Fighting the War on Poverty and serving St. Louis County for more than 50 years

“There is nothing new about poverty. What is new, however, is that now we have the resources to get rid of it.”

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Photo: Cecil Stoughton, White House Press Office (WHPO)
It was a momentous and historic year of progress for the Community Action Agency of St. Louis County, Inc. (CAASTLC). CAASTLC marked its 50th anniversary with some major milestones while serving customers in St. Louis County. Here are some highlights from the year, along with our 2018 annual report for your reading pleasure.

The team at CAASTLC continues to work at doing their part to serve, as we deliver on our mission to fight the War on Poverty. Our number one goal is to fulfill our mission to help those in need move out of a life of poverty through inspiration, guidance and education. With that in mind, we have extended our services in St. Louis County by adding a North County location to give our customers more access to our case managers and professional staff who provide life-changing services.

There were other notable accomplishments from 2018 to share. The first is that CAASTLC completed and received Board and State approval for its three-year strategic plan (2019-2021). This was made possible due to solid Board, Community Advisory Council, staff and community stakeholder engagement.

Another significant achievement is that CAASTLC officially launched its first ever employer-based Community Loan Center of St. Louis County, offering lending opportunities in both St. Louis County and St. Louis City. Our goal is to help our neighbors avoid the vicious cycle of predatory lending and gain more economic independence and financial health.

In October 2018, the agency celebrated 50 years of serving low-income families in St. Louis County. Our dedicated and phenomenal supporters made the event the most successful fundraiser in agency history. We are proud to continue our mantra of “Helping People, Changing Lives”.

Another highlight of the year is the installation of a new building sign, recognized as a symbol of hope in our community. The agency had unwavering support from community stakeholders that helped make the sign a reality. We are steadily nurturing those relationships and forming new ones to further enhance our reach within the St. Louis County community.

Along with other accomplishments for the year, CAASTLC received Board approval for our updated agency employee handbook, new risk assessment policy and updated financial policies and procedures. In addition, we had another successful year by receiving an unmodified audit opinion with no findings.

CAASTLC’s dedicated staff is constantly working to reach new heights in skill development, training and certifications to ensure continued excellence with our customer service. These efforts will allow our Agency to better serve our customers in the years to come. In addition, we are utilizing social media in new and innovative ways to reach our customers and grow our organization. This will allow us to further develop our image, recognition and brand within the communities we serve.

We would like to thank you for your support and all that you do to help CAASTLC maintain our commitment to prevent the conditions of poverty for present and future generations.
Spotlight on Success: Stephanie Gooch

Stephanie Gooch is a true testament of how CAASTLC programs can have a dramatic impact on the lives of those using our services. Stephanie was incarcerated in the St. Louis County jail from February until June of 2015. The incarceration came after Stephanie’s goal of saving money for nursing school was derailed by a relative with a drug problem who stole her money to feed a heroin habit. Out of anger she found herself at her cousin’s house, throwing paint on his car and damaging his property. She ended up with a property damage conviction and more than four months of jail time and shock treatment.

Soon after her release, Stephanie lost her mother and was struggling financially; yet she continued to stay on the path to redemption. She had the opportunity to meet with CAASTLC Employment Specialist James Ingram, who was a breath of fresh air. Stephanie had the pleasure of taking Ingram’s Workforce Development class. Stephanie says it helped her move toward a successful reentry into society. The class taught situational and problem-solving skills needed to be successful in the workplace.

Mr. Ingram continued to email Stephanie and reached out to let her know about job fairs and opportunities geared toward those with felony records. During that time frame, Stephanie also completed the “Makin’ It Work” program. It’s designed to equip those who have been incarcerated with practical and emotional-reasoning skills. Stephanie found a job after meeting an employer at a CAASTLC job fair and has been gainfully employed ever since.

With a boost of confidence and self-esteem, Stephanie has moved on to volunteer for political campaigns and has worked for at least nine elected officials, from state representatives to senators. Mr. Ingram nominated Stephanie for Mission St. Louis’ “Staying Power” award. Not only did she receive recognition for her accomplishments, she was also featured on the local news.

Stephanie eventually obtained her bachelor’s degree in Psychology from Fisk University and continues to maintain a productive personal and work life.

“Mr. Ingram’s class was the highlight of my week and stay while serving time. He was always well prepared and prompt for class and often started class with a relevant video clip related to the subject that day. He gave me hope that I could have a future beyond prison walls.”
Community Action Agency of St. Louis County, Inc. (d/b/a CAASTLC) is part of a national network of federally funded Community Action Agencies (CAAs) created by the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. All Community Action Programs in the network were originally created as part of the “War on Poverty”.

The Federal Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 was replaced by The Community Services Block Grant, (CSBG) in 1981. The primary focus is to serve as an empowerment service to help those living in poverty become self-sufficient.

CAAs administer various programs on community levels to help low-income families and individuals escape poverty conditions. Nationwide, CAAs help more than 11.5 million people move toward self-sufficiency. CAASTLC, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation that has provided services in St. Louis County for more than 50 years. It was originally incorporated as the St. Louis County Human Development Corporation of Metropolitan St. Louis (HDC) Advisory Council in 1968 and was renamed Metroplex Inc. in 1969. In 1978, Metroplex, Inc. became a separate designated entity to provide anti-poverty programs for St. Louis County.

In 1996, the agency’s name was changed to STEP, Inc. and in 2003 STEP, Inc. became The Community Action Agency of St. Louis County, Inc. as part of a national re-branding effort to make CAAs more identifiable in the community.

Services are provided to more than 40,000 low-income people in St. Louis County annually.
CAASTLC Members

Board of Directors

Sheila Pearson
Chair
10/17-present

Michael Pendergast
Vice Chair
12/13-present

Basil Rudawsky
Treasurer
12/09-present

Yolanda Austin
08/10-present

Gloria McQueen
Secretary
10/13-present

Rose Cason
06/11-present

Linda Eikerenkoetter
12/14-present

Louis “Lou” Aboussi
12/15-present

Shira Truitt
02/17-present

Joel Vickery
06/17-present

Tyrell Rodgers
04/18-present

Clayton Evans
06/18-present

Geralyn Clifton
10/18-present

Terrie Hart
12/18-present

Community Advisory Council

WIlma Abernathy
Marcus Adams
Bruce Aiton
Delsie Boyd

Michael Crayton
Selette Crews
Alvin Doss

Rose Eichelberger
Sharonica Hardin
Debra Harper-LeBlanc

Michael Kniepman
Kevin Marquitz
Sharon Pace

Monica Peterson
Jay Rhodes
Ted Rice
Shenisia Watson

CAASTLC, Inc. Staff

Administration
Cenia D. Bosman
President and CEO

Michael Clark
Project Manager

Human Resources
Susan E. Moss
Director

Public Relations
Shawndrea Thomas
Director

Contract Compliance
Richard Reinbott
Director

Cedric Jackson
Compliance Manager

Finance
Mark Kurtz
Chief Financial Officer

Pat Bulejski
Service Integration Specialist

Melissa Stumpf
Accounting Specialist

Danielle Tarrant
Senior Accountant

Housing & Support Services
George Robnett
Director

Roger Brown
Technical Coordinator, Weatherization

Janice McKinney Gage
Financial Housing Counselor

Program Administration
Georgie Donahue
Director

Keith Robinson
Associate Director CSBG

Employment Services
James Ingram
Employment Specialist

Seeds of Hope
Jake Smith
Farm Manager

Randy Tempel
Community Garden Coordinator

Case Management
Chris Boyd
Case Management Coordinator

Lori Jones
Case Manager

Mario Malone
Case Manager

Paul Springer
Case Manager

Affordable Care Act
Idalia McNulty
CAC / Health Insurance Enrollment Coordinator

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.
NEW COMMUNITY LOAN CENTER

On May 31, 2018, The Community Action Agency of St. Louis County launched its new Community Loan Center. It’s a new and innovative program and the first of its kind in Missouri. Employees now have the option to borrow money at affordable rates to pay for expenses like medical bills, car repairs and education, through convenient payment plans. In Missouri, where there’s minimal regulation, some lenders charge borrowers the equivalent of more than 400% for short-term loans. Now employees can borrow up to $1,000 at 18% interest, with up to 12 months to pay it back.

NEW SIGNAGE

The new sign on CAASTLC headquarters, dedicated on 8/15/2018 is a symbol of hope for the Community Action Agency of St. Louis County’s mission and future. The logo speaks to the “Promise” of helping those in need, which is the heart of Community Action. The federally funded agency offers a broad range of programs to promote citizen participation, provide utility bill assistance, home weatherization for low-income individuals, and more. The sign became a reality due to a collective and collaborative effort led by CAASTLC’s Community Advisory Council and supporters in the community. The strategically designed sign will empower our customers by providing a persistent, powerful and consistent reminder of hope in the heart of the St. Louis County community. It’s a long-term investment in communicating our mission for St. Louis County residents.

The Community Loan Center works with local businesses to help their employees. Some employers make the program available as part of their benefits package. The employee can apply online. After verification, the loan funds are deposited into the borrower’s bank account.

CAASTLC’s goal is to offer the program to as many employers as possible to help employees overcome financial hardships and gain financial security.

The National Need

44% of Americans cannot cover a $400 unexpected expense

26% of American households don’t have a bank account or access to banking services

On average, 36% of American households are unable to pay for basic needs for three months after the loss of a job or regular income

Our Reach

More than 900 CAAs help people build assets and financial skills

More than 400,000 people were enrolled in CAA budgeting and savings programs

More than 400 CAAs provide tax assistance services with volunteers

Our Annual Impact

800,000 low-income households increased financial assets or skills

CAAs helped low-income families increase their savings by $11.5 million

$459 million in tax credits, like the earned income tax credit and child tax credit, were returned to low-income families through CAA volunteer income tax assistance services.

The Principles that Guide Us:

• Commitment to Community
• Stewardship of Resources
• Excellence in Customer Service
• Dedication to Staff
• Integrity
Statement of Activities

For years ending: 9/30/2016 and 9/30/2017

PUBLIC SUPPORT AND REVENUE
Grants $8,622,688
Donations 38,563
Investment Income 3,135
Other 46,241
Total Public Support and Revenue 8,710,627

EXPENSES
Program Services:
  Weatherization 2,194,636
  Energy Assistance 3,673,086
  Community Services 1,972,401
  Housing/Rental Assistance 199,840
  Other Programs 68,832
  Total Program Services 8,108,795
Supporting Services:
  Management and General 618,203
  Fundraising 7,530
  Total Supporting Services 625,733
Total Expenses 8,734,528
Change in Net Assets -23,901
Fund Balance $2,512,045

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

9/30/2016 Actual

9/30/2017 Actual

Grants $8,497,029
Donations 82,459
Investment Income 3,847
Other 239,629
Total Public Support and Revenue 8,822,964

Program Services:
  Weatherization 2,078,418
  Energy Assistance 4,146,676
  Community Services 2,042,881
  Housing/Rental Assistance 57,164
  Other Programs 0
  Total Program Services 8,325,139
Supporting Services:
  Management and General 516,457
  Fundraising 9,905
  Total Supporting Services 526,362
Total Expenses 8,851,501
Change in Net Assets -28,537
Fund Balance $2,483,508
Program Participation Results

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

27,502

Individuals and families with low incomes received emergency assistance from CAASTLC.

ECONOMIC ASSETS ENHANCEMENT AND UTILIZATION

2,264

Households with low incomes achieved an increase in financial assets or financial skills as a result of CAASTLC assistance.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND EMPOWERMENT OPPORTUNITIES

13,970

Community Resources and opportunities for people with low incomes were improved and mobilized to engage in activities and advocacy that support their well-being, as a direct result of CAASTLC initiatives.
INDEPENDENT LIVING FOR LOW-INCOME, VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

15,569

Vulnerable individuals with low incomes received services from CAASTLC and secured or maintained an independent living situation as a result.

EMPLOYMENT OR WORK SUPPORTS

12,754

Participants with low incomes in CAASTLC employment initiatives obtained supports that reduced or eliminated barriers to initial or continuous employment, acquired a job, obtained an increase in employment income, or achieved “living wage” employment and benefits.

CHILD AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

2,048

Infants, children, youth, parents, and other individuals participated in developmental or enrichment programs facilitated by CAASTLC and achieved program goals.
The latest 2017 U.S. Census Bureau statistics show that 9.8% of St. Louis County citizens live in poverty, about 96,000 people. In 2010 two communities, Spanish Lake and Wellston, were designated as areas of “extreme poverty,” something that did not exist in St. Louis County in 2000.

What does poverty look like?
If a single parent with one child works full time receiving minimum wage ($7.85/hour) in 2018, the family would earn $16,328 annually and remain under the poverty line ($16,460 for a family of two).
We gratefully acknowledge our 50th Anniversary sponsors and friends who share our Vision and support our Mission. We sincerely thank them for their assistance in helping us achieve our goals.

**Silver Sponsors**

![Spire](image1.png)  
![First Bank](image2.png)

**Copper Sponsors**

![CIBC](image3.png)  
![HealthCare](image4.png)  
![Midwest BankCentre](image5.png)  
![James Jewell](image6.png)

**Partners**

![St. Louis Community Credit Union](image7.png)  
![Christian Hospital](image8.png)  
![Snelling](image9.png)  
![Busey Bank](image10.png)

Maxine Clark & Robert Fox, Clark-Fox Family Foundation of the St. Louis Community Foundation

Kimberly Jade Norwood

**Friends**

Mike Batisto / Bellefontaine Neighbors / Deborah Johnson / Missouri CAN

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Highlights from our 50th Anniversary Celebration!
Spotlight on Success: Eric Harris

Eric Harris is living his dream. The 26-year-old is working as a model and outreach specialist for Better Family Life in St. Louis, but that wasn’t always the case. In December 2014, Eric was incarcerated after a run-in with police that ended with assault and gun charges. After serving a year in prison, he contacted CAASTLC for help and signed up for the anger management program. Eric finished the anger management program within 90 days and signed up for more services, including Step Up to Leadership. He says his Case Manager, Mario Malone, continued to help lead him to a path of success. Eric says young people who are on the verge of illegal activity should find something they are passionate about and focus on that. During his time at CAASTLC, Eric has sharpened his interpersonal, job search and interview skills and is now gainfully employed. With his entrepreneurial spirit in mind, he’s working to start a line of food trucks. Eric also wants to be an advocate for young people around the world by sharing his story of rising from the ashes of street life.

“Reach inside of yourself to find out what you can do naturally and can be passionate about.”

Our Vision

Healthy families thriving in their community free from poverty and social exclusion

A wide range of opportunities and accessibility to education, healthcare, careers, and safe, affordable, energy efficient housing

Inclusive communities that sustain economic opportunities and business growth

Natural resources protected and sustained for the future

Our Mission

The mission of CAASTLC, Inc. is to end poverty.
We are committed to helping the families and communities of St. Louis County prevent the conditions of poverty for present and future generations.

Helping People, Changing Lives

This project is funded at 80% at $800 by federal funds and 20% at $200 by nongovernmental sources for a total amount of $1,000. The federal funds are received from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) provided by the Missouri Department of Social Services Family Support Division. This project was prepared with the support of funds through the U.S. Department of Energy and the Missouri Department of Economic Development-Division of Energy. However, any opinions, findings, conclusions or recommendation expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of U.S. Department of Energy or the Missouri Department of Economic Development-Division of Energy.