



2021 ANNUAL REPORT

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.

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.

A MESSAGE FROM JEROME UNDERWOOD, **ABC'S PRESIDENT & CEO**

I opened last year's annual report message with an African proverb related to the theme of that report. This year's theme, Building Resilience: Withstand—Adapt—Recover, reminds me of another proverb: "When the root is strong, there is no concern in the storm." It is an understatement to acknowledge that the past year has been guite tumultuous. Despite living by last year's theme of being stronger together, we have been thoroughly tested. Some of our best-laid plans have had to be set aside.

> The COVID–19 pandemic delivered body blow after body blow to the entire world. Certainly, the most vulnerable among us felt the thunder of those blows. We did too. Our staff and their families did. Regardless

of who you are, or your socioeconomic status, the pandemic made us pause. We all had to withstand its impact. As an agency, we had no choice but to be resilient. So many lessons were learned and/or reinforced. One sobering reminder was that our clients are all too familiar with adversity. They have fortunately become experts at withstanding and adapting to it. Our reputation for service to the community was put to the test. The commitment to our mission demanded that we adapt how we do business. Typically we work on our clients' long-term needs. COVID-19 demanded that we pivot to assist with immediate and basic needs. It was either adapt or become irrelevant. I must admit that it was guite an organizational challenge.

The traumatic impact of the pandemic cannot be overlooked. Recovering will include reflecting on its human toll. Many lives were lost. Clients lost loved ones. ABC staff lost loved ones. Being resilient can sometimes be quite exhausting. The compound traumas of COVID-19 and systemic injustice are almost too much to ask people to recover from. Almost. But recover we must. Fuel for the recovery fire lies in the knowledge that generations who preceded us had multiple traumas to withstand, adapt and recover from. Our foundation as an organization is strong. That gives us comfort in this storm. I encourage our staff to lean on each other when they're weary. I encourage our clients and the community to continue to expect and demand adaptation from ABC. We will be part of orchestrating the new normal. We are committed to taking action that will withstand, adapt and recover from both COVID–19 and the very resilient systemic injustice that preceded it. At the foundation of this commitment is acknowledging that everyone's humanity and dignity must be upheld by all. We can surely build community resilience from that vantage point.

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PLANNING & EVALUATION DEPARTMENT

COVID-19 RESPONSE & RECOVERY

ABC's PLANNING AND EVALUATION DEPARTMENT is tasked with supporting the agency's mission, with a primary focus on building strong community partnerships; understanding community needs and assets; helping to align agency activities with mission and impact; identifying promising funding opportunities that advance current and emerging initiatives; and supporting programs in collecting data that drives continuous improvement and tells compelling, evidence-based stories of community impact.

During COVID-19, our department worked collaboratively across the agency and with key community stakeholders to complete an addendum to the 2019 community assessment, which summarized the initial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our community. Some highlights from the report demonstrate how we stayed connected to data emerging about affected communities and shaped our evolving responses to help those communities withstand the sustained pressures on family stability.

Monroe County experienced 67,411 cases and 1,332 deaths from COVID-19, and Ontario County had 7,378 cases and 107 deaths at the conclusion of New York's COVID-19 state of emergency. Healthcare systems were squeezed or overburdened but, unlike much of the county, became less so in Monroe and Ontario counties.

- At the beginning of the pandemic in April 2020, Rochester–Monroe Anti–Poverty Initiative (RMAPI) conducted a survey, which noted the following basic needs respondents reported having challenges obtaining (in order): food, housing and shelter, healthcare, and other needs such as debt and car payments, car repairs, and essential products (e.g., cleaning supplies and toiletries).
- During the pandemic, 211/LIFE LINE (an information and referral source) noted that the majority of its calls were for referrals around food (76.9%), followed by housing and shelter (5.7%) and, lastly, healthcare (5.3%).

- Seniors were among the hardest hit by the virus. Due to being at a greater risk of contracting the virus, many confined themselves to their dwelling. Homebound, seniors were found to need such support as nutritional services, activities/interactions to minimize feelings of isolation, and delivery of groceries and other items.
- The educational and child-care ecosystems have been greatly impacted by the pandemic. At the onset, one by one, school, early childhood development and most child-care providers temporarily halted services. In the summer of 2020, the county formed the COVID-19 Child Care Task Force to address the impact of the pandemic on the entire child-care ecosystem.
- more accessible remotely.
- Prior to COVID-19, the unemployment rate stood below 6% for Monroe and was 13.7%, 11.2% and 20.0%, respectively.

Through philanthropic and grant support, ABC was able to help fulfill many community and customer needs that emerged as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Inside this annual report are stories of how the agency has been impacted by the pandemic and has been able to help address the myriad of needs outlined above and detailed in the full assessment found here: www.abcinfo.org/2019-community-assessmentaddendum/





The digital divide between those with means versus those without means has become more evident and prevalent as services in the community grew increasingly

Ontario counties and was slightly above 6% for the city of Rochester. Since the pandemic, the unemployment rate for these areas was at least 10%. In July 2020, the unemployment rate for Monroe County, Ontario County and the city of Rochester

PLANNING & EVALUATION DEPARTMENT



ABC CONTINUES TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF OUR COMMUNITY and customers that emerged as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As of September 30, 2020, the following agency-wide outcomes were achieved:

- ABC delivered 1,344 meals to customers' homes and 750 families received food distributed from four ABC locations utilizing Energy Conservation Program (ECP) trucks. The project was a partnership with Foodlink, 211/LIFE LINE and ABC.
- Using CSBG Cares Act, Head Start Cares Act and ESL Federal Credit Union funding, we addressed the digital divide. We purchased and distributed nearly 1,150 computers for children and families, providing access to the internet and technology for employment, education and medical purposes. To ensure the proper use of these devices, we also offered technology training for those who requested assistance.
- ABC's Project Helping Hands delivered 743 care packages (personal items and/or baby supplies) to vulnerable agency customers utilizing ECP trucks.
- More than **350** families received baby supplies: diapers, baby wipes, baby food/ infant food formula, cereal and juice.
- ABC provided more than 10,700 telehealth services. Customer needs ranged from pandemic-related stressors to depression and coping with severe addictions.

ABC plays a unique and transformative role in our region, developing cross-sector collaboratives to address the most complex, deeply rooted and systemic challenges to effective poverty alleviation. In March of 2020, as an unexpected and large-scale wave of unemployment was challenging the capacity of our region to stabilize the social safety net for impacted families (particularly those not in poverty but still living below a living wage), ABC helped our community adapt.

Of particular note, our Benefit Project collaborative was able to continue its work of mapping public benefit eligibility criteria and earned income into a person-centered calculator. We pivoted our proof of concept from a smaller-scale study into a more robust tool that could be developed as part of larger system reform efforts in our region. Our expanded project plan included launching a prototype for Monroe County by November 2021 and expanding the availability of the calculator tool to the public across the ninecounty region by the end of 2022. Completion of this project will provide accurate eligibility determinations and a full picture of net family resources, in advance of making employment and other family-planning decisions, to ensure that individuals looking to move to self-sufficiency, social service agencies serving individuals living in or near poverty, and businesses trying to recruit and retain employees can cooperate in helping families move toward long-term financial sustainability. Additionally, this kind of online tool can allow policymakers and advocacy groups to generate better information about the costs and impacts associated with potential reforms to public

benefits systems.

THE STRENGTHENING WORKING FAMILIES INITIATIVE (SWFI) was

created to provide low- to middle-skilled parents with opportunities to advance in their high-growth or -demand industry careers (healthcare, IT and advanced manufacturing), addressing barriers to accessing training and employment faced by those with child-care responsibilities. Concerning child-care needs of parents seeking education and training, SWFI increased access to child-care resources, directly paid for child-care needs during training, and bridged the gap between the workforce and child-care systems. The program is funded to address both the individual job-training needs and child-care barriers of workers, while developing or improving systems navigation services that will result in sustainable systemic changes in a community.

Set to end on June 30, 2020, the funder, the U.S. Department of Labor, granted an extension through June 30, 2021. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the systems-level activities work, led by ABC in tandem with the SWFI collaborative partners, was able to adapt to the pandemic by holding several collaborative activities virtually (on a smaller scale) such as the child-care and training fairs. These events provided vital child-care and training resources to parents, those serving parents and the wider community. Through these efforts, the systems-level activities work helped the community withstand the challenge of communicating about available opportunities and support sought by stakeholders. A toolkit is in development that will house key resources in one place so stakeholders have information on how to access available resources. The toolkit may be helpful as parents and the community recover from the pandemic and attempt to rebuild their lives and/or return to normalcy.

2020 HIGHLIGHTS



families learned and exhibited improved family functioning skills.



1,221 children participated in ABC's and its

partner agencies' Early Head Start/Head Start preschool activities to develop school readiness skills.



individuals obtained permanent employment.





families benefited from weatherization, energy conservation services and home maintenance services.





individuals completed substance abuse screenings, and 145 received substance abuse counseling.



DIVISION FOR YOUTH & COMMUNITY SERVICES

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 to promote opportunities for growth and attainment of self-sufficiency.

To continue to meet the needs of our service population, the **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT (CDD)** had to change where we worked and how we worked while still providing a high level of service. Through adaption, CDD was able to develop a leaner service model without sacrificing outcomes, increasing

costs or reducing staff.

- work uninterrupted from home.
- We adjusted our service delivery models to maintain contractual compliance and ensure we continued to meet our predetermined outcome goals.
- We developed new programming to meet emerging needs created by COVID-19.
- We created noncontact document drop-off protocols, allowing us to continue receiving the original documents necessary for processing files, contracts and applications.

COVID-19 created societal and economic concerns that impacted several demographics. To help individuals/families with low income, the PANDEMIC AFFECTED **RESPONSE TEAM (PART)** was developed to provide direct support and navigational case management to those families and individuals of Monroe County most economically impacted by COVID-19 living at or below 200% of federal poverty guideline levels. The program is designed to address COVID-19-related loss of employment, inability to keep up with household bills and food insecurity.

PART navigators work with applicants to determine their current financial situation and develop an action plan to help them achieve stability. The program has a beneficiary fund that can be used to support the following needs:

- Rental assistance
- Utilities/household assistance (primarily RG&E, Spectrum)
- Food assistance, as determined by household size
- Single adult
- Single parent with 1 or 2 children
- Households of 4 or more
- Auto payment assistance

• We developed a remote technology strategy to ensure communication with each other and our customers. Each staff was equipped with a home office package to

THE STREET MANAGER works with business owners and stakeholders in the northeast business corridors to revitalize this once-thriving area. The project includes members of the community and business associations to increase community-based employment and commercial resources. It is a deeply person-centric service we were able to continue during COVID-19. The Street Manager developed new socially distanced ways of interacting with business owners.

THE HOUSING INTAKE SERVICES PROGRAM 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 would not be able to accomplish on their own because of the financial cost involved.

COMMUNITY BUILDING IN ACTION (CBA) works with residents on the grassroots level to achieve their goals of improving their neighborhood and local business community. CBA has a transformative effect by developing the ability and capacity of 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, events for children and gatherings of residents in the neighborhood.

The program recently established a partnership with the University of Rochester on a stroke initiative to increase awareness of signs, prevention, actions and resources to mitigate the impacts of strokes in communities of color.

THE OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS is in its third year of operation. Its services and activities are centered on three key areas based on identified needs of low–income immigrant communities:

- Improving the economic condition in which new Americans with low income live.
- Increasing the social contact between new Americans and the larger population.
- Increasing access to community resources that improve the condition in which people live.

COVID-19 created challenges based on its previous service model being in-person. We continued to provide services via Zoom, Webex and the 8x8 Express platform.

THE COMMUNITY CREDIBLE MESSENGER INITIATIVE (CCMI) and SAVE OUR

YOUTH programs focus on reducing recidivism among youth, the reunification of families and reducing gun violence. The team works with a caseload of youth and parents to promote community safety. We maintained contact with our caseloads electronically as determined by our population. We discovered we increased rates of communication by using mediums the youth use regularly. Video calls increased contact, produced relevant information and increased the relationship between staff and participants.



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 in English and Spanish by culturally diverse and certified staff who are reflective of the population served by the clinic.

During COVID-19 our outpatient substance abuse clinic has withstood and has been dedicated to meeting the needs of individuals who are impacted by alcohol and drugs. Due to the onset and impact of COVID-19, the clinic had to adapt to the new normal and change the way we deliver services. ABC shifted from providing 100% onsite services to nearly 90% remote telehealth services including assessments, group treatment, individual and medication-assisted treatment. This maintains person-to-person contact, enabling clinicians and patients to engage face-to-face by video or by audio and safely continue in treatment, reducing the chance of relapse and/or losing patient contact and follow-up. Moreover, the agency provided resources such as access to the internet and other technology devices such as smartphones, tablets and computers to patients facing these digital divides.

Last year in 2020, ABC provided more than **9,900** telehealth services, demonstrating our ability to meet the emergent needs of our patients and by quickly and effectively adapting to the changes in traditional service provisions while complying with protected health information standards. We reached over **276** individuals with more than **12,860** targeted procedures addressing the most severe addictions identified in our community during the pandemic.

To help withstand the challenges of social distancing and sheltering in place associated with the pandemic, ABC New Directions successfully implemented two recovery–based interactive mobile apps called eTherapy and CBT4CBT, which combine evidence–based research with technology. Patients are provided with addiction treatment and recovery resources, which they can carry around in their pocket—giving them 24/7 access to support and connection within the community and adding to their peace of mind and well–being. Patients can easily track their sobriety, keep a virtual journal, monitor their triggers and connect with peers who are also on the journey of recovery.

New initiatives on the horizon for ABC New Directions include strategic work involving value–based payment initiatives, systems transformation projects, permanent provision reimbursement of telehealth services and work related to post–traumatic stress associated with the aftereffects of the COVID–19 pandemic.

THE ACTION FRONT CENTER (AFC) educates and supports people in making healthy choices that will prevent the spread of HIV, hepatitis and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) to achieve optimal health and quality of life.

In the early months of the pandemic, the staff phoned **35** AFC participants living with HIV at least once a week to check in and assess if they had any needs ABC could help them with. Some were isolated, and the connection provided needed emotional support. Our staff made masks by hand and collected food and cleaning supplies, which they delivered to those in need. A total of **32** low-income households impacted by HIV were referred to the ABC Community Crisis Fund and were provided with personal protective equipment and additional cleaning supplies. Education, support groups and peer educator training were conducted virtually, and individual services were conducted by phone. Emergency housing assistance was provided to those in need.

Many AFC program participants were unable to join group activities held on Zoom. To adapt, ABC provided Chromebooks to 16 AFC participants to help them stay connected with ABC/AFC services, as well as to access health and mental health care. AFC has provided monthly individual and group lessons on how to use technology and virtual meeting apps. In September of 2020, AFC began providing group interventions using a hybrid model with HIPAA-compliant Zoom and in-person participation observing safety protocols. ABC was approved by the NYS Department of Health to provide HIV testing at our offices and shelter programs for the homeless. Street outreach resumed, providing prepackaged kits that included condoms and safer sex items, educational and promotional materials, and masks. AFC increased messages on social media to deliver HIV, STI and hepatitis information about prevention, testing, treatment and community resources.

While keeping our staff safe and continuing to meet the needs of our program participants, the FOCUS ON SELF-SUFFICIENCY DEPARTMENT (FSSD) changed how we delivered services to ensure customer satisfaction and quality services during the pandemic. As we transition out of the pandemic, we are committed to continuing to provide traditional and virtual services.

- Due to a huge digital divide problem within our community, with the support of CSBG Care Act funding, we purchased Chromebooks and Wi-Fi for participants. This allowed us to continue to support our community with online services.
- We worked with partner agencies to ensure support during COVID-19 with the use of a community referral system called Unite US.

In our TRAINING IN EMPLOYMENT AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY (TESS) PROGRAM, individuals receive job-readiness training, soft skills support and coaching services in preparation for meaningful employment that pays a living wage. During the pandemic, in-person activities, including job interviews, could only be done virtually. Using the CSBG Cares Act and ESL Federal Credit Union funding, we started the Digital Divide Project. We have been able to purchase 650 Chromebooks to distribute to families for employment, education and medical purposes. To ensure the proper use of these devices, we also offered technology training for those who requested assistance. Anticipating our reopening, we will continue to offer classes in person and virtually. We have also included a technology literacy module in our TESS curriculum. During this time, we were able to support our community through our yearly coat drive partnership with WROC-TV and Fidelis Care. We distributed nearly 1,500 coats.

A total of 200 families received Safe Home kits which included household cleaning supplies and hygiene kits provided with support from CleanCraft, LLC. Lastly, during the Christmas holiday, we received a donation that allowed us to provide 30 families with toys.

Our ADULT EDUCATION SERVICES (AES) prepares individuals to get their high school equivalency degree. AES also provides support with TEAS, TABE and TASC testing. AES services have fundamentally changed over the last year due to the pandemic. We, and our customers, had to withstand the sudden and complete stop to in-person activities, our primary method of service delivery. To continue to support our customers, we evolved and adapted our services to be delivered completely online. As we transition back into providing traditional services in person, we will continue to innovate and provide our services in new and exciting ways as our customers increase their access to technology and their technological literacy continues to improve.

The AES program has been awarded a New York state literacy education grant and partnered with the NY State Education Department to expand the services that we are currently offering and to provide our students with more holistic supports to ensure their success.

BRIDGES TO SUCCESS (BTOS) is an adult-mentoring program that connects individuals with a mentor who provides supportive services while they work on meeting their everyday living needs and pursue their economic goals. In January 2020, we started our second round of the Bridges program. Cohort 2 opened with 100 spots to be filled through the randomization of 150 interested participants. In March 2020, we only had 20 spots filled and we could no longer meet in person to enroll. Through the use of technology, the staff was able to fill all 100 spots during the height of the pandemic. By using discretionary funds, we purchased laptops for all Bridges participants who didn't have a device, allowing them virtual access to their mentors. Of the 100 participants enrolled, 92 are still actively working on their goals with the BTOS mentor. Current funding ended in December 2021. Partnering with Foodlink, we provided **18** of our Bridges families with fresh fruits and vegetables as well as healthy recipes weekly for 18 weeks.



HEALTH PROFESSION OPPORTUNITY GRANTS (HPOG) provides supportive services and access to training and education opportunities that lead to meaningful employment in the healthcare field. HPOG focuses on providing individuals with access to the resources necessary to equip them with training and career development opportunities for healthcare occupations that are in high demand.

The onset of COVID-19 caused a major disruption to the HPOG program and participants. Healthcare training sites throughout the county were paused or shut down due to restrictions on in-person instruction with uncertainty about when they would resume. New enrollments into the HPOG program were also put on hold due to the necessity for in-person meetings and consent requirements that were unable to be obtained due to all staff working remotely.

HPOG was able to withstand the challenges brought on early by the pandemic by making necessary adjustments to the way we communicated both internally and with our customer base. HPOG navigators stood firm in their ability to assist those they served by maintaining open communication and ensuring people knew of the support and services that were available from ABC and throughout the community.



As the pandemic surged on, it was clear that HPOG and its training partners would need to adapt to the new normal. When the HPOG study was approved for participants to consent remotely, a new system was put in place for enrollment. The HPOG staff worked together to create a virtual information session as well as a method to collect electronic signatures on all paperwork and documents that required them to keep the program moving forward. HPOG also worked closely with training sites and employers to ensure that our adaptations would work alongside their needs and enhance the partnerships.

After adapting the entire HPOG model to fit the remote learning and case management model, the program needed to help previous participants recover and allow for new participants to succeed. While the training sites slowly reopened, the certification sites remained backed up and at limited capacity. The HPOG program had over 35 participants waiting to take their Licensed Practical Nurse exam that would lead to employment. To assist these participants, an online test preparation program was purchased by HPOG that would allow participants to stay prepared for when they would be able to test in the future months. HPOG also partnered with employers to hire six of these participants as graduate practical nurses, allowing them to utilize their training before being certified. Of the more than 35 participants, 20 were able to successfully pass the licensure exam and obtain employment. With the adapted virtual information sessions and collaboration with training sites, the program has enrolled almost 400 new participants since the onset of the pandemic.

HPOG continues to push forward in assisting low-income participants in Monroe County to obtain the necessary assistance to enter the healthcare workforce. As the pandemic continues, HPOG will continue to withstand and adapt to the changes.



protocols:

- staff to meet the needs of the youth.
- delivery bags with supplies for creating projects.
- As COVID restrictions lessoned, in-person hybrid service models were put in place and a safe, social-distancing protocol was followed.

development for youth health advocates. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, our young people have had to withstand the challenges of remote learning, social isolation, lack of motivation, depression, anxiety and stress. Access to HIV/STD testing and medical care had been limited. Staff and youth leaders adapted by using virtual platforms and social media to reach out to engage youth, make referrals, provide prevention information, MILANO run educational sessions and maintain relationships. Staff provided more than **60** youth individual prevention sessions and access to HIV/STD testing services by using at-home test kits provided by our clinical partners. When youth were burnt out on group remote learning, the staff adapted by running individualized sessions coaching youth on study skills, stress management, motivation and more. Staff also delivered monthly at-home learning kits to our 10 youth leaders. The HIPSY program has taken on the recovery process as an opportunity to revise and improve our services. For example, we have divided staff

HIGH-IMPACT PREVENTION SERVICES FOR YOUTH (HIPSY) serves youth ages 13 to 24 who are at the highest risk for negative sexual health outcomes. The program facilitates access to HIV and STD testing, treatment and healthcare services, the delivery of relevant and comprehensive sexual health education, and youth leadership and youth leaders into small teams who canvass the community, providing face-to-face interaction with youth, offering referrals, prevention information and general support. We look forward to eventually bringing more youth back into our offices for individual and small group sessions and in-house HIV testing services.

To continue to meet the needs of our youth and families during the pandemic, the YOUTH SERVICES DEPARTMENT shifted workspaces from the office to home. To continue providing the needed services, our department constructed the necessary

Our program managers and direct service staff received laptops to work from home.

Schools were closed due to COVID. Our after-school programs created virtual spaces for youth to meet, parents to engage and peer mentors to continue working alongside

To engage youth in the virtual spaces, each week the staff created contactless

THE SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (SYEP) typically hires 40 youth ages 14 to 20 through the Youth Services Department. The youth are split into two work experience programs, EPIC (Equipping Performing and Inspiring in the Community) and AIMM (Adolescents Inspiring through Multi-Media). Youth learn the



skills needed to obtain and retain employment while advocating for the betterment of their community through meaningful service-learning projects. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the SYEP faced a significant decrease in hiring and was only able to hire **20** youth employees for 2020 to carry out our AIMM work experience project. The project was aimed to mobilize the community toward a positive perception of youth and the importance of their voice in fighting prejudice in the city of Rochester and Monroe County. Due to the pandemic, a virtual showing of the short film took place and was well attended and received.

STRATEGIES 2 SUCCESS (S2S) allows young people to learn about their gifts and talents in a youth-friendly atmosphere while learning how to advocate for themselves. The young people in our program have seen a rise in their GPAs and family relationships restored as they learn about their worth and individuality. These young people experience a community of school staff, ABC advocates, caring finearts instructors and family members who are unified in the interest of their future. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we adapted to the guickly changing environment by converting to an online model, using virtual meetings and social media platforms to engage our youth and continue to be present in their lives. We also implemented project delivery, virtual workshops and activities to keep our youth engaged while continuing to provide hands-on experiences. S2S remained committed to helping our youth succeed academically. And we celebrated a new partnership with Miss B's Tutoring Table as a productive way to address students' academic struggles during an unprecedented time.

PROVIDING REAL OPPORTUNITIES WITH DEDICATION (PROWD) works with students between the ages of 10 to 13. The program is funded by the Department of Health to help teach students the importance of sexual risk avoidance, working with the evidenced-based curriculum "Making a Difference." PROWD staff work with approximately 60 students and families per year, empowering youth to develop assets while learning new activities such as yoga, karate, painting, drumming and other fine-art instruction. Through circle conversations, students are educated and given tools to deal with hard topics such as abstinence, STDs and peer pressure. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the team was able to withstand the challenging time by teaching the program virtually using the Zoom and Google Meet platforms. Our youth and family specialists adapted to this new normal by taking advantage of free training to help prepare themselves to navigate the platforms. The team learned to use tools like Mentimeter, Kahoot and Canva to present programming in a fun and unique way that kept our participants engaged and interested in the subject matter. As we look to recover and plan for the possibility of meeting in person, we will continue to provide the best version of ourselves and programming for our families. With these tools and resources, our participants and caretakers can acquire the education and skills that will lead them to a higher level of self-sufficiency.

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

To say that 2021 was another challenging year would be an understatement. Given the unprecedented and life-changing tragedies that our nation and the world confronted in 2020, there was a sense of hope and optimism that 2021 would be a substantially better year. Unfortunately, progress hasn't nearly been what any of us anticipated on numerous fronts. The preceding paragraph isn't meant to convey

Then, we'll move into yet another era as we navigate through a postpandemic environment for the first time in our lifetimes. It's certain that things will be much better in many ways, but it's also certain that life won't return to what we knew as "normal" prior to March 2020. Indeed, the theme of this year's annual report, "Building Resilience: Withstand—Adapt—Recover," will take on a new meaning and significance.

The same can be said for the work that we do at Action for a Better Community. The services we provide, issues we advocate for, and changes we strive to attain in keeping with our mission of providing opportunities for low-income individuals and families to become self-sufficient, are essential to the progress we must make as a region and a nation.

In closing and on behalf of my colleagues on the board of directors, I'd like to thank the employees of ABC for their remarkable resilience. The ability of our people to withstand incredible challenges, adapt to ever-changing circumstances and help our community recover are truly amazing. Thank you for everything you do.

Here's to 2022!

Blag

doom and gloom but rather to provide a realistic assessment of where we were at the beginning of 2022. However, things will get better in some respects once the COVID-19 pandemic ends, hopefully this year.



school diploma.

Nationally, ABC's Head Start program remains one of the highest-performing Head Start programs in the country, as documented by the Office of Head Start's annual Performance Indicator Report. Locally, the Head Start program also continues to be one of the highest-performing early childhood programs, as documented by 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 to be on target or above that of other children who have participated in other 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—one ready to learn and thrive. ABC assures that all children have insurance and a medical and dental home. Hearing and vision screenings are provided on-site for all children, and a pro bono dentist provides dental screenings at all centers.

EARLY CHILDHOOD **SERVICES**

Keeping the Commitment.

LITTLE VOICES NOW, BIG VOICES AND ASPIRATIONS TOMORROW!

ABC Head Start serves preschool children ages zero to five. The program works to prepare children for their educational journey, as well as supporting families to be the first and most influential educator during this journey.

Quality early childhood education programs such as ABC Head Start have proven to be a critical launch point to obtaining positive outcomes not only during the preschool years, but beyond. Studies have shown that a strong preschool education results in strong social skills and sets a solid foundation for increased literacy skills that are vital for children learning how to read. As a result, the more children learn, the greater the transition is from learning to read to reading to learn. This will increase success in school and boost high school and college graduation rates. With these improvements, communities can expect 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



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 has contractual agreements 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, the 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.

ABC Divisions and Programs (service integration)

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

Center for Community Health & Prevention, URMC

Child Care Council

The Children's Agenda

Children's Institute

The City of Rochester

Consumer Credit Counseling

East Avenue Dentistry First Books



Dr. Lynne Halik Homeless Services Network March of Dimes Mental Health Association of Rochester Monroe County Department of Public Health 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 Strong National Museum of Play University of Rochester's Department of Dentistry Wilson Commencement Park



ENERGY CONSERVATION PROGRAM

The ENERGY CONSERVATION PROGRAM (ECP) provides low- to moderate-income families with grants to retrofit their homes with energy-efficiency measures to reduce the burden of high energy costs and potential health-related issues. ECP provides these services with in-house industry-certified staff to owner-occupants and owneroccupants with tenants, as well as landlords with tenants, including those with multifamily properties.

■ THE WEATHERIZATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (WAP) provides low-cost to free grants to eligible households in the city of Rochester. ECP is committed to reducing energy costs for low-income families, particularly the elderly, people with disabilities and those with children, by improving the energy efficiency of their homes and ensuring their health and safety. We provide these services through an application process, followed by a comprehensive building analysis of the applicant's home and the available funding. ECP determines the most cost-effective measures to reduce energy consumption, while increasing comfort and improving health and safety in our clients' homes. The measures ECP reviews fall into five major categories: improving heating efficiency, reducing air infiltration, reducing heat conduction with insulation, improving health and safety, and reducing electrical consumption.

- ABC administers several benefits through the federally funded **HOME** their immediate home energy needs:
- detectors or programmable thermostats if necessary.
- who have a documented medical condition that is exacerbated by heat.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, ECP was no longer able to work inside the living spaces of homes and could complete activities only in the basements. As the pandemic progressed, ECP discontinued all residential on-site activities.

ECP adapted to the changing landscape and partnered with Goodwill (211), Catholic Family Center and Foodlink to distribute food boxes to those impacted by the pandemic. Our target demographics were people who had tested positive for the virus, were in guarantine, or were under the age of 64 and had a disability that rendered them home-bound.

ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (HEAP) to help low-income households meet

- The Heating Equipment Clean and Tune Benefit allows eligible households to receive free cleaning and maintenance of their primary heating equipment annually. This may also include minor repairs and the installation of carbon monoxide

- The Heating Equipment Repair and Replacement Benefit assists households with the cost of repairing or replacing the applicant's primary heating equipment.

- The Cooling Assistance Benefit installs an air conditioner in the homes of those

ABC provides all of these HEAP services as their program funding allows.

ECP retooled our vehicles and storage space and transitioned from transporting and housing tools and materials to storing and transporting food. ECP delivered a total of **528** boxes of food to **1,197** individuals. To make our daily deliveries throughout Monroe County as efficient as possible, we partnered with staff from the Planning and Evaluation department, who provided us with sorted route lists.

ECP acquired a grant from the United Way's Community Crisis Fund to provide personal toiletries and essential supplies to our clients. In addition, ABC's Business Services department had a connection with the United Way, which provided protective equipment for us to donate to our clients.

> Through these collaborations and partnerships, ECP was able to assist 303 families and 926 individuals with items such as gloves, masks, hand sanitizer, deodorant, denture supplies, incontinence supplies, diapers, formula, baby food, toothpaste, laundry supplies and food at a time when these individuals were in a place of isolation and need.

With additional funding from the New York State Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), ECP delivered 456 packages of reusable masks and hand sanitizer to our agency clients. These successful efforts opened the door for **Project Helping Hands**.

Project Helping Hands helped our community begin to recover by providing no-cost small home repairs to income-eligible clients who have been impacted by the pandemic. ECP provided a wide array of repairs including but not limited to gutter repair, painting, window and door replacement, furnaces, plumbing, yard care and snow removal. ECP also installed home air purification systems to combat allergens and kill airborne bacteria, mold and viruses in homes.



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ENERGY CONSERVATION PROGRAM

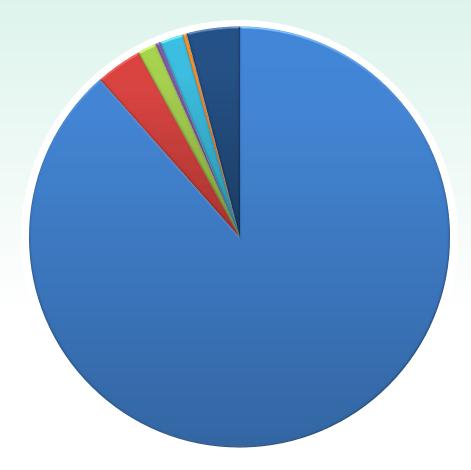
Shinita Hlywa, Program Director

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Christopher Bell, Communications Director Daniel Callahan, Information Services Director William Porter, Business Services Director

ABC'S FINANCIALS

Action for a Better Community, Inc. Financial Information for Fiscal Year Ended September 30, 2020



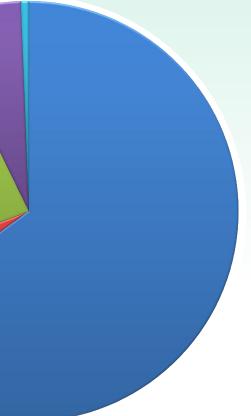
REVENUES

\$26,463,186
\$1,072,037
\$75,892
\$485,371
\$93,719
\$386,248
\$942,536
\$23,407,384





Change in Net Deficiency



\$153,480 \$26,332,139
\$153,480
\$1,728,204
\$6,236,756
\$1,104,935
\$17,108,764

FRIENDS OF ABC

Contributions received January 1, 2020–December 31, 2020

All gifts to Action for a Better Community make a difference. This list reflects contributions made January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2020. Donations made after these dates will be acknowledged in the next annual report. Due to a data breach, we may not have access to a list that included many of our supporters. We apologize if we have omitted any supporters or listed anyone incorrectly. We are grateful to all of our contributors for all of their support. Thank you!

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Kathryn & Theodore Nixon

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ABC COVID OUTREACH

January 1, 2020–December 31, 2021

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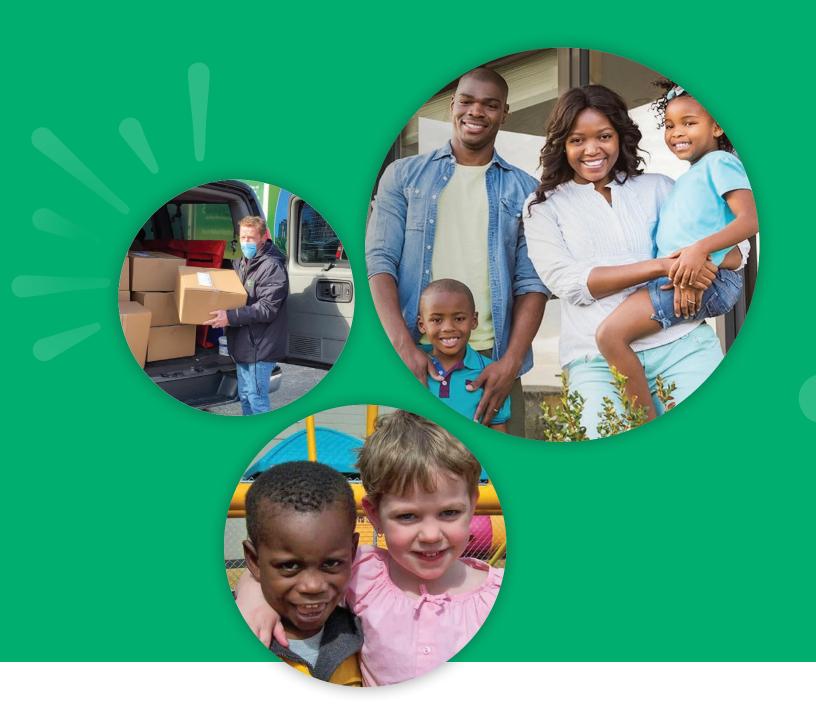
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