

TEAM Receives \$1.3M Early Head Start Award

Winners of the federal Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships (EHS-CCP) grants were announced at December's White House Summit on Early Education, and TEAM won \$1.3 million per year, the largest award in Connecticut!



Awarded through the Administration for Children and Families, a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and targeted towards low-income families with children from birth through age 4, EHS-CCP encourages collaboration between agencies with EHS programs and private home child care providers. TEAM's EHS program, for low-income families with pregnant women and children up to age 3, began in 2011. TEAM has also run a Head Start program in the Valley and Milford, serving low-income children ages 3 to 5, for more than 40 years.

Regarding the need for EHS programs, ACF Acting Assistant Secretary Mark Greenberg said, "The first three years are critical for brain development, and [EHS] provides high-quality early care and learning opportunities for our most vulnerable young children."

The EHS-CCP grant is a natural extension of the long-established relationships TEAM has with more than 80 licensed childcare home providers through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), which provides reimbursement for nutritious meals and snacks. TEAM will now be able to further bolster a select number of these partnering providers, with children benefiting from EHS Program Standards regarding the delivery of comprehensive services, including education, health (including prenatal) and wellbeing services, home visitation, and other social support services.

"This is an unprecedented initiative to increase the level of quality in the field of Early Childhood," said TEAM President/CEO David Morgan, "and an historical opportunity to provide, for the first time ever, subsidized center-based Infant/Toddler opportunities in the Valley for our most vulnerable and disadvantaged families."

The roll-out of EHS-CCP is underway and promises to be a wonderful addition to TEAM's robust services!

Toys 4 Kids Drive Reaches More Than 1,300 Kids

The spirit of community giving was evident in the 2014 TEAM Toys 4 Kids toy drive, with over 7,000 toys donated for more than 1,300 children from nearly 700 families!

In November, Tom and Diane Baklik hosted their 10th annual Christmas Breakfast at their home in Oxford, with several local entertainers, and a visit from Santa Claus!



Milford's Neopost USA held their 14th annual, employee-driven Bikes for Tikes, raising enough money to purchase 149 bicycles! With other donations, nearly 200 kids received brand new bicycles!



Toys 4 Kids is unique from other area toy drives in a few ways. Clients

go through a screening process, providing proof of Valley residency, proof of income, and proof of age for all children, ensuring donations reach the local children aged 12 and under for whom they are intended. Parents are also able to "shop" for toys for their children at the TEAM Toy Store. This empowers parents to choose toys based upon their child's interests and tastes.



For nearly 30 years, Toys 4 Kids has helped low-income Valley families celebrate the holidays, which wouldn't be possible without the generosity of the community and the hard work of volunteers. This year, 165 people volunteered more than 2,000 hours transporting toys from drop-off sites at 132 businesses



throughout the Valley, as well as organizing and working at the toy store. Several organizations held their own events to help make the holidays special for area kids.



Thanks to everyone who helped make TEAM's 2014 Toys 4 Kids drive a resounding success!

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New Logo, New Look in Print and Online

As TEAM's new logo, unveiled on our 2014 Annual Report, is being updated throughout the agency, we're bringing a fresh, new look to our newsletter and website. We encourage you to visit us at



New logo



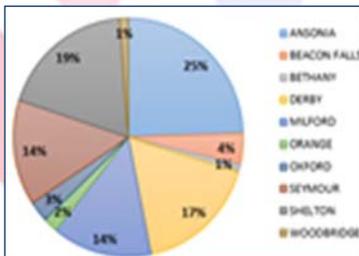
www.teaminc.org, and invite you to "like" us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/TEAMIncCT.

Energy Assistance Season Heating Up at TEAM

Since the August opening of Energy season, TEAM's Energy Department has already helped more than 3,600 homeowners and renters apply for the Connecticut Energy Assistance Program (CEAP).

CEAP, and other energy assistance programs, help offset heating costs for approved low-income households by making payments directly to heating providers, including oil, natural gas, electricity, propane, kerosene, coal, wood, and wood pellet suppliers. Gross income guidelines differ by household size; for example, a household of one must be below \$32,514; for a household of 4, the threshold is \$62,528.

More than \$1.9 million has been paid this season to heating providers on behalf of more than 2,900 households, 75% of which have been in the Valley.



Households receiving energy assistance, by town, as of 02/28/15

To schedule an appointment through May 1 to apply for Energy assistance in Derby, call (203) 736-5420 and follow the prompts; for Milford's Human Services office, call (203) 783-3253; in Orange, call (203) 891-4787; and in Woodbridge, call (203) 389-3429.

Clients GAIN Employment, Self-Sufficiency

Nearly one year since TEAM's Gaining Access to Independence Now (GAIN) enrolled its first cohort of 10 clients, the program has helped nearly 30 clients achieve the goals they aimed to accomplish!

Taking a holistic approach, GAIN offers intensive case management to help clients break through the many barriers to employment they experience. Working with a case manager, clients develop and implement their own Individual Employability Action Plan, participate in peer support groups, attend weekly workshops, get connected with daycare and transportation services, receive job skill training, and, ultimately, gain employment in their chosen vocation.



Proud GAIN graduates!

Of the 27 clients to participate in the three GAIN cohorts, 14 have already found employment, with 11 people joining the medical field, 2 working as make-up artists, and 1 person working in early childhood education.

TEAM hopes to be able to offer additional GAIN cohorts and help other clients build pathways to success!

Early Education Makes the Best of a Long Winter

Unable to use their playground, upgraded this past fall, after Mother Nature buried it under feet of snow, the kids in TEAM's Head Start Program were developing cabin fever. Thinking outside of the box—or should we say “bottle?”—Assistant Teacher Maria Luiza Mazzacco spearheaded a project that captivated kids and parents alike!

“Miss Maria” asked parents to bring in their empty, clean one-gallon milk bottles, which the classes then used to build an igloo. The kids were so happy with the results, they started bringing their parents to the gym to see the igloo. Teachers turned the inside into a cozy nook where kids can “chill out” with a good book!



Thanks to Miss Maria, and the rest of TEAM's Early Ed staff, for helping the kids develop some great teamwork skills!



How cool is this igloo?

Festival of Trees Brightens Holiday Season

Benefiting TEAM's Volunteer Caregivers program, November's 11th Annual Festival of Trees at Wesley Village in Shelton raised over \$12,000!



Volunteer Caregivers provide free in-home services and transportation for disabled, elderly, or isolated people in the Valley, allowing them to remain independent.

Businesses, organizations, and individuals decorated and donated more than 50 themed trees, mantelpieces, wreaths, and centerpieces, including a tree inspired by the Disney movie *Frozen*, a jewelry tree, a Dunkin Donuts tree (loaded with gift cards!), and a Lotto tree. Also donated were dozens of packed gift baskets, with such goodies as gift certificates to local restaurants, theatre tickets, spa products, wine and chocolate, and hotel stays!



Meals On Wheels Slots Available

For many of the seniors receiving hot daily meals from TEAM's Meals on Wheels program, the chance to socialize is almost as important as the meal itself.

Serving Ansonia, Derby, Shelton, Seymour, and Oxford, Meals on Wheels provides homebound persons age 60 and older with a nutritionally-balanced hot lunch five days per week. Frozen meals are also delivered once per week.

Drivers become familiar with clients and their routines, and can contact family members or emergency services should a concern arise. Clients look forward to the daily visits, as they may otherwise have limited or no social interaction.

There is no low-income qualification for the program. If a client is unable to make the suggested \$3 donation per meal, service will not be denied.

To arrange for Meals on Wheels service for yourself or a family member, call (203) 736-5420 ext. 227.

Proud Member



Griffin Hospital Supports TEAM Diaper Bank

In 2012, Griffin Hospital received an official designation as “Baby-Friendly®” from Baby-Friendly USA for its commitment to providing newborns a best start to a healthy life. This year, under the leadership of CEO/President Pat Charmel, Griffin Hospital continued its baby-friendly ways with a \$5,000 donation to TEAM Diaper Bank!

Griffin Hospital also gave TEAM Diaper Bank access to purchase diapers and wipes through Griffin’s national distributors at wholesale rates. This partnership significantly cuts costs, enabling TEAM to purchase more diapers and wipes with the same amount of money! Serving residents of Ansonia, Derby, Oxford, Seymour, and Shelton, TEAM Diaper Bank provides diapers and wipes to income-eligible families with children under 4 years of age.

Despite being a necessity for babies, diapers are not covered by WIC, SNAP (food stamps), Medicare, or other programs. With a typical infant using 10-12 diapers per day, and toddlers using up to 8, a baby in a low-income family may spend the entire day in a



(l-r) TEAM President/CEO David Morgan, Griffin Childbirth Center Director Luanne Miller R.N., TEAM FRC Manager Ayanna Williams, Griffin Hospital CEO/President Pat Charmel, TEAM CFO Wendy Rodorigo, TEAM Board Member David Rabinove, TEAM Executive VP Diane Stroman

single soiled diaper, leading to rashes, infections, and other health problems. Babies with severe diaper rashes often cry frequently which, when coupled with living in need, can lead to further stress for both the parents and the children. Parents who can’t afford diapers also can’t leave their child in daycare to go to work, leading to economic instability and continuing the cycle of poverty.

TEAM Diaper Bank gives families a way to break this cycle by getting to the “bottom” of the problem and, with Griffin Hospital on board, more bottoms will be covered!

To apply for diapers, or to find out how you can help TEAM Diaper Bank, call (203) 736-5420 ext. 208 or e-mail diapers@teaminc.org.

Volunteers Provide Income Tax Prep Assistance

Tax Day (April 15) is fast approaching and for households with total income of \$53,000 or less, free tax preparation assistance is available.

TEAM’s Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program aims to increase the number of working families that qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Care (CTC) Credit, supplementing the income of low- to moderate- income families.



Through mid-March, TEAM’s cadre of volunteers, each with a minimum of 16 hours of training from the IRS, have helped nearly 400 taxpayers prepare basic tax return forms. The tax returns are filed electronically by the volunteers at no cost to the client.

Call (203) 736-5420 ext. 206 to make an appointment through April 15 at TEAM’s Derby office, Derby Neck Library, or the Milford Senior Center.

Client Spotlight: “I Bought A House!”

With an annual salary just over \$29,000, single mother of three Renita didn’t think she’d ever be able to save enough to buy her own home. In August 2012, to achieve her goal of homeownership, Renita applied for TEAM’s Assets For Independence (AFI), a Matching Savings program; every dollar participants deposit into an Individual Development Account (IDA) is matched with 2 dollars, through Federal funding, for a total savings of up to \$4,500. In order to receive the matching deposits, participants must attend six weeks of financial literacy training and then monthly workshops thereafter. The AFI IDA may only be used to purchase a first home.

Two months after joining the program, Renita lost her job and took an Emergency Withdrawal from her IDA to avoid a utility shut-off. Renita enrolled in a job-training program, switching to a more lucrative career. As soon as she found a job in her new field, she replaced her withdrawal and continued growing her savings. In October 2014, Renita achieved her savings goal in her IDA and began looking for a home. More significantly, using tools learned in her workshops, Renita had independently saved over \$11,000 in her own personal savings account!

On February 27, Renita achieved her hard-earned goal and closed on her new home! She says, “TEAM has helped me go from Section 8 housing assistance to now being a proud homeowner...I made it through even when I had setbacks. The staff really care about people.”



To learn more about AFI or other Matching Savings programs, or to find out when the next 1st Time Home Owner workshop will be held, call (203) 736-5420.

Ansonia Rod & Gun Donates To Senior Services

The Ansonia Rod & Gun Club recently made a generous \$5,000 donation to TEAM’s Senior Services! Member dues support local programs benefiting the community, as well as activities such as youth gun safety programs.

Providing critical services, TEAM’s Senior programs ensure the wellness and well-being of our greatest generation.

TEAM is very grateful for the support of the AR&GC!



(l-r) TEAM Director of Family Support Services Suzanne Reilly, TEAM Board Member Ken Gurin, AR&GC Treasurer Horace Berhle, TEAM Executive VP Diane Stroman, TEAM President/CEO David Morgan

A Message From Our President

In a 90-day window of meaningful succession-planning and transition activities at multiple levels of TEAM's leadership that includes the President/CEO and the Executive Vice President positions, we have experienced a multitude of experiences that now brings us to the dawning of a 2015 rich with promise and new opportunities for TEAM. My most heartfelt thanks to each of you for the outpouring of emails, phone calls, and time together; I consider this an exceptional opportunity to be an even greater servant than ever before in my service to others.

Helping people, changing lives; educating children, strengthening families; transforming communities...these sentiments are just some of the pillars of TEAM's work dedicated to a vision in which all individuals and families are thriving.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and myself, I feel very fortunate to share with you a passion for TEAM; we hold its scope of work for positive change so close to our hearts. Thank you so much for your support as we continue our journey together, big dreams and realities lie ahead for TEAM and those we serve each day.



David Morgan
President/CEO



"Graduation" for Early Ed Site Director

Jamie Peterson, former Site Director for TEAM's Early Education Head Start Program, has moved to the head of the class! With her recent promotion to Director of Child and Family Development, Jamie now oversees all of TEAM's Early Childhood initiatives, at 6 locations in the Valley and Milford area.

In her previous role, Jamie managed the areas of Health and Nutrition, Family and Community Partnerships, Licensing, and Program Governance. Throughout her 11 years in Early Ed, Jamie has developed a vast knowledge of Community Action and Early Education and is very excited to take on her new role.

The best part of her job, Jamie says, has been connecting with



families and seeing the amazing progress of the young children. While she finds it bittersweet to watch children leave the program, she takes pride in knowing they are well prepared for success in kindergarten. She's so confident in the program, she even had her now 5-year old daughter enrolled in the preschool for 2 years!

TEAM's Mission Statement

TEAM, Inc. is a private, non-profit corporation, governed by a volunteer tri-partite Board of Directors, with a mission to connect economically disadvantaged individuals and families residing in the Lower Naugatuck-Housatonic Valley Region with solutions that lead to well-being, self-sufficiency, and full participation in the community.

Upcoming Events

**Saturday,
April 25, 6–11 PM
Warsaw Park,
Ansonia**



At TEAM's biggest fundraiser, 98 Valley men will be serving their signature dishes, including tacos, wings, pasta, seafood dishes, and desserts! With Chaz of WPLR's Chaz & AJ Show as emcee, live entertainment, a silent auction, and a raffle, this is a "don't miss" event!

Tickets are \$55 and include wine, beer, and soda. To purchase, contact Trish at (203) 736-5420 ext. 221, or info@teaminc.org.



**Tuesday & Wednesday,
May 5, 8 AM–
May 6, 8 PM
www.GiveGreater.org**



**Saturday,
October 3, 6–11 PM
Racebrook Country Club,
Orange**



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