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.

Service Delivery Locations

Willimantic
1315 Main Street, Suite 2
Willimantic, CT 06226
(860) 450-7400
Access and Visitation
Access to Assets
Administration & Finance
Case Management
Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
Climb the Ladder to a Successful Future
Emergency Food Bank
Energy Assistance Program (CEAP)
Eviction and Foreclosure Prevention (EFPP)
Housing Preservation
Individual Development Accounts (IDA)
Parent Education Program (PEP)
Women, Infants, and Children Nutrition (WIC)
Weatherization (Energy Conservation)
Windham Area Hour Exchange

Danielson
231 Broad Street
Danielson, CT 06239
(860) 412-1600
Access and Visitation
Beyond Shelter
Case Management
Climb the Ladder to a Successful Future
Community Based Life Skills
Emergency Food Bank
Energy Assistance Program (CEAP)
Eviction and Foreclosure Prevention (EFPP)
Next Steps Supportive Housing
Parent Education Program (PEP)
Supportive Housing for Families®
Youth Group Homes
Youth Mentoring

Emergency Shelter
51 Reynolds Street
Danielson, CT 06239
(860) 774-4977

Hawkins House Adolescent Group Home
Danielson, CT 06239

Crossroads Adolescent Transitional Supervised Apartments
Norwich, CT 06360

Senior Services
Beckish Senior Center
188 Route 66
Columbia, CT 06237
(860) 228-0759

Senior Housing
Willington Woods
60A Old Farms Road
Willington, CT 06279
(860) 429-8777

Elisha Brook
56 New Park Avenue
Franklin, CT 06254
(860) 886-0367

www.accessagency.org
The Access Community Action Agency is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Together We Are Strong
Dear Friends:

Welcome to the Access Community Action Agency’s 2012 Annual Report. As in years past, this report provides you a sampling of the results Access has achieved during the past year, including some examples of people who’ve been able to overcome barriers that impair their ability to be economically stable — which is our core mission.

We hope you will take a few minutes to look at the report and gain some insight into the good work that was done during fiscal year 2012, which covers July 2011 – June 2012. You’ll also be able to see how Access effectively used the community’s resources that we hold in stewardship to strengthen the region.

The past year was another challenging one for Access, as it was for many in this region. Yet with the support of a strong board of directors, other community leaders, local individuals, businesses, foundations, faith communities and of course dedicated staff, we have effectively and efficiently partnered to fight poverty and meet challenges every day.

The theme of this report is “Together We Are Strong”. It is only by working together that we can support each other and build a community that nurtures economic opportunity for all who are able and provides compassion, care and support for those in need — when they need it.

With ongoing support and partnerships, Access will continue to work as your eyes, ears and hands in the region to ensure that all families and individuals can overcome the barriers that get in the way of realizing economic stability. There is no more important work than this, and no more important partner than you.

We hope you find this Annual Report informative and inspiring. We are certainly inspired by both the outstanding support and collaborations that are at the heart of our success.

Sincerely,

Mary A. DeMarco
Board Chair

Peter S. DeBiasi
President/CEO
Thank you to our July 2011 – June 2012 Board of Directors!

The Access Community Action Agency Board of Directors consists of dedicated volunteers who generously donate their time and talent in service of the local community. They represent the region’s towns, private businesses, organizations, and constituent groups.

Mary DeMarco, Chair
Tammy Miner, Vice Chair
Grace Curran, Treasurer
Ann Gruenberg, Ph.D., Secretary
Douglas Cutler
Mae Flexer
Veronica Gomez
Joy Hollister
Olga Kurnyk-Ezis
Patricia Wilson Pheanious
Melissa Phillips
David Pinney
Ines Rolon
Jessica Saclowski
Dolly Von Husen

Our Community Vision

Windham and Tolland Counties will be a region whose residents and communities have and effectively use the resources necessary to ensure that all of its families and individuals thrive.

Our Mission

To create the conditions that empower individuals and families to overcome the barriers that impair their ability to be economically stable.

Strategic Commitments

Meet Basic Human Needs
Build Capacity to Accumulate Income and Assets
Foster Positive At-Risk-Youth Development

Our Values

Compassion
Empowerment
Respect
Synergy
Accountability
Excellence

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Dorothea came to the Access Community Action Agency’s Homelessness Prevention Program after having been referred to the agency by another support organization. Dorothea had suffered through years of chronic homelessness, domestic violence, and substance dependence, and was struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a result.

Dorothea was relocated to Access’s Emergency Shelter, where she was empowered to address her mental health and wellness, substance abuse, and housing needs. “Life at the Emergency Shelter offered me hope that I would get back on my feet again,” she remembers, “and it made me feel confident about my life.”

Staff was impressed with how diligently Dorothea worked to achieve her desired goals, following up on all recommendations toward housing and treatment services. Not only did she thrive in the supportive environment provided at the Shelter, but her hard work resulted in her successful move out of the Shelter and into permanent supportive housing.

Dorothea marvels at how much she has achieved, noting that without Access’s Homelessness Prevention Program, “Maybe I’d still be on the street or at another shelter.”

Dorothea will continue to receive critical support toward her next goals as well as services from Access through the agency’s Next Step Supportive Housing program. She is excited about her future, affirming, “I never want to be homeless again. I want to get my GED, get part-time employment, and continue to work toward my well-being. [...] I’m so grateful for being able to get into Access’s shelter.”

Belinda is grateful for the learning she accomplished during her time at Crossroads. “It helped with my education — not only with school — but with knowledge of time management skills and financial literacy. It helped me learn the basics, such as grocery shopping and opening a bank account. Crossroads helped alleviate the struggle of being independent at a young age.”

Today, Belinda is a junior at Eastern Connecticut State University, majoring in social work with a minor in women’s studies with hopes to advocate for women’s reproductive rights and social justice.

This year, two more young women from Crossroads — Kat and Zana — achieved major milestones on their ways to following in Belinda’s path toward successful independent adulthood. Both young women graduated from high school and are embarking on college studies armed with the educational success tools learned in the program. Kat is now pursuing a degree in accounting at Three Rivers Community College and has also secured a job in a local office. Zana worked over the summer as a counselor at a local summer camp and, this fall, started attending the University of Connecticut at its West Hartford campus.

Crossroads Director, Katrina Kettle, acknowledges the hard work these young women put in to achieving this very important milestone in the face of all their past struggles. “We are very proud of Kat and Zana!”

Meeting Basic Human Needs

Results That Matter

Access works with youth and their families to overcome obstacles and challenges in their lives while teaching them skills so they can become economically stable.

- 141 divorcing parents of 196 children completed the Parent Education Program to learn how to help their children deal with difficulties related to divorce.
- 72 children and youth were able to remain or were reunited with their biological parents through positive parenting skill development as well as home health and safety improvement and education.
- 76 children were able to maintain positive relationships with their non-custodial parents through supervised visitations.
- 20 adolescent girls were supported in developing independent living skills at school, work, and volunteering experiences while living in safe, nurturing group homes.
- 14 youth improved their academic, athletic, and/or social skills for school success through one-on-one mentoring.
When adolescents begin their residencies at the Access Community Action Agency’s Crossroads Supportive Work Education and Transition Program, they have already faced great obstacles in their young lives. When Belinda arrived at the program, she had spent years bouncing back and forth between the homes of family and friends until she had “burned her bridges” and had nowhere else to go. “Crossroads was my last resort,” she remembers.

Crossroads is a community-based, transitional living program for adolescent females — and more recently, adolescent males. Crossroads youth are referred to the program by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) because they are near aging out of the department’s system and need support to transition into independent adult lives.

Often these youth come to Crossroads still wrestling with the demons of their pasts — histories of abuse, neglect, and abandonment. Some struggle with making positive choices, leading to poor school performance, dysfunctional relationships, substance abuse, and other dangerous circumstances and behaviors. As Belinda recalls, “I would have continued on my path of self-destruction if I hadn’t gotten to Crossroads.”

Crossroads offers these youth opportunities to overcome the barriers borne of the issues that haunt their pasts and to learn — through practical application — critical independent living skills needed to succeed as adults. Youth residents live in a supervised apartment setting and practice budgeting and money management, health and medical care management, household management, and educational and vocational achievement. They also participate in scheduled recreational activities and cultural events to increase their positive engagement in the community. Program staff works closely with the program’s youth to help them define and achieve their goals.

Access provides access to food, housing, and other basic needs assistance to people going through difficult times, giving them help and hope so they can get back on their feet and move toward economic stability.

- 4,216 adults and 2,399 children received 76,515 meals from Access’s two food banks.
- 2,419 women, infants, and children had access to nutrition education, and to monthly supplemental healthy food vouchers worth $1,446,165.
- 213,116 nutritious meals and snacks were provided to 502 low-income children enrolled in 64 licensed home child care settings.
- 287 homeless individuals, comprised of 42 families with 66 children and 176 single adults were temporarily housed in our Emergency Shelter.
- 64 families and individuals moved from emergency or transitional housing to safe, stable housing.
- 77 families were able to maintain permanent housing because of rental assistance.
- 12 single, previously chronically homeless individuals attained and maintained permanent housing.
- 17 evictions were prevented with the use of funds to cover back rent and the development of payment continuation plans.
- 59 one-bedroom senior housing units provided affordable living to seniors at Elisha Brook in Franklin and Willington Woods in Willington.
- 8,160 households received help paying their heat utility bills.
- 23 low-income households were cleared of lead hazards; 6 residents of these homes were children under six years old.
A
fter losing his job, Walter found himself falling far behind in paying his rent and other bills. Month after month went by with no job prospects and, as is the case for so many long-term unemployed, as Walter remained without employment prospects and his financial situation deteriorated, he began to suffer from depression.

Walter remembers the desperation of his search and his frustration as each employment lead went nowhere: “I went to three different staffing sources with no luck, until I eventually ran out of money.”

Ultimately, Walter lost his apartment where he had been living in Groton. So, with only the shirt on his back, he drove his moped scooter from the Connecticut coastline to Danielson in the state’s northeast corner. A friend invited Walter to stay with him until he could find work and get back on his feet.

But, even that living arrangement ended as the symptoms of Walter’s depression became more pronounced. That is when Walter came to Access’s Emergency Shelter in Danielson, where he began a program of comprehensive case management and worked closely with his case manager to build an action plan that connected him with important resources, including programs to address his emotional and medical well-being.

Walter also participated in Access’s workforce development program, and received referrals to a host of job-readiness resources, such as skills assessments and training opportunities through the Department of Labor’s CT Works. Walter recalls how hard he worked at improving his employability, noting, “I went to CT Works every day and attended every workshop I could.”

Walter rebuilt his self-esteem, created a strong resume, and launched himself into an enthusiastic job search. He remembers how supportive his case worker was, sharing, “I was encouraged to apply for a job every day and look for affordable housing.”

With his new-found confidence, Walter quickly found a full-time job at a popular restaurant in Brooklyn. “Hank’s was the first place I applied, and I was so persistent, they gave me an interview and hired me that night for an immediate start the next day!”

Walter is happy in his work and was thrilled to move out of the Shelter into an apartment of his own. He is grateful for the help he received from Access and says one of the best things about leaving the Shelter was enabling “someone else who needs help to have his room.”

Results That Matter

Access helps people to prepare for work and to budget their hard-earned money to be able to purchase assets, with the ultimate goal of achieving family economic stability.

- 1,760 low-income homes have lowered home heating costs due to their homes being weatherized at an estimated annual savings totaling $961,100 in reduced energy costs; 2,746 homes lowered their energy costs through HES-IE (formerly WRAP) program work.
- 23 full-time jobs were created or retained in the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).
- 39 individuals completed job-related training and received licenses and/or certificates.
- 35 low-income adults and youth actively participated in a matched savings and financial literacy program; of those, two adults and nine youth were able to purchase the qualifying asset for which they had saved.