

A photograph of three young children sitting on a wooden surface outdoors. A Black girl in the center is laughing joyfully, showing her teeth. To her left, a white girl with freckles is looking towards her. To her right, a white boy is looking down at their hands, which are held together on the wood. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting foliage. The overall mood is happy and communal.

Advocacy, Partnerships Community Impact

 **ACTION** *for a* **BETTER COMMUNITY**

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

ACTION

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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.

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



For the past four years, Action for a Better Community has held an annual Signature Conference to convene community leaders and stakeholders to engage in honest—and sometimes emotional—conversations about the state of our community. What I find most rewarding about these conversations is that they are much more than talk: they are sources of hope, sparks of energy and bridges being built in real time. ABC plays many important roles in our community, and one of those is bringing together people who share our belief in equity, opportunity and belonging for everyone in our community.

One example of ABC's convening power, of which I am particularly proud, is the emerging community movement we have called "Greenlining: Closing the Racial Wealth Gap." What is "greenlining" you may ask? It is the opposite of redlining—that despicable practice that literally segregated our community, and continues to do so, both racially and economically. Its impacts have not only devastated our community's neighborhoods and families. Those impacts have persisted across generations, increasing the racial wealth gap as some families have passed on wealth through homeownership while others have been excluded from such opportunity. This must change. With our partners, our goal is to close the racial wealth gap over time.

For the past year, several participants in the home ownership ecosystem—financial institutions, housing stakeholders, philanthropy, municipalities, and community-based organizations have been meeting at ABC's offices to identify how we can collectively chart a different path. In 2024, this roadmap will be shared with the community, and we will begin to reverse the decades-long impact of redlining.

ABC operates programs aimed to assist individuals and families on their path to social/emotional and economic self-sufficiency. Notwithstanding the effectiveness of these programs, we are also engaged in effecting change at the systems level. We also need to contribute to changing the environment in which economic marginalization so comfortably exists. Greenlining is one such example of ABC's advocacy. By building partnerships and coalitions with organizations that share our belief in equity, dignity and opportunity, we are helping our community write a new future. A future where the story is one of belonging rather than exclusion, the story of equity rather than advantage—the story of a just community, one we all deserve.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J Underwood".

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

When you hear the words “Strategic Plan,” what do you think of—honestly? Do you picture a document with colorful charts and ambitious goals that sits on a shelf and collects dust? A “plan” full of good intentions, but that is quickly put aside when the day-to-day swirl of the real-world forces us to focus on today, not five years from now? Action for a Better Community understands that phenomenon and we are disrupting that reality.

In December 2023, ABC’s Board of Directors approved a Strategic Framework for 2024–2026. Unlike traditional Strategic Plans, which quickly become outdated, the Strategic Framework is a set of core goals that will promote ABC’s strategic vision to become a stronger, more effective and vibrant force for families and community change.

ABC’S FRAMEWORK IS BUILT AROUND THREE CORE GOALS:

- Fiscal sustainability
- Organizational excellence and staff wellness
- Effective communication of ABC’s impact across the community

Together, these core goals will guide ABC’s activities for the next three years. They will focus ABC’s Board and staff on diversifying the agency’s revenue base to ensure that ABC will continue to grow to meet the ever-changing needs of the community. They will align the agency’s internal processes with the best practices of non-profits across the country and, at the same time, invest in ABC’s most valuable asset: our people. Finally, they will inspire new ways of engaging with the community—ensuring that ABC will no longer be a “best kept secret” but will instead be known by all as the vital, life-changing community institution it has been for almost 60 years.

ABC’s Strategic Framework for 2024–2026 will only succeed through partnerships and collaborations with stakeholders from across our community. Residents, public officials, faith community leaders, fellow service providers, businesses and others are all invited to share our vision for a better community!

2023 HIGHLIGHTS



3,618

individuals were served,
benefiting from multiple programs
and services.



53

youth ages 10–13 participated in
a 12 week sexual health intervention
with the goal of preventing STDs
and unwanted pregnancies.

DIVISION FOR YOUTH & COMMUNITY SERVICES

ABC's Division of Youth and Community Services provides a variety of programs in health, education, community development, workforce development and youth development to individuals that are affected by the causes and conditions of poverty. Through our partnerships and advocacy, we have been able to make a significant community impact by providing opportunities for individuals to move themselves and their families on a path towards self-sufficiency.

Our **YOUTH SERVICES DEPARTMENT** serves young people between the ages of 10 and 24, with the goal of allowing them to develop, utilize their talents and critical thinking to become self-reliant and confident individuals. This is done through free after-school arts and academic programs, adolescent sexual health interventions, peer-to-peer mentorship, teen leadership, and summer youth employment. Although services are provided to youth, there is a strong commitment to family involvement that facilitates parent engagement sessions, focusing on ABC's utilization of the whole family approach.



55

individuals obtained a high school equivalency diploma.



331

individuals took the GED exam.



40

youth completed job readiness training.



Creativity and innovation are important attributes of the **FOCUS ON SELF-SUFFICIENCY DEPARTMENT (FSSD)** when providing needed services to individuals in the community. The services help low-income individuals 18 and older and their families, achieve economic independence and self-sufficiency through programs that offer education, employment, financial literacy and helping individuals overcome significant barriers that have impacted their journey to self-sufficiency. ABC's Focus on Self-Sufficiency Department is proud to be one of the only organizations in the county that administers the GED exam as well as operating one of only two retention training programs in the county. Through our advocacy, the department was able to join other education providers to ensure there were no budget cuts for adult education in New York State, which would have impacted thousands of people.

Staff in the **ACTION FRONT CENTER (AFC)** assists people in making choices that will stop the spread of HIV, viral hepatitis, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and help them live healthier, more independent lives. Using a peer model, AFC develops grassroots leadership and consumer voices, mobilizes the community to strengthen the leadership and voice of those highly impacted communities and advocates for better health and social justice.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS



239

individuals received HIV testing, engaged in education/support groups, and reported improved treatment adherence and quality of life.



809

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



The **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT** has 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 the neighborhood and resident stability. The department addresses these barriers through our programs that focus on at risk youth, new Americans, addressing and advocating on health disparities and revitalizing communities.

NEW DIRECTIONS is a full Outpatient Substance Use and Behavioral Health Services Clinic that is 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. Family counseling, relapse prevention services, continuing care, and medication-assisted treatments are also offered. The clinic is committed to providing holistic and evidence-based practices that address the comprehensive needs of individuals and families.



128

individuals obtained permanent employment.



275

families improved housing/health through weatherization services.



237

individuals received treatment for substance abuse issues.

ENERGY CONSERVATION PROGRAM



ABC's Energy Conservation Program is committed to reducing the energy burden of low-income families, improving energy efficiency in homes and reducing the carbon footprint. This allows families the flexibility to save their hard-earned money to use for other needed essentials, while at the same time, providing a healthier, safer living environment in the homes of some of our most vulnerable populations in the city. Health and safety inspections include indoor air quality tests, carbon monoxide detection in the air and appliances, gas leak checks, and proper flow and ventilation of air.

The Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) provides free energy-efficiency and health and safety measures for low-income households, including owner occupants with tenants. We also provide reduced-cost services to property owners with tenants, including those with multi-family properties with a significant number of their tenants meeting the income guidelines. WAP services include energy upgrades and retrofits through the installation of windows & doors and heating/hot water system upgrades and repairs. In rental properties, we also provide additional deferral mitigation measures including basement water proofing, roof repair and/or maintenance, kitchen and bathroom rehabs and upgrades. Soon we will begin our first clean heating and cooling technology project with the installation of heat pumps.

ABC's Energy Conservation Program participates in the HEAP Clean and Tune Program, which provides a free service once a year to income qualified applicants, as well as the HEAP Emergency Cooling Program, which provides a free air conditioner to qualified applicants once every five years.

Over the last 30 years ECP has provided weatherization services to 8,659 homes to include multi-family developments in the Rochester community.

Partnerships key to ECP's success include:

- ESL Federal Credit Union
- Rochester **E**Nergy **E**fficiency and **W**eatherization Consortium (**RENEW**)
- City of Rochester
- PathStone Corporation
- Climate Solution Accelerators
- Monroe County
- Office of Aging
- Keybank





EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

Head Start is a federally funded program that provides early childhood education, health, and social services to children from low-income families. Head Start believes parents are their children's first teachers and work with the entire family to strengthen the family structure. Next year, the program will celebrate 60 years of Head Start services fulfilling its commitment to serving pregnant mothers and children in poverty.

ABC Head Start has been making a difference in the lives of thousands of families for six decades. The program focuses on providing comprehensive services that support the healthy development of children and empower families to thrive.



Head Start offers high-quality early education to children aged 0–5, ensuring they have a strong foundation for future success. The program promotes school readiness by providing age-appropriate learning experiences, including cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development.

In addition to education, Head Start also addresses the health and nutrition needs of children. This includes regular health check-ups, dental care, and nutritious meals. The program recognizes that a child's overall well-being is essential for their development.

Head Start also supports pregnant mothers by providing prenatal care, education, and support. This focus on maternal health ensures that expectant mothers receive the necessary resources and guidance to have a healthy pregnancy and give their child a strong start in life.

Furthermore, Head Start recognizes the importance of supporting the whole family. The program connects parents with community resources and offers opportunities for parental involvement and education. By engaging parents in their child's education and providing support, Head Start strengthens the family unit and promotes positive outcomes for children.

ABC directly manages a Home-Based program and six Head Start centers:

- Clifford Avenue Center
- Hart Street Center
- Home-Based Program
- Jefferson Avenue Center
- North Street Center
- Joseph Avenue Center
- Hudson Avenue Center





As we begin to celebrate 60 years of Head Start in Rochester, NY, we acknowledge the tremendous impact the program has had on the lives of children and families. We remain committed to providing quality early childhood services and supporting pregnant mothers, children in poverty, and low-income families in our community.

Thank you for being a part of this journey and for your continued support of Head Start. Together, we can make a lasting difference in the lives of children and create a brighter future for all.

ABC's Head Start services are financially supported by the Department of Health and Human Services—Office of Head Start, The Rochester City School District, Department of Agriculture—Child and Adult Care Food Program, the Greater Rochester Health Foundation, the Rochester Area Community Foundation, the Child Passenger Safety Program, and numerous individuals. The program also benefits from the volunteer efforts of hundreds of members of the community, including Head Start parents.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Advocacy Center
- American Red Cross
- Anthony Jordan Health Center
- Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired
- Better Days Ahead
- Bivona Child Advocacy Center
- Catholic Family Center
- Child Care Council
- Child Outcomes, Planning & Assessment
- Children's Institute
- City of Rochester
- Common Ground Health
- Consumer Credit Counseling
- Department of Health & Human Services
- Department of Public Health
- Early Intervention
- Eastman Dental
- Elliott Landsman Corporation
- Every Parent Influences Children
- Excellus
- Fidelis Care
- First Books
- Foodlink
- Golisano Children's Hospital
- Greater Rochester Health Foundation
- Head Start & Early Head Start Parents
- Heading Home Housing Council
- Homeless Services Network
- Hyatt Regency Hotel
- IBERO
- Jacobstein
- M&T Bank
- March of Dimes
- Mental Health Association of Rochester
- Monroe Community College
- Nancy Coughlin
- Nazareth College
- New York State Office of Children & Family Services
- Parent University (RCSD)
- Patterson Dental
- Paul Schwartzman
- Pediatric Links
- Perinatal Network
- Policy Council Community
- Representatives
- Regional Early Childhood Direction Center
- Roberts Wesleyan College
- Rochester City School District
- Rochester Early Childhood Assessment Partnership
- Rochester Education Opportunity Center
- Rochester Hearing & Speech
- Rochester Museum & Science Center
- Rochester Primary Care Network
- Rochester Public Library
- Seneca Park Zoo
- Small Smiles
- Smile Mobile
- Society for the Protection and Care of Children
- St. John Fisher College
- State of New York Car Seat Safety Program
- Steppingstones Learning Center
- Strong Behavior Health
- Strong National Museum of Play
- Sysco
- United Way of Rochester
- University of Rochester
- Volunteers of America
- WDKX
- Westside Health Service
- YMCA

Any omission is inadvertent and a failure of memory, not of gratitude!



Head Start

January 19th, 2023, was a typical day at ABC's Head Start Childcare Center. Children were buzzing around the classroom. Teachers were helping students build things with toys, reading to small groups and making sure everyone was playing and learning safely.

Suddenly, an unforeseen medical emergency occurred: a staff member collapsed, unconscious, and stopped breathing. Without hesitation, ABC Head Start staff Lindsey Lewis and Adrianna Harris sprang into action. They immediately assessed the situation, called for emergency medical services, and initiated CPR. With unwavering determination and expertise, they performed chest compressions and rescue breaths, tirelessly working to revive their colleague. Their prompt actions and knowledge of lifesaving techniques stabilized the staff member until paramedics arrived, ultimately saving her life.

Their life-saving training is a requirement of all Head Start staff at ABC. Staff are trained to administer First Aid and CPR appropriately, to be knowledgeable of all allergies and health conditions of children and to regularly review classrooms and play areas to ensure they are safe and free from hazards.

The selfless and swift actions of Lindsey Lewis and Adrianna Harris created a second chance at life for a colleague. Their actions exemplify the values ABC lives every day with the children in our care—dedication, compassion, and a commitment to safety and well-being.

Action Front Center (AFC)

"When I first came to ABC, I was a freshly planted seed in the soil. Coming to ABC gave me water to grow. It added leaves and helped me to bloom with each program I attended. I became able to stand on my own."

Gwendolyn Sullivan



High Impact Prevention Services for Youth (HIPS Y)

"I changed; everything changed. I'm making more friends, and I learned a lot more about sex education. I get encouraged by the ABC staff and I feel like they care. I'm getting more support here than I get at home sometimes."

Kevin Wilson

Bridges to Success

"The program provided funds to support me during a crucial phase of my life. This support/assistance was more than financial assistance, it was a lifeline that allowed me to focus on my goals without the burden of financial stress. It made me feel valued. ABC's services are a beacon of hope and empowerment for people like me who need a helping hand and an opportunity to shine. The unwavering encouragement, motivational artworks, and dedication that I received from ABC boosted my confidence and determination. I started believing in myself again, believing that I could do anything. I felt valued as a human being."

Antonia Ibok



A MESSAGE FROM BRAD RYE, ABC'S BOARD CHAIR

As a long-time member of ABC's Board of Directors, I am sometimes asked, "Why have you stayed on ABC's Board for so many years?" The answer is simple: I believe that Action for a Better Community is a vital institution in our community. I believe that our community needs the critical services ABC provides families, the advocacy that ABC engages in to promote opportunity for all, and the caring, dedicated staff who inspire hope and confidence in ABC's customers every day.



The nonprofit world is a challenging one. Funding is always in jeopardy, regulations are complex and ever-changing. It sometimes feels like progress is slow. But ABC energizes me. Whether it is the children of Head Start who come to school ready to explore the world, the youth we work with who are determined to rise into positions of community leadership, or the adults who refuse to give up on their dreams of a better life, ABC is a place where everyone feels like they are home, that they belong, that their story is a critical part of the story of our broader community.

This year ABC is turning a new page as it launches the first year of its new Strategic Plan. This Strategic Plan will strengthen ABC's resource base, invest in the hard-working staff and promote ABC's accomplishments in every corner of the community. If the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything it is that our community is resilient and caring. There is no better example of that resilience and dedication than the people of Action for a Better Community. I am proud to be one of those people and I invite you to join us in keeping our community strong!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Rye".

ABC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

(Currently Serving)

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Patricia Stevens, 1st Vice Chair
Michael Johnson, 2nd Vice Chair
Lee Alice Lawson, Secretary
Timothy Flaherty, Treasurer

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Delories Griffin
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Mitch Gruber
Rhonda Morien
Isaac Elliott
Freddie Hines
Charles Reaves
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Corinda Reaves
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ABC ADMINISTRATORS AND DIRECTORS—2023

(Currently Serving)

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Ruby Austin, Assistant to the CEO
Mubarak Bashir, VP for Youth and Community Services
Eric Binazeski, Director of Finance
Patricia Lloyd, CCAP, Chief Operating Officer
Sharon Minigan, VP for Early Childhood Services
Aaron Wicks, Ph.D., CCAP, VP for Planning & Evaluation

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William Porter, Business Services Director

DIVISION OF YOUTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Michelle Boyd, Action Front Center Program Director
Linda King–Bronner, LMSW, CASAC, Health Services Department Director
Leslie Mossman, Focus on Self–Sufficiency Program Director
Steve Turner, Community Development Department Director

ENERGY CONSERVATION PROGRAM

Shinita Hlywa, Program Director

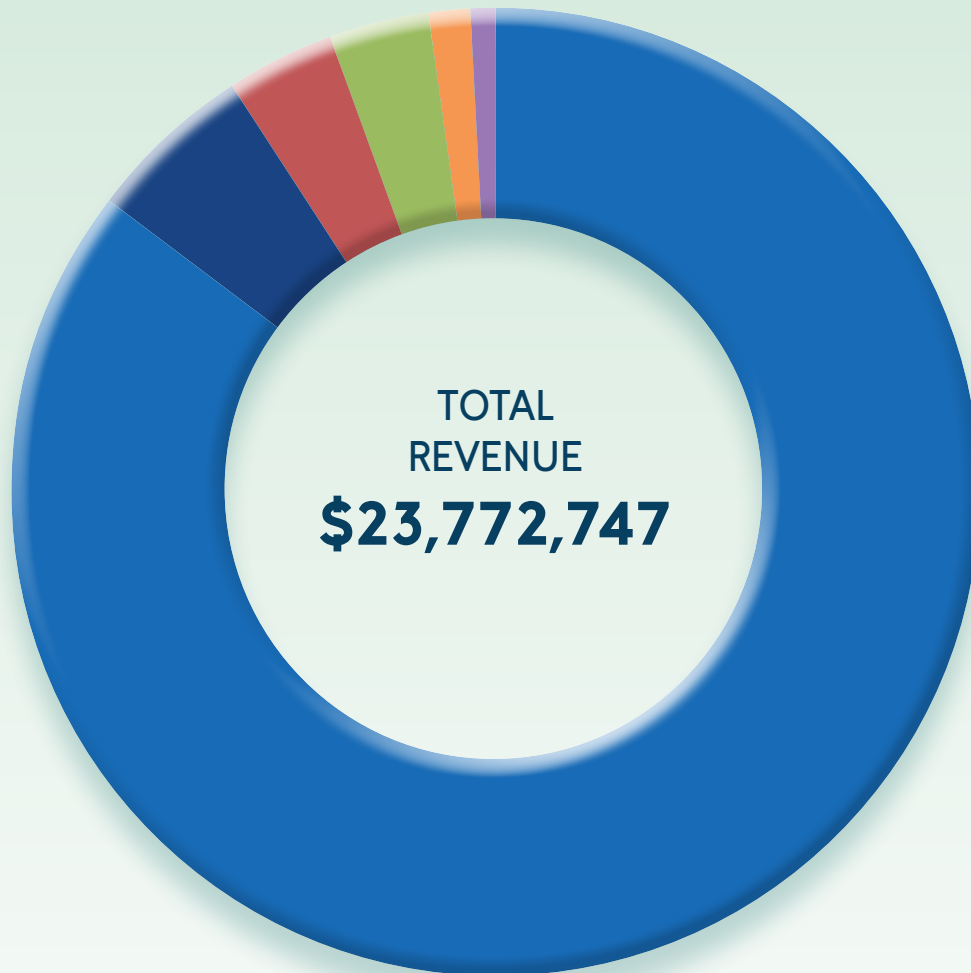
EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES DIVISION/HEAD START

Lashawndra Ashford, Center Director – Hudson Avenue
V. Michael Mitchell, Family Services Manager
Natasha Dingle, Health and Nutrition Manager
Joan Favata, Acting Center Director – North Street
Nicole Gibbons, Assistant to the VP of Early Childhood Services
Barthelemy Koumassou, Center Director – Hart Street
Shatoya Moore, Center Director – Clifford Avenue
Peter Ochi, Center Director – Joseph Avenue
Lisa Smith, Center Director – Jefferson Avenue
Linda Wright, Associate VP of Education

ABC'S FINANCIALS

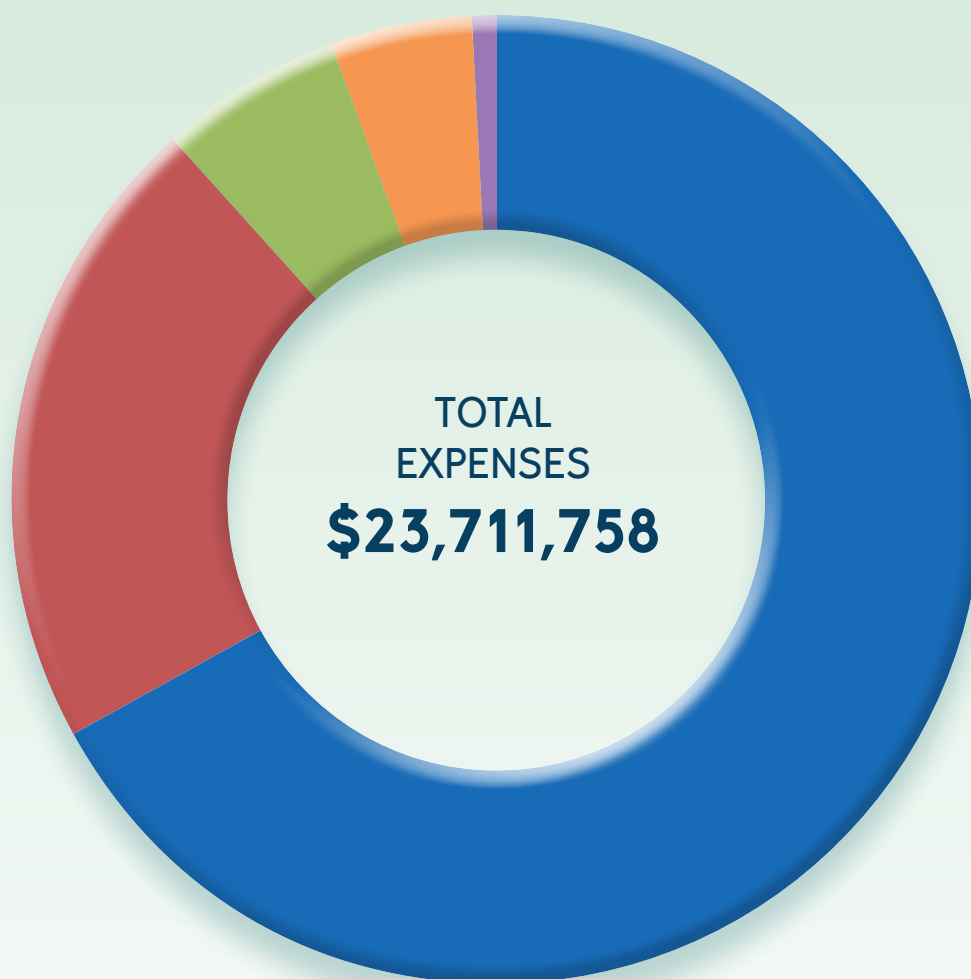
Action for a Better Community, Inc.

Financial Information for Fiscal Year Ended September 30, 2023



REVENUES

<div></div> Government Grants and Contracts	\$20,306,776
<div></div> Fee for Service	\$898,312
<div></div> Foundation and Corporate Support	\$775,615
<div></div> Fundraising/Contributions	\$190,881
<div></div> Other Revenue	\$293,744
<div></div> In-Kind Support	\$1,307,419
TOTAL REVENUE	\$23,772,747



EXPENSES

Early Childhood Services	\$ 15,907,335
Weatherization Services	\$ 1,108,151
Community Based Services	\$ 5,072,080
Administrative Costs	\$ 1,474,586
Fundraising	\$ 149,606
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$23,711,758
Change in Net Deficiency	\$60,989

FRIENDS OF ABC

Contributions received January 1, 2023–December 31, 2023

*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, 2023 to December 31, 2023. 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.

Thank you!

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Tim Flaherty
Scott Forsyth
Lucinda Lamme
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Jerome & Elrith Underwood

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To the
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MISSION
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ABC BRIDGES TO SUCCESS

Five Star Bank

ABC ENERGY CONSERVATION PROGRAM

NYSCAA Buckeye Donation

ABC EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES/HEAD START

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Scott Forsyth
Andrew Holt
Toys for Tots

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Urban League of Rochester NY
Jordan Health Center
The Greater Rochester Housing Partnership

ABC NEW DIRECTIONS PROGRAM

Rochester Area Community Foundation

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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.



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