

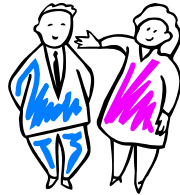
The Pillars

March/April 2009



Planning Department

submitted by Jarod Taylor



The Planning Department is excited to announce that CPCA is now certified as a Homeownership Counseling Agency by the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA). We are excited to partner with PHFA to bring homeownership education and counseling to our area; there are no other agencies offering these services in our communities. There are many powerful tools available to us as a certified agency that will enable us to help clients with budgeting, credit counseling, homeownership prep, foreclosure counseling, and much more. As this program continues to grow, it will prove to be a tremendous asset in guiding our clients to self-sufficiency. In the coming months we hope to also begin accepting applications for PHFA's Homeowners' Emergency Mortgage Assistance Program (HEMAP). The program provides varying levels of mortgage assistance for qualifying residents that have fallen behind because of job loss, illness, etc., or are victims of sub-prime lending. If you have any clients that may benefit from homeownership or budget/credit education we welcome any referrals.



May is National Community Action Month and to raise awareness of the issues faced by those living in poverty, Community Action organizations across Pennsylvania will be holding Family + Community Forums. The forums will consist of a structured discussion on the current economic status of the community, focusing on the most economically vulnerable families. The forums will also include an interactive exercise called the Poverty Simulation, which puts participants in the shoes of those living in poverty. We will be inviting a diverse group of community members to participate and are planning to hold two separate forums for Centre and Clearfield counties. No dates have been confirmed, but if you are interested in helping out or have any ideas, please see Tia or Jarod.

Information Technology



submitted by Rich Rahalla

The sale of eleven surplus computers and monitors has generated \$355.00 for the General fund of CPCA.

A reminder to all users of the FAMS and Horizon programs: you are requested to be logged off the programs when not actively using the programs. There are users who's PCs are logged into these programs while the staff member is at lunch, at a meeting, or engaged in activities away from their desk. Not logging off is a NO-NO.

Human Resources

adapted from The Personnel Advisor

A recent study revealed that identity theft is more widespread than ever, with nearly 10 million American victims losing \$48 billion in 2008. The number of victims rose 22% to a record 9.9 million in 2008 from 8.1 million a year earlier, with about one in 23 U.S. adults becoming victims, according to the study by Javelin Strategy & Research.

To help people avoid becoming victims of this crime, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has provided 10 safety tips to detect and prevent identity theft.

IRS Safety tips:

1. If you receive a letter or notice from the IRS which leads you to believe someone may have fraudulently used your Social Security Number, respond immediately to the name and address or phone number printed on the IRS notice.
2. If you receive a letter from the IRS that indicates more than one tax return was filed for you, this may be a sign that your SSN was used fraudulently.
3. Another sign that you may be the target of identity theft is an IRS letter indicating you received wages from an employer unknown to you.
4. The IRS has a department which deals specifically with identity theft issues. The IRS Identity Protection Specialized Unit is available if you have been in contact with the IRS about an identity theft issue and have not achieved a resolution.
5. You can contact the IRS Identity Protection Specialized Unit by calling the Identity Theft Hotline at 800-908-4490 Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm local time.
6. The IRS Identity Protection Specialized Unit is also available if you believe your identity may be at risk of being stolen due to a lost or stolen purse or wallet or due to questionable activity on your credit card or your credit report.

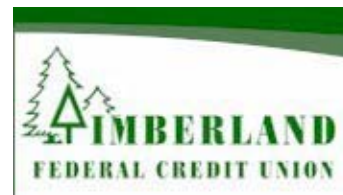
7. The IRS never initiates communication with taxpayers about their tax account through emails. If you receive an e-mail or find a Web site you think is pretending to be the IRS, forward the e-mail or Web site URL to the IRS at phishing@irs.gov.

8. The IRS has many more resources available to help inform taxpayers about identity theft on the IRS Web site at www.irs.gov. On irs.gov you can access information on how to report scams and bogus IRS Web sites. You can also visit the IRS Identity Theft Resources Page, which you can find by typing "Identity Theft Resource Page" in the search box on the irs.gov home page.

9. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is also available to assist taxpayers with identity theft issues. You can reach them at 877-ID-THEFT (877-438-4338).

Visit www.OnGuardOnline.gov for protection tips from the federal government and the technology industry.

For more information on how to deter, detect, and defend against identity theft, visit the FTC's Identity Theft Site (www.ftc.gov/bcpl/edu/microsites/idtheft)



Central PA Community Action has asked that all employees have direct deposit of their pays. In order to accommodate employees who did not have bank accounts, CPCA partnered with Timberland Federal Credit Union to provide Savings Accounts for employees to receive their paychecks via direct deposit. There was a sign up held at the main office and employees who joined were entered to win two gift cards. The winner of the first \$50 gas card was John Goodrow and the second was Jennifer Sigvaldsen. Congratulations to both John and Jennifer!!!

Thanks to Timberland Federal Credit Union for their generosity!!!

Safety Corner

submitted by Stacy LoCastro



Good Working Positions

To understand the best way to set up a computer workstation, it is helpful to understand the concept of neutral body positioning. This is a comfortable working posture in which your joints are naturally aligned. Working with the body in a neutral position reduces stress and strain on the muscles, tendons, and skeletal system and reduces your risk of developing a musculoskeletal disorder (MSD). The following are important considerations when attempting to maintain neutral body postures while working at the computer workstation:

- * Hands, wrists, and forearms are straight, in-line and roughly parallel to the floor.
- * Head is level, or bent slightly forward, forward facing, and balanced. Generally it is in-line with the torso.
- * Shoulders are relaxed and upper arms hang normally at the side of the body.
- * Elbows stay in close to the body and are bent between 90 and 120 degrees.
- * Feet are fully supported by the floor or a footrest may be used if the desk height is not adjustable.
- * Back is fully supported with appropriate lumbar support when sitting vertical or leaning back slightly.
- * Thighs and hips are supported by a well-padded seat and generally parallel to the floor.
- * Knees are about the same height as the hips with the feet slightly forward.

Regardless of how good your working posture is, working in the same posture or sitting still for prolonged periods is not healthy. You should change your working position frequently throughout the day in the following ways:

- * Make small adjustments to your chair or backrest.
- * Stretch your fingers, hands, arms, and torso.
- * Stand up and walk around for a few minutes periodically.

Family Services

submitted by Joan Domico

Could you believe Easter came early this year for Verna Hess, a resident of Park Avenue Towers? This Easter Lily is 3ft. 4 inches tall, given to her five years ago by a favorite cousin, Connie Hudson. It has faded a couple of years but decided to bloom and come back to life this Easter and show its blessings. Isn't the touch of God beautiful?



Horizon Update

submitted by Stacy LoCastro

CPCA is continuing its work with Horizon Information Systems for our new "FAMS" program, nicknamed "CATS" by Cambria County Community Action. Connie Harris, Family Service Worker in Clearfield, has been testing the CATS program by entering consumer information into the program. She is then able to provide feedback to Ellie Fenton and Horizon about CATS and any issues she encounters. Recently, we received information that the new CATS program may also be able to "patch" family information to the new Weatherization "WAP" intake system. This will be very useful in saving staff time that are currently having to double enter family information in programs. Our hope is to transition to the new program by June 2009. CPCA will be providing training to all staff using CATS in the near future. Stay Tuned!

Director's Corner

by Hugh Daly

I asked Gail to hold up publication of "The Pillars" until after a big important meeting in Harrisburg on March 24. Dale Knepp, Stacy and I, with over 200 other employees from all but one of Pennsylvania's 43 Community Action Agencies attended the meeting in Harrisburg. We have been waiting anxiously for this

meeting, as we expected to get an idea of how much additional money we would be receiving for Weatherization (WX) under the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* (ARRA). This Act is commonly known as the "Stimulus Package". We know that President Obama is on record as stating his administration's desire to Weatherize up to 2 million homes in the next two years. We also know that Pennsylvania's share for Weatherization from ARRA is somewhere between \$151 to \$320 million dollars. This amount is to be over and above our regular Department of Energy and LIHEAP funding for WX, which for our agency for this year was approximately \$1.2 million dollars. So you can imagine how eager all of us were to hear how much we were going to be getting. **Well guess what...** No one from the State Office showed up for the meeting! We do have to remember that Weatherization and LIHEAP are both FEDERAL Programs (with federal funds) that are administered by the State of Pennsylvania. That means that we get the money we need to run the programs from the State. And, although the law makes provision for *advanced payments* of the funds, the Commonwealth has chosen to pay us, and the other Community Action Agencies, by the reimbursement method. A U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) spokesperson recently said that the Federal Government was aware that some states held on to the federal money in order to gain the interest payments from investing the money for a relatively short time before they have to pay it out to their Community Action sub-contractors. I don't know for sure if that is what PA does, but the extra-long times we have had to wait for our reimbursements recently suggests that maybe they do. The lack of information from the State has not kept us from planning how we are going to use the money, we just don't know "how much" yet. So, using the tools provided to us by our Weatherization Coalition we have prepared "scenario" budgets for increasing our WX production by two times, three times, and four times. The last scenario would call for us to hire as many as 28 new employees in the WX Department, but even if we use the most conservative estimate, we will be hiring additional employees for Weatherization for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2009.



So much for WX, but what about Family Service? Recently, one of our Centre County employees expressed some concern about what might happen if the agency lost our RAP contract with Centre County. We recently learned that Centre County Government had decided to have just one agency do the entire RAP (Rental Assistance Program) program beginning in July. We were invited as an agency to provide a proposal to cover the entire county for the coming year. Currently, we are one of two agencies funded for RAP in Centre County. I'm sure the other agency will also be submitting a request to be the sole provider for the county. We will submit a proposal, and it will be a strong one given our years of experience with the program, but what if we aren't the agency chosen? Will we have to close our Centre County Offices in Bellefonte and Millheim, and lose half of our staff from the Philipsburg office? **NO.** You should know that even if we got the contract for the whole county the total amount of money we would get to pay salaries from RAP would be less than \$40,000. Our share of the contract right now is not enough to pay the salary and benefits for even one worker. Most of the money we use to pay salaries in Centre County comes from the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Program, another *FEDERAL* fund. Oh by the way, the ARRA bill nationwide calls for an extra one billion dollars for CSBG! Again, we don't yet know how much money is going to come to us from that sum, but we know we will get some of it. How will we spend any additional money? Fortunately, some hiring priorities have already been established in the agency's Strategic Plan, and we are making plans for some additional new programmatic activities.

Stay Tuned!