

Community Action Month

May is National Community Action Month (NCAM), a time when Community Action Agencies (CAA's) across the country tell their stories and share their successes! NCAM was created by the Community Action Partnership to reinforce CAAs' role helping low-income families achieve economic stability.

During NCAM, Community Action Agencies truly make the Promise of Community Action — “to help people and change lives” — come alive by hosting events that help put a "face" on the families living in poverty, and spotlighting the dedicated individuals who are helping them escape it. Success stories are honored and personal achievements are recognized. Some governors and mayors even proclaim May "Community Action Month" in their states and cities.

CAAs also use NCAM to call attention to poverty-related problems. As CAAs are showcasing their programs, they are also giving local residents—many who are unaware of the poverty in their communities—a first-hand look at the struggles low-income families face and how Community Action programs help these families achieve financial security.

SEKCAP Award for Collaborative Excellence: The Award for Collaborative Excellence (ACE) recognizes an individual who has demonstrated outstanding initiative in creating and participating in community collaborations that have significantly contributed to the success of SEK-CAP in fulfilling our mission to advocate for and improve the lives of low-income people and communities.

This year we have chosen three outstanding women to spotlight for their community efforts. Each of them is making a difference in their community by volunteering their time and talent to a special project or projects.

Billie Jo Drake



Billie Jo has been married for 48 years to Alan. They are the parents of two sons and one daughter, and grandparents to nine grandchildren. They have lived in Fort Scott, Kansas, their entire married life, except the two years Alan was stationed at Fort Riley, Kansas.

Drake retired from USD 234 after serving 16 years as a classroom teacher and 15 years as an elementary principal (the first three years of administrative work were in the Iola, USD 257 school district).

Currently, Billie Jo serves on the following:

- Chairwoman, Bourbon County Inter-Agency Coalition and Coalition Board
- Chairwoman, Bourbon County Red Cross calling committee
- Chairwoman, Mercy Fort Scott Community Board
- Member, Mercy Joplin Regional Community Board
- Board Secretary, Bourbon County Partners in Change/Next Steps
- Co-chairperson for Transportation and Childcare for Partners in Change
- Member, Community Christian Church
- Teacher/Discussion Leader for Community Christian Church's Monday Morning Bible study group
- Member, Chapter FU, PEO
- Secretary, Area Women Educators
- Member, Comfort Quilts
- Member, Prayer Shawl ministry

“My goal as an educator was to give every child or staff member I touched the opportunity to achieve at his/her highest level by extending care and respect for the individual. In my retirement, I have extended that same care and respect for the individuals I encounter through the programs with which I work. My passion is to make our society better by helping one person or family unit at a time accomplish small steps toward goals of improvement.”

Thank you for your work, Billie Jo!

Linda Mays



Linda Mays works for USD286 Sedan School as a Library Aide, and is the Coordinator for Re-Imagine Sedan.

“I believe that rural communities are at an intersection of wanting to maintain their freedom, casual lifestyle, and ways of the past, and with confronting the realities of a sustainable future, the well-being of all, in the community. Each resident, from the very young to the old, has gifts (talents) and deserves the chance to develop them. Since a community is greater than the sum of its parts, we all need to be in relationship with each other and help each other develop our gifts. If we recognize and utilize each other’s gifts; we can create a strong, healthy, loving community.”

Thank you for your work, Linda!

Tina Gantt



Tina Gantt currently works at KVC Health Systems as a Family Service Family Support Worker. She offers services, which strengthen the family and promote the safety and well-being of the children. Services enhance parenting skills, family and personal self-sufficiency, functioning of the family, and reduce stress on the families; including connecting families to community resources.

She is extremely passionate about serving families and ensuring that helping professions know the most current updated resources, activities, and opportunities in their communities. Tina is blessed to be serving her third year as Chair of the Partnership for All Cherokee County Children Coalition (PACCC). During their monthly meetings, they have great presentations, education, share resources, and collaborate with other agencies so that they may better serve families.

“You never know what people may be struggling with; I am dedicated to helping families, focus on the positive instead of the negative, and never miss the chance to encourage each of them. I will never forget the day when a mother told me ‘I didn’t give up, because you believed in me.’”

Thank you for your work, Tina!