



The CAPsule

Newsletter of the Bergen County Community Action Partnership, Inc.

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BCCAP OPENS NEW HEALTH CENTER IN GARFIELD

On Monday, May 8th, staff from **Bergen County Community Action Partnership** joined representatives from the community and **North Hudson Community Action Corporation** to officially open Bergen County's first **Federally Qualified Health Center** at a ribbon cutting ceremony at the new center located at 535 Midland Avenue in Garfield. This facility will provide health services for those who are unable to afford healthcare and are uninsured.

Dr. Allan De Giulio, Deputy Executive Director of **BCCAP**, served as M.C. for the ribbon cutting. Federal, state and community leaders, including **U.S. Congressman Steven Rothman**, **Bergen County Executive Dennis McNerney**, **Freeholders Bernadette McPherson** and **Elizabeth Calabrese**, and **Garfield Mayor Frank J. Calandriello** addressed the assemblage. **Representative**

Rothman declared his enthusiasm for the new health center: *"Today's ribbon cutting represents a giant step forward in providing vital care to uninsured and underinsured residents of Bergen County. By giving all residents access to preventative care and treatment, we will have fewer sick people, fewer emergency room visits and will actually save money in the long run. It's also the morally right thing to do. In fact, these federally qualified health centers could be a model for delivering care in a universal, single-payer health care system."*



Joining in the ribbon-cutting are, from left to right, President/CEO of NHCAC **Christopher Irizarry**, Garfield Mayor **Frank Calandriello**, Executive Director of BCCAP **Bob Halsch**, Congressman **Steven Rothman**, and Bergen County Freeholders **Bernadette McPherson** and **Elizabeth Calabrese**.

The health center was created thanks to the unique partnership between **BCCAP** and **North Hudson Community Action Corporation**. **NHCAC** operates six other federally qualified health centers in Passaic and Hudson counties. Executive Director of **BCCAP**, **Robert Halsch**, said, *"Providing health care to the uninsured or underinsured in Bergen County is a significant advance in responding to critical human needs. It is especially gratifying to affiliate with an experienced sister community action agency in this project."*

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From the Executive Director's Desk...



There is no mistaking that Bergen County is changing. Those changes are inevitable and ubiquitous. Unfortunately, a significant change is the increase in the numbers of residents living in poverty — a 42 percent increase since 1990. Our experience in the work of helping the poor tells us that the numbers of homeless have also significantly increased during this period, as have the numbers of low-income residents (now estimated at 156,000).

As a microcosm of New York City and having the distinction as the most densely populated county in the state, stress is commonplace in Bergen. Alcohol and drug abuse grows. Day laborers toil for low wages that often go unpaid. Families are forced to make impossible choices about which bill to pay and which to put in a “delay payment pile.” A language other than English is spoken in the homes of one-third of our residents. Almost 10 percent have no health coverage.

The leadership team of BCCAP recently participated in a strategic planning retreat which examined the changes rapidly occurring in Bergen County as a precursor to the development of a Strategic Plan for 2006-2008 (see page 7). The team revised the agency’s mission statement to better address the expanding needs of our constituents. *“To change lives through education, economic opportunities, healthcare, housing, and human services”* will drive our current and new initiatives as we journey through the next three years that promise to offer challenge and opportunity. Services that incorporate financial literacy and asset development will be prioritized. For example, future efforts will include a “Micro Business Credit Program” through a grant recently awarded by DCA.

The newest and most exciting initiative, one that has been in the planning stages for several years and has now been brought to fruition, is the opening of Bergen County’s first Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) in partnership with our sister agency, North Hudson Community Action Corporation. This facility has been named the “Community Action HELP Center of Bergen County” and will be home to “Health, Education and Life-changing Programs.” We anticipate bringing comprehensive early childhood (i.e. Head Start), adult education and home energy assistance programs to complement the full-service primary care health facility now in operation at this Garfield site (see pages 1 and 3).

We are determined to remain vigilant and responsive to the sweeping changes as they occur within the County and to “change lives...” as our mission states. Our English Language and Civics Education (ELCE) students recently shared their newly acquired skills by reading to Head Start children (see pages 4-5). In addition, ELCE students helped to organize a blood drive through the Community Blood Services (see page 7). The community action motto, “People Helping People” will continue to be the driving force in all that we do so that this growing population of low-income residents have the opportunity to become healthy, strong and productive members of our Bergen County community.

Robert F. Halsch, Jr.

Federally Qualified Health Center First Step in New HELP Center

The opening of the new Health Center at 535 Midland Avenue in Garfield is great news for many residents of Northern New Jersey. Access to adult medicine, pediatrics, and women's health services are available at the facility. Dental care will be coming soon.

Additional human service programs are also be provided in the future at the same site. Plans include **Head Start** pre-school classrooms and English as a Second Language classes, along with help with housing and energy bills and citizenship preparation.

The uninsured and working poor are benefiting greatly from the opening of the Health Center in Garfield. A new Rutgers study found that nearly one in four adults were without health insurance in northeast New Jersey. Visitors to the center can receive health services whether or not they have insurance. BCCAP and the new health center serve the



The new **HELP Center** in Garfield.

uninsured foreign born as well. The charge for their visits is based on their income. No one is denied care because of an inability to pay.

Appointments to the new health center can be made by calling 973-340-1182 or by walking in at 535 Midland Avenue in Garfield.

We Respond to the Increased Need for Immigrant Services

It has recently been noted that New Jersey falls behind other states with large immigrant populations in immigration services provided by the state. Thus, there is a welcome increase in immigration services throughout New Jersey, along with an increase of information and communication available to notify immigrants of the services that do exist.

Fortunately for immigrants in our area, BCCAP has been doing

its part to improve this situation. Immigrants are able to learn or improve their English skills through English lessons, and take citizenship classes to help them gain citizenship. An increase in similar classes throughout the state is necessary, as the alternative is isolating a large population. The NJ Immigration Policy Network identifies the establishment of an Office of Immigrant Affairs as the first big step in providing the necessary services to immigrants, people who are a vital and growing part of our community and country. Over 25% of Bergen

County's population is foreign born. Many new immigrants require the services provided by BCCAP to adjust to their new culture, language and environment. Immigrants founded this country, and they continue to be of importance to our culture, economy, and society.

As New Jersey looks to improve the services provided to immigrants, BCCAP has set an example by helping thousands of immigrants through the various programs we offer.

The needs of the foreign-born cannot be ignored as immigrants and citizens will both benefit from further integrating this increasing population into our society so they can continue to be productive members. This is more likely to occur with proficiency in the English language and knowledge of our culture.



Students participating in an English Language and Civics Education class.

Head Start and ELCE: Learning From Each Other

The Students in BCCAP's ELCE (English Language and Civics Education) program recently chose to fulfill a community service requirement by reading to the Head Start classes. While this reinforced the children's listening skills, the volunteers were able to enhance English language capacity. The ELCE students and many of the children in Head Start have a common bond. A majority of the families



in Head Start are of Hispanic origin and many of the children are learning English as their second language. The foreign-born adults and the children all benefit a great deal from programs such as **ELCE** and **Head Start**, which provide them with

opportunities to learn and improve their English literacy skills, leading to success in school, home, and community.

Green Eggs in Honor of Dr. Seuss for Read Across America Day

Elaine Miller, BCCAP's Director of Research and Development (left), and **Nancy Griner**, Head Start Director, enjoying **green eggs** (made famous through Dr. Seuss books). The Head Start students are celebrating **Dr. Seuss's** birthday, March 2nd, which just happens to be the same day as **Read Across America Day**.



Bergen Executive Visits Head Start



Bergen County Executive Dennis McNerney during his recent visit to the **Bergenfield Head Start** site. He spent part of his day with the children reading, singing, and creating artwork that was displayed throughout the county offices during the month of May.



A Lesson in Nutrition



Head Start students prepare their very own salad after receiving the ABC's of good nutrition, especially the importance of eating lots of vegetables, from dietician **Pamela Stoffberg, R.D.**

Technology in the Classroom



Children at the Head Start center in Fairview gained some hands-on computer experience using age-appropriate software programs.

First Ever Mommy/Toddler Program



Bergen County Head Start's first-time **Mommy/Toddler** program brought together the tots with their moms or grandparents who met weekly for a fun learning and bonding experience. The activities included arts and crafts, gym and story telling. **Lisa Spellman**, the program's Family Advocate coordinator, facilitated the successful ten-week program.

Fatherhood Initiative

In an effort to further involve fathers and other male role models in the education and daily routines of their children, the **Head Start Fatherhood Initiative** invites these men to share in reading, eating meals, and joining in other classroom activities. The initiative also provides an opportunity for many of the dads to reinforce their own English language skills.



Praise and Gratitude for Weatherization Services

For many, the soaring cost of heating their homes makes it unaffordable, leaving them in a predicament, sometimes having to choose between heating their homes or eating. However, the BCCAP Weatherization Department works hard to keep the **low-income residents** of Bergen County warm each winter and cool during the summer while helping them lower energy costs. The department's services include examining homes for hot air leakages, making the necessary repairs to keep homes insulated, and providing or replacing windows, doors, furnaces and boilers.

The assistance provided by the Weatherization Department does not go unnoticed or unappreciated by the recipients of their work. Many clients have sent thank you letters commending **Jim Lewis, Weatherization Manager** and the rest of the Weatherization staff for their work. The letters, whether in English or Spanish, all mention the effectiveness of the Weatherization team and the difference they've made in improving the living conditions for many. One client states, "We wish to thank you and your staff for the efficiency in handling our case, it has made an amazing difference in our home." BCCAP's Weatherization services are critical in helping keep energy bills from going through the roof.



Amanda Clyne, a member of BCCAP's Weatherization Staff, testing a client's furnace.

Linda Buggs Joins BCCAP Staff



The BCCAP family welcomes **Linda Buggs**, new Assistant Director of Real Estate Development and Management. Linda is a professional with over twenty years of experience in customer service and project management.

Linda holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Dela-

ware State University. We are excited to have Linda as part of our BCCAP team. She will be assisting with the supervision of Weatherization projects and will be a vital part in managing BCCAP's properties and developing future real estate opportunities for the agency. Linda shared her enthusiasm about her new position by saying, "I am glad to be able to share my leadership with an enthusiastic team. I know that together we will help people make significant strides in improving their lives."

"To change lives through education, economic opportunities, healthcare, housing and human services."

Bergen County Community Action Partnership, Inc. (BCCAP) is a 501(C) (3), not-for-profit Community Action Agency. Established in 1967, BCCAP is Bergen County's designated anti-poverty agency.

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BCCAP Drafts 2006-08 Strategic Plan

A twenty-member team representing all agency departments recently participated in a strategic planning retreat. Together team members reviewed the changing



BCCAP Leaders and staff at the Strategic Planning retreat.

demographics and environment in Bergen County and discussed future program initiatives to meet growing needs and challenges. This laid the foundation for formulating a Strategic Plan, titled "*Navigating a Steady Course in a Sea of Change*," to guide the agency over the course of the next three years.

The Plan emphasizes a renewed dedication to helping those in need in Bergen County. An important achievement of the retreat was the revision of the **mission statement**, which now states, "***To change lives through education, economic opportunities, healthcare, housing, and human services.***"

BCCAP Brings Support to Rally for a Better New Jersey in Trenton



BCCAP's Deputy Executive Director, **Allan De Giulio, Ph.D.**, was interviewed by **Michael Aaron** from the **New Jersey Network News** while attending a rally at the War Memorial in Trenton.

The rally was in support of Governor Corzine's proposed state budget which would further support the low-income population of New Jersey. The rally was organized by the Housing Community Development Network, the Anti-Poverty Network, the NJ Anti-Hunger Advocacy Coalition and the NJ Community Action Association.

Hundreds of people attended the rally from over 80 different organizations statewide.

ELCE Classes Sponsor BCCAP Blood Drive

Students in the **English Language and Civics Education classes (ELCE)** at **BCCAP** work to learn the English language and gain knowledge about their new country. In addition, community service is a key part of their curriculum. ELCE classes fulfilled their community service responsibility by organizing a blood drive in partnership with the Community Blood Services at BCCAP on June 5th. The students publicized the event and provided refreshments. Most also volunteered as blood donors. **Karen Valencia**, one of the ELCE teachers, explained that the idea for the blood drive emerged after one of the class's visiting community speakers explained the importance of donating blood.

Other community service projects organized by the ELCE students have included puppet shows for Head Start students and collecting clothing for those in need.



Dr. Rafael Bichardo and volunteer **Jesus Valencia** in the **Community Blood Services** Bus from Paramus, NJ.

Changing Lives, One Client at a Time

Alma Reyes Evans, a case manager in BCCAP's Crisis Services Division of BCCAP, assists homeless clients through shelter placement, counseling, and connecting them with essential support services. Personal interaction is key in helping the most vulnerable get back on their feet.

In a recent interview, Alma spoke of one client in particular that touched her and serves as an example of the potential all clients have, especially those who are determined and have a positive attitude. Victor (not his real name), was able to move from a life of homelessness, with a criminal record, and substance



Alma Evans and a current client discussing options.

abuse history, to a life of independent living with a home, a full time job, and a renewed relationship with

his son. Victor arrived at the shelter in December 2005, after being discharged from a 12-day detoxification and mental health treatment program. Victor had been homeless due to his addictions to narcotics and alcohol, while also suffering from depression and anxiety.

After nearly four months in the shelter and a month after beginning to work, Victor found an affordable place to live and was able to move into his own apartment.

Alma said, *"I was very impressed by his initiative in getting things done."* She also said his desire to be a good father to his son was Victor's greatest motivational factor. Alma also reported Victor's employer was satisfied with his job performance and noted his good work ethic.

Victor's story is truly inspiring, as he was able to transform his life. Clients such as Victor are what make Alma and other case managers in the Crisis Services Division so committed to their work. The fulfillment of seeing a person like Victor create a meaningful life for himself with their help confirms that their work really does have a profound impact on lives — one client at a time.



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Contributions to support any of BCCAP's programs may be sent to the above address.