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Dear Friends,

What does it take to move an individual or family to a place of economic stability and security? What does it take to create and build adequate social and financial capital to get back up when life knocks you down?

At Community Action, we believe it takes all of us … the entire community working together with shared vision and purpose. Through advocacy, effective resource allocation, collaboration, investing in staff capacity, and leveraging local, state and national expertise … we deliver client centered services to generate social and economic progress for struggling families. 2019 was a fast-paced year at Community Action of Allegan County, we implemented new programs and enhanced our current services to address the causes and conditions of poverty.

Through continued partnership with USDA, the Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan, and Allegan County Commission on Aging, over 3,500 households at the greatest risk for food insecurity and health disparities, were provided nutritional supports necessary to thrive.

We grew our Dual Community Development Program (DCDP), graduating more than 38 students from the Pre-Apprentice Certification Training (PACT) program, providing a path to employment and family sustaining wage in the building trades and construction industry. In this report, you will read the story of Roger and Michelle Bird, a family whose life was transformed by the build and purchase of the first DCDP home in the City of Allegan.

Addressing issues of financial literacy was also a focus. With support from Allegan County United Way, we launched a family centered financial coaching program. As a component of our Early Education Services, 235 families participated in the program which included options for classroom instruction and peer-to-peer skill-building in the areas of credit repair, debt reduction, income maximization, and more. In this report you will meet, Chaela and Bailey, a young family who received individualized support empowering their family to achieve the goal of establishing an emergency savings account.

We are committed to addressing the causes and conditions of poverty—not just its symptoms. We partner with all sectors of the community to take a family centered approach; building the skills needed to achieve and maintain long-term stability. From financial and nutrition classroom education, to individualized case management across our programs we meet our families wherever they are on their journey to a brighter future.

Stability looks different for every person … each child, older adult, individual or family has a unique perspective; a set of life experiences, perceived barriers, and skills to build upon. The success of those we serve translates to success for the entire community. Without you … our friends, community partners, volunteers, and supporters … success would not be possible.

Warmest Regards,

Lisa M. Evans
Executive Director

Mike VanDenBerg
Chairman, Board of Directors
OUR TEAM

Community Action of Allegan County has a tripartite board structure to promote the participation of the entire community in the reduction or elimination of poverty. The Board of Directors consists of elected public officials, private sector representatives and low-income residents.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Michael Van Den Berg  
Board Chairman - Public

Carol Dennis  
Private

Scott Owen  
Public

Dean Kapenga  
Vice Chairman - Public

Mimi Gabriel  
Private

Jim Pitsch  
Public

Lovedia J. Stap  
Treasurer - Private

Linnea Isenhoff  
Client

Nicole Richmond  
Private

Carolyn Jordan  
Secretary - Client

Stacey Lucas-Southwell  
Client

Laurie Schmitt  
Private

Linda Burton-Collier  
Client

Sharon Martin  
Client

Jim Storey  
Public

STAFF LEADERSHIP

Lisa Evans  
Executive Director

Sarah See  
Director of Early Education

Brenda Molendyik  
Chief Financial/Operating Officer
Community Action of Allegan County will serve, advocate, and engage individuals, families and communities to overcome the effects of poverty and encourage self-reliance.

Our Mission

Our Values
Collaboration
Continuous Improvement
Quality Service
Stewardship
Hope
Dignity

Helping People.
Changing Lives.

The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 authorized the formation of local Community Action Agencies as part of the War on Poverty under President Lyndon B. Johnson. Regulated by the federal government, over 1,000 Community Action Agencies exist.
OUR PARTNERS

We express deep gratitude and appreciation for the following organizations and their support.

Allegan Adult Education Network
Allegan Advantage
Allegan Alternative Education
Allegan Area Educational Service Area (AAESA)
Allegan County Area Technical Education Center
Allegan Commission on Aging
Allegan County Community Foundation
Allegan County Community Mental Health
Allegan County Continuum of Care
Allegan County Department of Health & Human Services
Allegan County Health Department
Allegan County Probation Office
Allegan County Senior Services
Allegan County Sheriff
Allegan County Transportation
Allegan County Veterans Services
Allegan Credit Union
Allegan District Library
Allegan Economic Development Commission
Allegan Episcopal Church
Allegan Medical Clinic
Allegan Professional Health Services
Allegan Public Schools
American Red Cross
Americorps
Area Agency on Aging of West Michigan
Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Baraga Manor Apartments
Bethany Christian Services
Bloomingdale Public Schools
Borgess Family Medicine
Borgess Medical Center
Bridges of Hope
Bridgeport Apartments
Center for Women in Transition
Chemical Bank
Christian Neighbors
Church of the Good Shepherd
City of Allegan
CLEAResult
Coats for Kids
Consumers Energy
Dorr Standard
Dorr Township Library
Eric R. Erickson, DDS
East Martin Christian Reformed Church
East Martin Christian Schools
Ely Manor
Feeding America
Fennville Library
Fennville Public Schools
Forever Curious Children’s Museum
Goodwill Industries of Southwest Michigan
Grand Ravine
Great Start Collaborative
Great Start Readiness Program
Gryphon Place
Hand2Hand
Home Builders Association of Michigan
Home Builders Institute
Honor Credit Union
Hopkins Public Schools
Huntington Bank
Intercare
Lakeshore Habitat for Humanity
Lee Township Community Center
Love, INC
Martin Area Resource Center
Martin Library
Martin Public Schools
Mediation Services
Meijer
Metro Health Wayland
Michigan Career and Technical Institute (MCTI)
My Community Dental Centers, Allegan (MCDC)
Michigan Department of Education
Michigan Public Service Commission
Migrant Resource Council
Michigan State Police
Michigan State University (MSU) Extension
Living Waters Community Church
Otsego District Library
Otsego Public Schools
Ottawa Area ISD
Pathways, MI
People Helping People
Perrigo
Plainwell Adult Education
Plainwell Community Schools
Plainwell Library
PNC Bank
Project Hope
Pullman Intercare
Safe Harbor Children’s Advocacy Center
Sherwood Cove
Skilled to Build Foundation
STAR Family Literacy
Sylvia’s Place
The ARC of Allegan County
The Ecology Center
The Right Place
United Way of Allegan County
Van Buren ISD, Project Lean
Village Market
Wayland Ambulance
Wayland Family Dentistry
Wayland Public Schools
West Michigan Works!
Western Michigan University
Woman, Infants, and Children (WIC)
Wightman Associates
Wings of Hope Hospice
WHO WE SERVE

Community Action’s mission is to provide individuals and families in crisis, or those struggling above the poverty line, with essential services to meet basic needs for food, housing, mobility and quality education services; while supporting paths to self-sufficiency and self-reliance. Our services focus on lifting families out of poverty and poverty prevention.

WHAT IS POVERTY?

Poverty is the state or condition in which a person or family lacks the financial resources and daily essentials necessary to enjoy a minimum standard of life or well-being. Poverty status in the United States is assigned to people or families whose annual income and economic security is below a threshold set by the Department of Health and Human Services.

FINANCIAL STABILITY

Our Weatherization Program provides help in stabilizing a family’s budget and minimizing monthly utility expenses.

ACCESS TO HEALTH

Through our child health, dental and development screenings, we help make healthcare more accessible.

SKILLED TRADES

Our Dual Community Development Program provides Pre-Apprenticeship Certified Training (PACT), a nationally accepted certification.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

DCDP students help construct homes that allow low-income families access to affordable and safe housing.

BASIC NEEDS

We provide food programs, emergency utility assistance, transportation, and referrals for families and individuals.

EARLY EDUCATION

In partnership with parents, Head Start and Early Head Start Programs provide valuable education and health services to children and families.

36% of Allegan County residents are considered Asset-Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE).

In other words, over 1/3 of our county is working but still struggle to make ends meet.

- UnitedforAlice.org, 2020
WALK FOR WARMTH

Living without heat is a dangerous reality for many Michigan residents facing utility shut-offs. Choosing between paying the heat bill and buying groceries is a choice no one should have to make. According to Michigan 2-1-1, utility assistance is the number one requested need (29.9%) from callers looking for community resources in Allegan County.

To combat utility shut-offs, Community Action of Allegan County held a Walk for Warmth 5k Run/Walk on Saturday, March 16, 2019. The walk took place at the Lynx Golf Course in Otsego.

Money raised from walker registration and sponsorship support went directly to our Utility Assistance Program. The program assists income eligible households by providing payment for metered and deliverable fuel bills in order to avert a household crisis.

HOLIDAY GIVING

STUFF THE BLUE GOOSE

Through a joint effort with Michigan State Police, gifts are collected from generous shoppers at the Wal-Mart in Plainwell. Due to the generosity of our community members and local businesses we were able to ensure that 177 Allegan County children ages birth to teen had something special awaiting them on Christmas morning!

“ I feel like a kid at Christmas time again! Two very nice ladies brought a big blue bag to my house and it was FULL of gifts for me. Someone spent hours crocheting for me.” —

SENIOR GIFT BAGS

Gift bags were given to 53 seniors who participate in our Home Delivered Meals program. Individuals were chosen by our Senior Services department, who know each participant well because of their daily contact with them through their meal deliveries. Generous donations were made of various items specific to senior needs by the community.
This year’s Hearts and Hands Celebration took place Thursday, October 24th at the Laketown Golf and Conference Center in Saugatuck. The evening featured community partner recognition, a silent auction and the opportunity to support Community Action’s work in alleviating poverty.

**PARTNER AWARDS**

**DORR STANDARD**

Head Start owns a fleet of 15, 30 passenger buses that are used daily to provide transportation to most of our Head Start students. Community Action does not have a garage or mechanic on staff so we utilize community partners. Thankfully for us, Dorr Standard has been our partner over the last several years. Rick Damveld, leading the way, prioritizes our buses when we experience a breakdown, an oil change, or State Police Inspections. Dorr also graciously stores our full fleet over the summer free of charge.

**BRIDGEPORT APARTMENTS**

Dan Camacho, Community Manager at Bridgeport Apartments is not only a valued community partner, he is a Head Start Advocate! Dan has taken it upon himself to identify families living in the apartment complex with children ages birth through five, provided them program collateral and informed them of the benefits in partnering with Head Start. Dan has willingly allowed our team to come onsite to host recruitment events, encouraged participation by knocking on doors, and requested ways he could partner more.

**PARKER HANNIFIN**

Parker Hannifin’s Fluid Systems Connectors Division in Plainwell assisted us with our food distribution program by organizing, bagging and loading the delivery truck. Through their efforts, we were able to efficiently supply hundreds of families with shelf stable food. The team has been an advocate and willing to share their experience and build excitement with others to engage in volunteering with our program.
FINANCIAL STABILITY

Combining the population of households in poverty with ALICE, equals the total population struggling to afford basic needs in our county. Even with at least one person in the household working, 37% of households in Allegan County don’t earn enough to reach the basic survival threshold. Our Weatherization Program provides help in stabilizing a family’s budget and minimizing monthly utility expenses.

ABOUT OUR WEATHERIZATION PROGRAM

The U.S. Department of Energy’s Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) reduces energy costs for low-income households by increasing a home’s energy efficiency while ensuring a family’s health and safety. This program is the single largest residential energy efficiency program in the United States. Our local administration of the WAP supports a national industry; producing new jobs and technologies, while supporting the health and wellness of the most vulnerable families in Allegan County.

OUR IMPACT

- 16 homes safer and more energy efficient
- 185 people received energy efficiency education
- $307 yearly savings per home

16% AVERAGE SAVINGS IN ENERGY COSTS PER HOME.
Last winter Fritz and his wife, Linda, cut a vacation short. They needed to come home and meet with Fritz’s youngest brother, Peter’s neurologist. About five years ago Peter had been seen by a psychiatrist and was diagnosed with agoraphobia. After spending 27 years as a master electrician, Peter was slowly becoming unable to perform his responsibilities and was diagnosed with a fear of crowds. The family never felt comfortable with this diagnosis but trusted the experts, until that day in the neurologist’s office.

After performing an examination as well as an MRI by another doctor, it was determined that Peter had a rare form of frontotemporal dementia. In most cases dementia patients decline on a more or less steady slope, but for Peter it is more of a stair step affair. Fritz and his sister-in-law Kathy spend each day with Peter, anticipating where the next step will take them. Wanting to keep Peter in familiar surroundings, it was important to the family that Peter stay in his home. For that to happen though, his house would need repair.

Peter’s family reached out to Community Action of Allegan County’s Weatherization Assistance Program for help. The program provides free home energy conservation services to low-income households. Services reduce energy use and lower utility bills. To allow Peter to stay in his home, Community Action installed smoke detectors, a smart thermostat, a high efficiency furnace, carbon monoxide detectors in addition to insulating the attic, installing Visqueen on the crawlspace floor to prevent moisture and sealing off the basement with a new door.

Peter would not have been able to stay in his home if it weren’t for Community Action of Allegan County’s Weatherization Program. The family was thrilled with the work. “The work was excellent and the person who actually oversaw and performed the repair tasks was a Godsend.”

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We assist families, individuals and seniors with their basic needs every day through food programs, emergency utility assistance, transportation, outreach and referrals. More than 70% of all calls made to the social services helpline 2-1-1 from our community are for basic needs requests with food, shelter and transportation at the top of the list.

**The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)**
Supplements families and individuals experiencing income challenges by providing emergency food and nutrition assistance. Free food is distributed every 3 months to eligible households.

2,888 HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVED GROCERIES AT OUR QUARTERLY FOOD COMMODITY DAYS.

**Senior Transportation**
Consistent, reliable access to transportation is essential to meet basic needs and ensure quality of life. Our volunteer drivers transport seniors to appointments for medical, legal, nutritional or social purposes.

VOLUNTEER DRIVERS PROVIDED 46 SENIORS DOOR TO DOOR TRANSPORTATION AND 633 RIDES.

**Senior Project Fresh**
Aimed at helping older adults eat healthier as they age by providing free nutrition counseling and coupons that can be exchanged for fresh fruits, vegetables, and other healthy foods sold at local farmers markets and roadside stands.

151 SENIORS RECEIVED PROJECT FRESH SERVICES.

**Home Delivered Meals**
Nutritious hot, frozen or cold meals are delivered to homebound seniors. Our drivers provide needed contact and monitor the health and welfare of seniors on a routine basis.

89,032 MEALS WERE DELIVERED TO 474 HOMEBOUND SENIORS.

**Early Education Nutrition**
Head Start and Early Head Start provide healthy, nutritious meals in the classrooms inclusive of breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snack.

75,680 MEALS WERE SERVED TO CHILDREN AGED 0-5 IN THE 2018-2019 SCHOOL YEAR.

**Crisis Utility Assistance**
Assists income eligible households by providing payment of metered and deliverable fuel costs in order to support health, wellness and financial stability.

155 FAMILIES RECEIVED CRISIS UTILITY ASSISTANCE.

3,746 HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVED OUTREACH INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SERVICES.
ACCESS TO HEALTH

Low-income families with insurance struggle to find accepting providers and face challenges to pay for care. Allegan County has a low number of primary care physicians and dentists per capita with 17% of the population having no healthcare provider and 12% having no access due to cost.

CHILD HEALTH SCREENINGS

Our Early Education Programs provide development screenings and medical exams, including vision, hearing, physicals, hemoglobin, and blood lead screenings and dental care. Screenings allow us to identify potential issues early and refer students to their medical provider for follow-up care. In addition to medical referrals, our Early Education Children receive medical records assistance and appointment reminders.

372 children received development screenings
293 children received all medical screenings
246 children received dental care

40+ STUDENTS WERE IDENTIFIED AS NEEDING FOLLOW-UP CARE AS A RESULT OF OUR DENTAL AND VISION SCREENINGS.
EARLY EDUCATION

Early care and education is vital to long term educational success in children. The barriers preventing parents from receiving quality childcare and early education are attributed to social and economic conditions facing families. 22% of children under the age of 5 in Allegan are living in poverty.

Our Early Education Services programs provide quality comprehensive education and health services to over 350 children in Allegan County. Most of our sites provide transportation to assist families who are unable to transport their children to the program. Both programs are offered to families tuition free.

Early Education Services received a fiscal review through the new Federal monitoring protocol. Both programs were 100% compliant in all content areas. Results for CLASS (an observation instrument developed to assess classroom quality and child/adult interaction in preschool through third grade) were above the 2015 national program average in three domains; emotional and instructional support and classroom organization.

LAST YEAR WE SERVED 373 CHILDREN.

- 62 students had a diagnosed disability and received additional supports
- 96% of Early Head Start Students reached educational proficiency
- 93% of Head Start Students reached educational proficiency
- 139,645 miles traveled and 178 children transported by our buses
- 328 FAMILIES SERVED
  - 84% of parents had a high school degree or higher.
  - 57% were single parent families
  - and 43% were two parent households.
- 311 FAMILIES RECEIVED TRAINING
  - Including adult education, mental health, health education, parenting education and crisis intervention.

92% OF ELIGIBLE CHILDREN WERE AT OR BELOW POVERTY GUIDELINES.

Additionally...
- 2% were foster children
- 1% received public assistance
- 4% were homeless
- ...and just 1% were over-income.
CREATING A LIFE OF INDEPENDENCE

One afternoon Chaela and her daughters happened to be at Wayland Park the same day as a CAAC Early Head Start Playgroup. She noticed the different activities the group was doing and immediately became interested. After learning more, she decided to complete an application for the Early Head Start Home Based program. Once completing the approval process, her children Indigo and Wren were enrolled in the program.

The family has participated in the weekly home visits using the Parents as Teachers and Conscious Discipline curricula. They also attend playgroups throughout the county. Along with her partner Bailey, Chaela works hard to accomplish the goals set for themselves. Chaela’s first self-identified goal was to obtain a stable job making more money. Chaela accomplished this goal and works for Perrigo full-time, with a benefits package.

Another goal set by the family was money management. Bailey and Chaela use a budget workbook and sit down together regularly to discuss upcoming bills. They started to track their spending habits and have regained control of their finances. While they are still working on paying off student loans, most of their debt has been paid off and bills are being paid on time, eliminating late fees. They use a shopping list and use coupons to eliminate unnecessary spending.

The family now has an emergency savings fund and feel more secure with their finances. “The program doesn’t only help your kids learn. It offers so much more! You have help finding so many resources whether that is help with paying your bills or parenting classes,” said Chaela.

Both Bailey and Chaela share responsibilities in teaching their children. They read to the girls and set aside time for learning every day. They have learned that you can make everyday activities fun and a learning opportunity. By following a routine, the girls’ behavior improved as they now know what is expected and have something to look forward to.

Their Home Visitor, Lisa Stanford looks forward to their weekly visits together. “One of the best feelings for me is going to their home and having the girls run up to the door smiling to greet me, ready to learn and play. It is an honor to partner with Chaela and Bailey”.

The program doesn’t only help your kids learn. It offers so much more! You have help finding so many resources whether that is help with paying your bills or parenting classes.”
The Dual Community Development Program (DCDP) is rooted in community strength and commitment to workforce, economic, and community development. From 2000 to 2009, Michigan lost 43% of its skilled trades workforce. This equates to roughly 60,000 workers exiting the industry without replacement. With this many roles left unfilled there are numerous opportunities for entry level and skilled individuals who are interested in the construction workforce. This deficit of skilled trades workers has directly affected the availability of affordable housing in many communities. DCDP seeks to address both issues with its unique blend of training and community service.

The duality of this initiative, Skilled Trades Education and Affordable Housing, are the key pillars of the Dual Community Development Program, an innovative new project created by Community Action of Allegan County. With program goals meant to engage adult learners in hands on skilled trades training, pathway graduates of the program to high demand living wage employment opportunities, and by using construction training as labor in building affordable housing that is accessible by low to moderate income households the Dual Community Development Program successes will be wins for communities across Allegan County as the program promotes Community and Economic Development.
SKILLED TRADES

The core of the DCDP is the Pre-Apprenticeship Certified Training (PACT), a Department of Labor recognized, nationally accepted certification and educational curriculum that prepares students for careers in the building trades. The program is 20% classroom training, and 80% hands-on learning which focuses on actual home construction and remodeling projects.

As the building trades experiences a continued significant shortage of skilled workers, and a high demand for housing and construction, strong employment opportunities in jobs with above living wage compensation are abundant. Students are prepared to meet this industry need by an in depth classroom learning opportunity coupled with hands-on field training in constructing energy efficient affordable homes or completing home rehabilitation projects in Allegan County.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

While receiving their training, PACT students assist in the construction of affordable housing units in Allegan County. Units allow a family of four earning just over $53,000 a year, or what is considered a “survival budget” in Allegan County, to have a choice between inadequate, unhealthy, and unsafe housing or an affordable new safe beginning to meet their housing needs.

The program’s goal of a 100 days from project start to finish, allows families to find stability in their housing situation and work toward sustainability and self-sufficiency as soon as possible.
BUILDING A BRIGHTER FUTURE

Roger and Michele Bird met while serving in the Air Force, stationed in West Germany prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall. It changed their lives, they grew up and came to faith while serving their country. After graduating from college in Ohio, Roger and Michele moved to Detroit, and then to the west side of the state. The opportunity to move to Allegan came in the form of starting their church in 2008. Allegan is by far their favorite city. Michele says; “It’s a little city that doesn’t know its a little city”.

In 2017, Roger and Michele Bird became fed up with working just to pay their mortgage. They knew that if they could downsize to something more aligned with their life goals and affordable, they’d be able to live so much more. In the fall of 2018, The Bird’s met with Community Action of Allegan County (CAAC) and found the solution they were looking for through our Dual Community Development Program (DCDP).

With the Bird’s desire for a highly-functional home that speaks to their willingness and passion to positively impact the community, it was apparent how the Birds and CAAC’s visions dovetailed together, and construction on the first ever DCDP House began, given the nickname, “The Bird House.”

These visions partnered with the experience of Macatawa Homes’ General Contractor for the project, Matt Zomerlei, Owner/Operator of Macatawa Homes and a Marine Corps Veteran, with over 25 years of industry experience. Matt became involved in the program after hearing about the mission of DCDP. Matt sees affordable housing as a necessary piece of the construction industry. “I want to live in a world where everyone has a decent place to live. It doesn’t seem right to live in a first world nation with continuing third world challenges.”

DCDP’s ingenuity and fresh take on addressing affordable housing excites Matt. “It can be frustrating as a builder at times to see that we continue to apply the same methods we have for years in housing affordability and expect different results.”

The Bird House began construction in January and was completed in May 2019. Both Roger and Michele agree, “It’s a great dream! To actually see that lives can be changed by creating viable solutions like affordable housing and promoting a healthy and safe community. We can be part of the solution! This is what happens when a community comes together!”

Lives can be changed by creating viable solutions like affordable housing and promoting a healthy and safe community. We can be part of the solution! This is what happens when a community comes together!”
## FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

### REVENUE

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<th>Source</th>
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<th>Percentage</th>
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<td>Federal Grants</td>
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<td>Local Grants</td>
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<td>State Grants</td>
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<td>Private Contribution</td>
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<td>Program Income</td>
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### OPERATION EXPENSES

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<td>Education Programs</td>
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<td>Health Programs</td>
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<td>Housing Programs</td>
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<td>Administrative Costs</td>
<td>$292,305</td>
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<td>Community Programs</td>
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