



BUILDING NEW BEGINNINGS

Action for a Better Community, Inc. | 2018–2019 Annual Report





MISSION STATEMENT

Action for a Better Community is a Community Action Agency that promotes and provides opportunities for low-income individuals and families to become self-sufficient.



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.

HISTORY

Action for a Better Community, Inc. is one of nearly 1,000 nationally recognized Community Action Agencies (CAAs), established under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 to fight America's War on Poverty. CAAs serve 98% of our nation's cities and counties and are a primary source of support for the more than 38 million Americans living in poverty in both rural and urban areas. ABC continuously emphasizes Community Action's identity in our area as a viable, working solution to moving people out of poverty



2018 HIGHLIGHTS

2018 HIGHLIGHTS



3,028 unduplicated individuals and **2,845** families were served, benefiting from multiple programs and services.



220 individuals received training certificates and obtained pre-employment skills and competencies required for employment.



196 individuals enrolled in adult basic education and high school equivalency classes.



499 individuals obtained permanent employment.



55 unemployed youth obtained employment to gain skills or income.



ABC (through its Ontario County partner, Catholic Charities of the Finger Lakes) helped **14,266** individuals obtain food assistance, and helped **106** individuals with rent payments.



152 individuals received income tax preparation assistance, which resulted in tax refunds that generated **\$374,920** in the community.



304 families benefited from weatherization, energy conservation services, and home maintenance services. **76** of these households documented a reduction in their energy costs.



20 staff have Home Energy Professional certifications.



256 partnerships were established or maintained, mobilizing and leveraging resources to provide a wide range of much-needed services to low-income people.



463 families learned and exhibited improved family functioning skills.



1,050 children were up to date on all possible immunizations, medical and dental care.



1,069 children participated in ABC's and its partner agencies' Early Head Start/Head Start preschool activities to develop school readiness skills.



30 certified teachers in the program, and **16** teachers with bachelor's degrees.



399 individuals completed substance abuse screenings, and **310** received substance abuse counseling.



338 individuals demonstrated improved mental and behavioral health and well-being.



54 individuals successfully completed ABC's alcohol and substance abuse treatment program.



18 families purchased homes using individual development account (IDA) contributions through ABC's Ontario County partner PathStone.



DIVISION FOR YOUTH & COMMUNITY SERVICES

“ THE DIVISION HELPS THE COMMUNITY BY DEVELOPING SERVICES AND PROGRAMS THAT HELP THEM LIVE *better today, so they can have a better tomorrow.* ”

The division’s mission is to provide a variety of social, human, educational, health, and community services to individuals who live in impoverished conditions and communities within Monroe and Ontario counties. The division works collaboratively with businesses, governmental and human services agencies, and community residents to maximize its collective impact for the purposes of promoting opportunities for growth and attainment of self-sufficiency.

- We serve youth who are susceptible to engaging in risky behaviors that could result in negative consequences. Our **High-Impact HIV/STD Prevention program’s** overall goal is to increase access to HIV and STD testing, treatment, and healthcare services to ensure young people maintain healthy lives. To date, in partnership with Trillium Health, 120 youth have been tested for HIV and/or STDs, and 70 youth have linked to screening, treatment and other prevention services.

- Through the **Summer Youth Employment program** we are able to see young people dive into their first work experience. They learn the skills needed to obtain and retain employment while advocating for the betterment of their community through meaningful service learning projects. We have witnessed the amazing character and creativity that young people possess in the city of Rochester, giving them a platform to express their thoughts, ideas, passions, and future aspirations.

- **Strategies 2 Success** allows young people to learn about their own gifts and talents in a youth family atmosphere, while they advocate for themselves to be the best version of who they are. The young people in our program have seen a rise in their GPAs, their family relationships have been restored, and they understand their worth and individuality. These young people have also witnessed a community of school staff, ABC advocates, caring fine arts instructors, and family members that are unified in the interest of their future.



In addition, individuals can acquire the education and skills that will lead them to a higher level of self-sufficiency.

- Through our **FOCUS program** families receive job readiness training, support, and coaching services in preparation for meaningful employment that pays a living wage.

- Our **High School Equivalency program** has been successful in not only preparing individuals to get their HSE degree, but we also provide TABE and TASC testing. Staff provide tutoring services to those individuals who require additional support to pass the exam.

- **Bridges to Success** is an adult-mentoring program that connects individuals with a mentor who works with them to offer supportive services while they work on meeting their everyday living needs and pursuing their goal of economic prosperity.
- **ROC-HPOG*** provides supportive services and access to training and education opportunities that lead to meaningful employment in the healthcare field. Poor or insufficient education can be a barrier to achieving meaningful employment. ROC-HPOG focuses on assisting individuals to access the resources necessary to equip them with training and career development opportunities for healthcare occupations that are in high demand. ROC-HPOG is composed of a collaborative partnership that includes institutions of higher education and community-based organizations, all working together to address the needs of participants enrolled in the program.
- **New Directions** is a full outpatient substance abuse clinic dedicated to changing lives by meeting the needs of individuals who are impacted by alcohol and drugs. New Directions offers services by culturally diverse and certified staff, who are reflective of the population served by the clinic. Family counseling and relapse prevention services are also offered. The clinic is dedicated to providing holistic and evidence-based practices that address the comprehensive needs of individuals and families. The clinic's motto is "When you enter our doors, your life begins a New Direction," and the staff live up to that motto every single day.

In 2018, we opened an outpatient clinic on the northeast side of Rochester to address the opioid epidemic that is ravaging our communities. Northeast Rochester has a very high incidence of drug sales and use.

- **The Action Front Center** empowers individuals to make healthy choices that will prevent the spread of HIV, hepatitis, and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and achieve optimal health and quality of life. We are proud of our success in delivering health education and services in the community since 1988, incorporating a peer educator/leadership development model. We develop grassroots leadership and consumer voices, mobilize community collaboration, and advocate for better health and social justice.
 - **Client Services:** Provides education and skills development, counseling, and support services to people living with an HIV diagnosis by helping them maintain their health, achieve viral suppression to prevent further transmission of the disease, and develop new skills that engage them in community activities.

*HPOG is supported by Grant 90FX0055-01-00 from the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The contents of this document are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of HHS. HPOG is a study funded by the federal government which is being conducted to determine how these training opportunities help people improve their skills and find better jobs. During the study, all new eligible applicants will be selected by lottery to participate in these training opportunities. Not all eligible applicants will be selected to participate in these opportunities.

- **Community Mobilization Initiative:** Actively and persistently mobilizes the necessary leadership and voices among those from highly impacted communities to increase awareness and address HIV and related stigma.
- **Prevention Education Services:** Offers health education, HIV, hepatitis, and STD risk-reduction counseling, skills development, and support services using science-based behavioral models. Trained peer educators help deliver community education and outreach services.

The Action Front Center has helped many people living with HIV, who at one time did not envision a future, to realize their potential and develop leadership and employment skills. Today they are employed throughout the community and are involved in community and statewide organizations, where they have a voice.

“WHEN YOU ENTER OUR DOORS,
YOUR LIFE BEGINS A
new
direction.”





We have a strong belief that community-wide change can only happen if residents are fully engaged in developing the strategies needed to make change happen. The Community Development Department's attention is on the collective impact ABC can have in the city of Rochester. Crime, housing, and poverty are significant barriers to neighborhood and resident stability. The department addresses these barriers with the following:

- **Save Our Youth (SOY)** works with individuals at high risk of either becoming a victim of or perpetrating an act of violence. Initially, the program was funded by the NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services to provide services in northeast Rochester. In 2017, ABC received additional funding to replicate its services in southwest Rochester. The program employs four outreach workers whose role is to engage young people in case management services to get them connected to education and employment to reduce violence.
- **Housing Services** provides residents with access to housing grant opportunities through the city of Rochester. ABC facilitates the intake process for applicants who need financial assistance to address housing conditions, including replacing/repairing nonworking furnaces, installing new roofs, and remediating lead hazards. These programs give community residents opportunities to address home maintenance needs they wouldn't be able to accomplish on their own because of the financial cost involved.
- **Community Building in Action** works with residents on the grassroots level to achieve their goals toward improving their neighborhood and local business community. CBA has a transformative effect by developing the ability and capacity of local residents to not only identify needed change, but affect it. Residents and business owners working with CBA demonstrate increased leadership, organizational, and advocacy skills. These newly developed skills have been used on a range of community efforts, from getting uniform signage in the business corridors to installing speed bumps on local streets to improve safety. Residents have transformed vacant lots into community green spaces to hold movie nights, children events, and gatherings of residents in the neighborhood.



A MESSAGE FROM **JEROME UNDERWOOD,** ABC'S CEO:

This past year, our community lost a true pioneer, Constance Mitchell. Mrs. Mitchell was the first person of color elected to the Monroe County Board of Supervisors and was, at the time, one of the highest-ranking African American female elected officials in the entire nation. Most important for us here at Action for a Better Community, Mrs. Mitchell was one of our founders. ABC was born at her dining room table when she hosted a small group of her peers in response to the underlying causes of the unrest of July 1964.

Entering my second year as president and CEO, I am reflecting on just how critical ABC has been to the life of our community. In the 1970s and 1980s, James McCuller grew ABC into a powerful voice for justice and equity in the greater Rochester community. During that time, two significant organizations grew out of ABC: the Veteran's Outreach Center and Foodlink. Beginning in the 1990s and for a quarter century, James Norman took ABC into a new era of growth, innovation, and partnership-building. As a result of his leadership, ABC is now a premier human services provider, an important convener of several community partnerships, and national leader in the community action network.

As we continue to look forward, an obvious question emerges: where does ABC go from here? The answer to that question lies in our history, in our DNA as an agency. ABC will continue to grow and will continue to be a vocal champion for the entire community. With education being an ever more important pathway to success, ABC will continue

*“Leadership is not only what we do,
IT IS WHO WE ARE.”*

to meet this critical need by expanding its adult education/high school equivalency programming, its before- and after-school programming for youth, and continuing to operate the best early childhood programs (Head Start and Early Head Start) in Monroe County.

We will also continue to strengthen our leadership activities across the community. Whether it is advocating for more citizen leadership, greater equity, or faster action to address the policy and systemic changes needed to counteract the disparities found in employment, healthcare, housing or education, ABC will continue to be in the forefront. Leadership is not only what we do, it is who we are.

If there is anything our past tells us, it is that ABC has always found a way to respond to community challenges with new ideas and fresh energy. Building new beginnings—for our families, for our community—is what makes ABC vital. And it is only because of the efforts of those who came before us that we can continue our work for those who will lead tomorrow.

JEROME UNDERWOOD,
ABC's CEO



A MESSAGE FROM **BRAD RYE,** ABC'S BOARD CHAIR:

During the past year, ABC's Board of Directors made a momentous decision: we sold two buildings and relocated those staff—approximately 100 in all—to a new location at 400 West Avenue. This change was not an easy one for our organization. It involved major real estate and financial transactions, logistics for a move and the associated design and facility work, major disruptions of staff as they had to pack and unpack offices and common spaces, and a significant change for customers who had to adjust their schedules to the new location. After months of planning and hard work, the moves have been completed. The Board of Directors could not be more proud of the staff for their commitment and hard work during this transition.

In a sense, this past year has marked an important new beginning for ABC. A new CEO completing his first year, a new space for services, and several new initiatives that have taken root or are about to grow. This is what the Board of Directors is most proud of: ABC's ability to constantly evolve as the community's needs change.

*“ABC is a place where there is always hope
for a better tomorrow because ABC is*
ALWAYS BUILDING NEW BEGINNINGS.”

Whether it was creating a new high school equivalency program several years ago, a new treatment clinic to respond to the opioid crisis a couple of years ago, or the emerging efforts across the community to integrate human services in a more effective way, ABC is always ready to meet the next challenge.

Over the past 55 years, hundreds of community members have volunteered their time, talent, and treasure to help ABC build new beginnings for the community. I thank all of those who have so generously given of themselves to this great organization, and I invite you to do the same. ABC is a place where there is always hope for a better tomorrow because ABC is always building new beginnings.

BRAD RYE,
ABC's Board Chair

SPECIAL THANK YOU TO THE INDIVIDUAL SUPPORTERS OF THE MARIETTA G. AVERY WALK FOR SELF-SUFFICIENCY

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EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

Little Voices, Big Aspirations!

ABC Head Start* serves preschool children and their families to ensure that all children are school ready and that all families can achieve their aspirations.

Quality early-education programs, such as ABC's, have proven to contribute to positive outcomes not only during the preschool years, but beyond. Studies have shown that a strong preschool education results in increased high school and college graduation rates, lower teen pregnancy rates, and other positive outcomes. The economic advantage that higher education brings is evidenced by the comparatively low unemployment rates and higher incomes of college graduates when compared to individuals without a high school diploma.

ABC's Head Start program is one of the highest-performing programs in the country, as documented by the Office of Head Start's annual Performance Indicator Report and the Children's Institute's annual RECAP report. RECAP shows that ABC Head Start children enter the program slightly behind their peers in cognitive, social, and emotional development, but by the time they leave Head Start and enter kindergarten, their development is assessed at levels at or above other children who have participated in quality early-education services.

ABC recognizes that a strong early-education program combined with support for parents will contribute to a stronger community. Family Navigators work with each family to achieve goals in areas such as economic self-sufficiency, housing, education, and employment. Each family's aspirations are the driving force for the program's family support services.

Health Navigators work with every family to assure that all children receive the medical and dental services that are needed for a healthy child—a child ready to learn and thrive. ABC assures that all children have insurance and a medical and dental home. Lead testing has been provided on site for children, and a pro bono dentist provides dental screenings at all centers.

ABC Head Start is family-centered and designed to foster a parent's role as the principal influence in their children's development. Parents are encouraged to become involved in all aspects of Head Start, including direct involvement in policy and program decisions.

*Head Start is used to refer to all of ABC's Early Education services—Early Head Start, Head Start and Universal Pre-Kindergarten, and Expanded Pre-Kindergarten.



ABC directly manages a home-based program and six Head Start centers:

- Clifford Avenue Center
- Hart Street Center
- Hudson Avenue Center
- Jefferson Avenue Center
- Joseph Avenue Center
- North Street Center

In addition, ABC contracts with the Ibero-American Action League and Volunteers of America for Head Start and Early Head Start services.

ABC's Head Start services are financially supported by the Office of Head Start, the Rochester City School District, Child and Adult Care Food Program, and the Child Passenger Safety Program. The program also benefits from the volunteer efforts of hundreds of members of the community, including Head Start parents.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Forming and strengthening community partnerships is an integral aspect of ABC's Head Start program. A fundamental goal of Head Start is to bring together community resources to support children and families in ways that are responsive to their needs and to include Head Start families in decision-making about these services. Each of the organizations below has worked directly with ABC in creating partnerships that benefit the families we serve.

American Red Cross

Anthony Jordan Health Center

Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Bivona Child Advocacy Center

Boards of Cooperative Educational Services

Regional Early Childhood Division Center

Catholic Family Center

Child Care Council

Children's Institute

Consumer Credit Counseling

East Avenue Dentistry

First Books

Homeless Services Network

Mental Health Association of Rochester

Monroe County Department of Public Health

March of Dimes

Nazareth College Department of Audiology and School of Education

New York State Oral Health Technical Assistance Center

Rochester City School District

Rochester General Hospital

Rochester Hearing and Speech

Rochester Museum and Science Center

Rochester Public Library

The Children's Agenda

The City of Rochester

The Strong National Museum of Play

The YMCA

University of Rochester's Department of Dentistry

Wilson Commencement Park



ENERGY CONSERVATION PROGRAM

The Energy Conservation Program (ECP) reduces fuel expenditures for low-income households. Services include furnace efficiency testing, furnace tune-ups when efficiency is below 75%, and installing high-efficiency models when warranted. Repairs and replacements also include heating and/or hot water tanks, in addition to installing perimeter, attic and/or wall insulation. Numerous air-sealing services are typically offered, and some eligibility is for window and door repair and replacement. ABC has attained the highest Building Performance Institute (BPI) certifications.

EMPOWER PROGRAM

ECP coordinates the Empower program with Weatherization services. Empower is a fee-for-service program, funded through the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority. The focus of the Empower program is to lower electric consumption for low-income households. Empower funding allows us to provide more services to our eligible households, while generating unrestricted funds for the agency.

ROCHESTER SAFE AND EFFICIENT HOMES INITIATIVE

In 2013, New York State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman allotted \$1 million to help city of Rochester homeowners live in safer, healthier, and more energy-efficient homes. This was the beginning of the Rochester Safe and Efficient Homes Initiative (RSEHI). The program's goals are to maximize funding available to income-qualified homeowners in the city of Rochester to make their homes more energy efficient and safe from environmental hazards, such as lead. Additionally, develop a network of service providers for home efficiency and environmental safety and create a sustainable model for safe and efficient homes. Action for a Better Community and the Rochester Safe and Efficient Homes Initiative have collaborated on the following:

The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) Heating Equipment Clean and Tune, and Repair and Replacement Benefits

HEAP is a federally funded energy program intended to provide assistance to low-income households to meet their immediate home energy needs. The Heating Equipment Clean and Tune benefit is for eligible households to receive energy-efficiency services, which include the cleaning of primary heating equipment and may also include chimney cleaning, minor repairs, and installation of carbon monoxide detectors or programmable thermostats if necessary.

Heating Equipment Repair and Replacement (HERR) benefits are available to assist HEAP-eligible households with the cost of repairing or replacing the applicant's primary heating equipment. The applicant must own their dwelling, and the heating equipment must have been documented by a participating vendor to be inoperable or unsafe, and in need of repair and/or replacement. Heating equipment replacement is also available, under limited circumstances and with medical documentation, for systems that are directly detrimental to a household member's health. Documentation must be in writing from a physician or physician's assistant, and must specify the reason(s) why the current system is directly detrimental to the household member's health and safety.

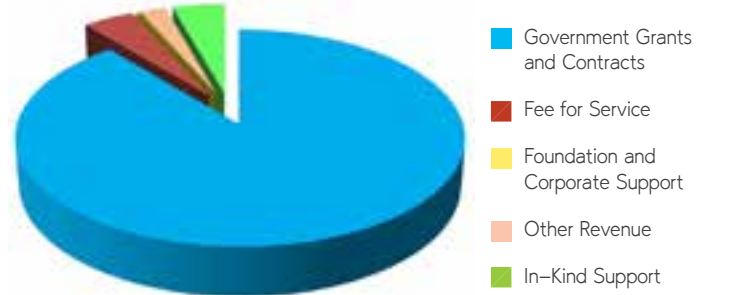
HEAP Cooling Assistance Benefit

The cooling assistance benefit may buy and install an air conditioner or a fan for your home. Your household is allowed one or the other, and the price cannot be more than \$800 with installation. Like HEAP funding, cooling assistance funds are limited and are distributed on a first-come-first-served basis. The applicant must be a U.S. citizen or a qualified alien with a documented medical condition that is aggravated by heat. The applicant must also meet certain income guidelines.



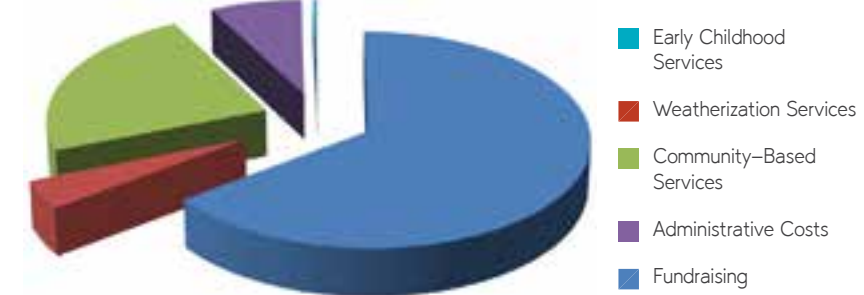
ABC'S FINANCIALS |

Action for a Better Community, Inc. Financial Information for Fiscal Year Ended September 30, 2018



Revenues

Government Grants and Contracts	23,638,940
Fee for Service	1,147,800
Foundation and Corporate Support	14,093
Other Revenue	583,393
In-Kind Support	1,162,183
Total Revenue	26,546,409



Expenses

Early Childhood Services	17,121,879
Weatherization Services	1,123,248
Community-Based Services	6,197,576
Administrative Costs	1,943,812
Fundraising	87,481
Total Expenses	26,473,996
Change in Net Deficiency	72,413

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*Contributions made through United Way donor designations.

All gifts to Action for a Better Community make a difference. This list reflects contributions made January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2018. Donations made after these dates will be acknowledged in the next Annual Report. We apologize if we have omitted any supporters or listed anyone incorrectly.

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Devon Williams

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(Currently Serving)

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Ruby Austin, Assistant to the President
Loretta Kruger, VP for Early Childhood Services
Patricia Lloyd, CCAP, Chief Operating Officer
Naimah Sierra, CCAP, VP for Youth and Community Services
Aaron Wicks, Ph.D., CCAP, VP for Planning and Evaluation
Eric Binazeski, CPA, Acting Director of Finance

Division of Youth and Community Services

Diane Bardeen, Youth Services Department Director
Brian Kelsey, ROC–HPOG Program Director
Linda King–Bronner, LMSW, CASAC, Health Services Department Director
Shawn Futch, Focus on Self–Sufficiency Program Director
Patricia Terziani, Action Front Center Program Director
Mary Terziani, Youth Prevention Services Manager
Steve Turner, Associate Vice President

Early Childhood Services Division/Head Start

Mustapha Berhan, Building Administrator—Hart Street
Regina Bradley, School Readiness Manager
Joan Favata, Building Administrator—Hudson Avenue
Andre Harper, Family Services Manager
Jannie Hill, Building Administrator—Jefferson Avenue
Sharon Minigan, Associate Vice President
Peter Ochi, Building Administrator—North Street
Asfa Sill, Building Administrator—Joseph Avenue
Tracy Tierney, Health and Nutrition Manager
Priscilla Wilson, Building Administrator—Clifford Avenue
Linda Wright, Education and Disabilities Manager

Energy Conservation Program

Nathaniel Sheppard, Program Director

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Christopher Bell, Communications Director
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