last year, Tri-CAP has focused resources to continue to provide existing services while adding our response to emerging community needs. First, by developing and implementing our agency’s COVID-19 Preparedness Plan, Tri-CAP was able to safely provide a continuity of services, calling upon our agility to respond to sudden and encompassing environmental changes and health & safety protocols. By implementing our plan, Tri-CAP adjusted the way we operate to keep employees, clients, and the community safe, following the scientific guidance to mitigate workplace transmission of COVID-19. In this way we continued to provide existing services and we are able to provide new programs and services.

Last fall, Tri-CAP partnered with another local non-profit by stepping up to provide program administration in support of the area’s homeless population. The program, established to provide assistance with temporary hotel room shelter for individuals and families experiencing homelessness during the pandemic, required an experienced nonprofit to provide the corresponding case management for participants in the program. Tri-CAP was able to provide experienced program administration and case management to assist participants as they established plans and worked toward more sustainable housing and employment goals.

In addition, Tri-CAP quickly ramped up to provide service through Minnesota’s COVID Housing Assistance Program (CHAP) through which Tri-CAP assisted nearly 200 Central Minnesota households who were experiencing economic hardship as a result of COVID-19. Beginning in August and running until the program ended in mid-February 2021, Tri-CAP worked with people, bringing their back rent and mortgages current as well as assisting with other past-due housing related expenses. CHAP had extended eligibility so that Tri-CAP was able to serve households with incomes above historical income eligibility. This expanded level of income eligibility was allowed by the funder in response to the fact that many families who experienced pandemic-related job loss and income reductions had moderate incomes prior to the pandemic. As a resource to the entire community, Tri-CAP, in our role with the CHAP
program, provided assistance to more residents of the communities we serve.

While 2021 is starting off with new challenges and emerging needs, Tri-CAP will continue to look for the uncharted ways to enhance and expand opportunities for economic and social well-being of our residents and our community.

Regards,

Lori Schultz, LSW, CCAP
Executive Director
Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program

We are taking tax appointments for Tri-CAP's VITA Tax Program. There are two ways to access this service. First, a screening appointment at the Salvation Army where you will review your completed tax forms with a volunteer to ensure everything is in order for another volunteer to prepare your taxes at a later date. The second way to access is to call for an appointment where you will simply verify your identity and drop your tax forms in the outside drop box. In both cases, the actual tax preparation is done later by one of our volunteers, not at the appointment. Once your taxes are complete and reviewed for accuracy, Tri-CAP will call you to let you know your taxes are complete. This process from appointment to completion takes approximately 2-3 weeks.

To schedule your screening appointment, please call 320-251-1612 or 888-765-5597. Appointments are available on a first-come first-serve basis. Once scheduled we will send you an important packet of information in the mail. Please be sure to bring/drop-off the forms you have fully completed.

*Note: The safety of our clients and volunteers is a top priority. We want to reduce contact when possible, and are offering a drop-off appointment option. All meetings will observe social distancing, masks are required, and plexiglass has been installed.

There is one location, the Salvation Army, for tax screening appointments this year. Please check dates, and times:
**Mondays:** 1 pm – 6 pm, through April 12th  
**Salvation Army**  
400 US Hwy 10 S  
St Cloud MN 56304  
**Thursdays:** 4 pm – 7 pm, through April 8th  
**Salvation Army**  
400 US Hwy 10 S  
St Cloud MN 56304  
**Saturdays:** 9 am – 2 pm, through April 10th  
**Salvation Army**  
400 US Hwy 10 S  
St Cloud MN 56304  

**In addition we have one location for drop off by appointment only:**  
**Tuesdays:** 8:30 am – 4 pm, through April 6th  
**Tri-CAP Office**  
1210 – 23rd Ave S  
Waite Park MN 56387  

At this drop-off only site, please drop off your information in the locked box outside our office after providing proof of identity.  
Taxes | Tri-CAP
Virtual Renting 101 Course - Now Available!

Gain Knowledge About the Renting Process

Renting 101 is a free class designed to help participants learn the essentials of attaining and maintaining permanent stable housing.
This class will provide information on:

- How to find an apartment
- Rights & responsibilities of tenants and landlords
- Understanding the rental application process
- How to understand leases
- Basic information on evictions & expungements

The total time to complete the course varies, but generally 1-1 ½ hours. The course is self-paced and so participants may start and stop the course as needed. Upon course completion participants will receive a certificate. To register call 320-251-1612 or 1-888-765-5597 or email at general@tricap.org. You will receive an email from Tri-CAP within 1 week with information on how to enroll/complete the course.

Rebuilding Lives - Minnesota Family Resiliency Partnership

Formerly known as the Minnesota Displaced Homemaker Program, the Minnesota Family Resiliency Partnership provides needed support, assisting clients in the pursuit of meaningful careers amidst significant life change. Statewide across 2018 and 2019, 63% of those who came to the program were victims of domestic violence, 85% were not receiving court-ordered child support, and 27% entered the program homeless. Over 5,400 individuals, including their families and children, were provided services and ninety-seven
percent of those participants completed the program successfully.

Rebuilding Lives program participants are caregivers, previously dependent on the financial support of others, who have lost that income due to death, disability, divorce, abandonment, or loss of public assistance.

Today, as the global pandemic impacts the number of jobs available and causes increased competition, this program is significant. Research indicates that it is most often women who will sacrifice employment to care for the family, and the longer an individual is out of the workforce the harder it is to return. As always, Tri-CAP remains committed to offer this program to support former caregivers through crisis and periods of instability while empowering all who are served to become agents of change in their own lives.

If you are interested in learning more about the Rebuilding Lives program, check out our website https://tricap.org/assistance/rebuilding-lives/

Many households impacted by COVID-19 need help paying for home heating costs. The Energy Assistance Program may be able to help.

Tri-CAP administers the Energy Assistance Program (EAP) in Benton, Morrison, Sherburne and Stearns counties.
The Energy Assistance Program is currently providing assistance with home heating costs and furnace repairs for income-qualified households. If you need help, contact Tri-CAP today for an application.

**EAP is federally funded through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Grants are:**

- For renters or homeowners
- For households with income at or below 50 percent of the state median income
- Based on energy cost, household size, and income

Tri-CAP provides Energy Assistance Program (EAP) to income eligible households living in Benton, Stearns, Sherburne and Morrison county with paying a portion of their home heating costs. The grant size is based on household size, income, fuel type and energy usage.

**SERVICES INCLUDE:**

- Provide direct payment to the energy supplier
- Educate consumers to use home heating energy efficiently and safely
- Advocate with energy suppliers and human service providers on behalf of consumers
- Crisis help for utility disconnections or necessary fuel deliveries
- Emergency heating system repair or replacement.

For the latest program updates and for a copy of the application, visit our website [https://tricap.org/assistance/energy-assistance/](https://tricap.org/assistance/energy-assistance/)
Volunteer Drivers Wanted

Volunteer Drivers:

- Make a difference
- Set their own schedule
- Receive a mileage reimbursement

Volunteer Drivers provide rides using their own private vehicles to residents of Benton, Stearns, Sherburne, Morrison, and Mille Lacs counties. Tri-CAP’s dispatch center matches up the passenger with an available Volunteer Driver. Passengers may need the help getting to medical appointments or a variety of other destinations. Volunteer Drivers are reimbursed at the Federal IRS rate and may also be eligible for some meal reimbursements. Our Volunteer Drivers provide a critical service to those in need.

If you enjoy driving and are interested in volunteering, please contact Tri-CAP or fill out an application available on our website: [https://tricap.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/VOLUNTEER-APPLICATIONpdf.pdf](https://tricap.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/VOLUNTEER-APPLICATIONpdf.pdf)
Tri-CAP
1210 23rd Ave South
P.O. Box 683
Waite Park, MN 56387
(320) 251-1612
(888) 765-5597
tricap.org

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