



Tri-County Action Program, Inc. Spring 2022

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.

This year, Springtime in central Minnesota is testing my vision and resolve to enjoy the "April Showers Bring May Flowers" expectation. Yet, despite the contrary weather conditions, Spring is one of my favorite seasons. I emerge from my winter habitat and anticipate the pleasure of enjoying the beauty that this season ushers in as we transition to outdoor activities.

My steadfast belief that ultimately winter will give way to sunshine and renewal, reminds me of the work I observe Tri-CAP employees undertaking. They exhibit patience and belief in their clients who are experiencing difficult situations. They professionally provide assistance, recognizing the stressful situations and needs that have brought our clients to Tri-CAP for help. Along with professional support, Tri-CAP employees demonstrate their belief in their clients. From pre-employment

assistance to energy assistance, transportation to taxes, and housing navigation to case management, Tri-CAP employees work with the residents of our communities, expanding opportunities for their economic and social well-being.

So far 2022 has brought new and unexpected challenges. Having come through the COVID-19 pandemic, I am optimistic and believe strongly that as a region, state, and country, we have the resilience and resolution to overcome unexpected difficulties as they arise. I know this because overcoming difficulties is what Tri-CAP and Community Action everywhere does. We identify needs at a local level and plan new and enhanced services to meet those needs, sometimes taking the lead and acting independently and other times working with and supporting community partners.

This year Tri-CAP will be undertaking a full-scale community needs assessment. While each year we update our local information, every three years Tri-CAP, along with all community action agencies, we collect all new community needs data. This data is fundamental and crucial to our service and outcome planning, providing a guide to the needs that we work to positively impact for individuals and families experiencing poverty and the community as a whole.

I am grateful for the support of Tri-CAP's Board of Directors, our Legislators, and all the wonderful employees at Tri-CAP who make the choice every day to see the opportunity in every challenging situation.

Regards,
Lori Schultz, CCAP
Executive Director



SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM - SNAP

Hunger issues continue to be concerning to seniors, families, and single adults throughout our communities. Tri-CAP has trained staff who are able to submit the SNAP/food support application online by doing a phone interview with the participant to ensure that they are gaining access to these vital food resources. If you or someone you know is in need of food resources, please have them contact one of our trained specialists at 320-251-1612 regarding screening and application assistance for SNAP. More information is available at [mnFoodHelper / mnFoodHelper](#)



Need help with your utility bills? See if you qualify for an energy assistance or water grant.



WHAT IS IT?

Minnesota's Energy Assistance Program helps renters and homeowners keep homes heated, lights on, water running, and more.



WHO IS IT FOR?

People who rent or own their home and struggle with their utility bills can qualify.



HOW MUCH CAN I RECEIVE?

- Up to \$2,000 to pay energy or water bills
- Free repair or replacement of homeowner's broken furnace
- Free energy efficiency home upgrades that can permanently lower your bills



AM I ELIGIBLE?

Household Size	Annual Income
1	\$35,237
2	\$46,080
3	\$56,922
4	\$35,237

Applications are available at <https://tricap.org/assistance/energy-assistance/> or by calling Tri-CAP at 320-251-1612/ 888-765-5597.



Angelina's Success Story: Rebuilding Lives

Angelina is a busy mom of three small children. She not only goes to school and works part time, but also cares for three younger siblings.

Angelina completed her Certified Nursing Assistant certification and attends a local technical and community college. Once she moves into a better paying job, her goal is to purchase a family home. Angelina reached out for housing counseling from Tri-CAP; her ex-husband was trying to destroy her credit and rent history to make it impossible for her to find a better living situation. Angelina realized in order to improve her situation she needed

to get away from her ex-spouse and work on improvements a little bit at a time. Using stimulus checks to pay off old bills that her ex saddled her with and continuing to work and attend school. The Rebuilding Lives program has been able to assist Angelina with a basic needs bag, a gas voucher to help her get to and from school and work, and tuition and book costs for her college course. In addition her counselor has provided extensive case management support.

Angelina is up every day at 5:00 am to get everyone ready and out the door on time. She walks to the bus stop with a toddler and a baby to get to work. Angelina has full custody of her children and does not receive child support. It has not been an easy road, but Angelina is seeing the results of her hard work and persistence. She plans to eventually attend a local university to complete a degree in Biology. She is very excited to attend a four-year college to further her education but doesn't see that as the end, she wants to continue to study Biology and medicine. Angelina is making a better life for herself and her children.

Update: Angelina has been hired to do CNA work at a starting wage of \$17.65/hour. She will work part-time until school is out and then will move into full-time work.

More information about the [RebuildingLives](#) program is available on Tri-CAP's website.





While making a living is important, there is a certain type of person who yearns to make a difference – to finish a meaningful day’s work and take pride in the fact that the world is a better place because of their efforts. Sometimes it’s about more than just a paycheck. If you are one of these people, you have the traits that set Tri-CAP employees apart. We offer a variety of opportunities throughout our service area. We offer a positive working environment, rich benefits and competitive wages.

We invite you to take a look at our [current job opportunities](#)

A Man with Two Hats: Dairy Farmer and Volunteer

Art Kerfeld is one of those calm and collected individuals who has organized his life after retirement successfully between his part-time dairy farming and volunteerism. Small wonder then that even as an eighty-year-old he is able to fulfill both responsibilities with immense satisfaction.

A dairy farmer, I caught him during my first call, riding his combine to get the fields ready for winter. He is also, in his words, at the beck and call of his sons, also dairy farmers, for whom he often runs errands. As a volunteer, Art has been driving for Tri-CAP for the last five years for several hours and miles a week. Additionally, he installs medical alert systems for seniors and get this, Art is the Bingo Caller at a nursing home in Melrose! This eclectic list of interests took me by complete surprise, and as I continued the interview, I discovered that Art was methodical, deliberate and systematic in his work.

In his inimitable style, Art explained to me the definitive choices he has made as a Tri-CAP driver. No, he does not like long trips; he confines himself to an area within a region that covers from his hometown 32 miles to Little Falls, 35 miles to the St. Cloud area, and up to 60 miles to Willmar.

Art prefers to drive older adults and would rather not take children since he doesn't have the appropriate equipment (car seat, child-proof locks, etc.) in his car. Because of his farming responsibilities he is unable to drive much during the summer months but is most willing to take on more gigs during the Fall and Winter.

Thus, driving for Tri-CAP is most suitable for Art's style and availability, and the flexibility Tri-CAP provides is something for which Art is very grateful. "There is no issue," he said, "when I turn down a ride, even in the last minute, say because of bad weather." Overall, Art loves Tri-CAP. "They run a very good operation," he declared, "They are overseen by three County Commissioners, and that makes them legitimate." He appreciates the reimbursement he gets because it pays for his driving expenses.

Art said he was very thankful for and enjoyed the driver meetings Tri-CAP held regularly before the pandemic hit. He described how about 10-12 drivers usually met about twice a year to discuss their experiences. "I learned a lot during those sessions," said Art, thoughtfully, "I gained knowledge on how to handle some difficulties."

Art's usual practice during a drive is to share his experiences and expertise on dairy farming. Most people do not know much about dairy farming, and he is confident that their curiosity is piqued especially when he tells them about the nine robots on his farm. All in all, he enjoys taking his passengers.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." Said Margaret Mead. A helpful nature and willingness to serve others makes Art one of those committed citizens changing the world with Tri-CAP.

"It is always a good feeling help people in need," he expressed, "I like visiting with different

sorts of people and helping them.” According to him, the job is a perfect pastime for retired seniors looking for something to do. It is not too taxing, and volunteers have choices. “Moreover, the passengers are usually very appreciative, and the rides always end with smiles and many “Thank you’s.” What more can we want?” he concluded.

Author: Lalita Subrahmanyam, RSVP Americorps Senior Services Volunteer

Tri-CAP NEEDS VOLUNTEER DRIVERS:

Our Volunteer Driver Program needs volunteer drivers! It's a great way to help community residents while bringing in some extra cash for your mileage. Meals and parking are reimbursed, as applicable. Set your own schedule! [Learn more on our website.](#)



Public Transportation: Tri-CAP is pleased to assist you with scheduling your public transit rides. Our Dispatch Center is open to make ride reservations or changes Monday – Friday from 8:00am – 4:30pm.



Tri-CAP

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