

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance

CAPK's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program performance in 2014 is set to surpass last year's, according to Program Manager Sandi Truman.

As of April 30, a total of 3,787 CAPK VITA tax returns had been accepted by the Internal Revenue Service, representing close to \$5.8 million in federal returns and \$2.7 million in Earned Income Tax Credit returns recovered on behalf of low-to-moderate-income clients.

The magic number to beat is 3,962 returns completed in 2013, Truman said, and 2014 numbers will continue to rise because VITA work for this tax season will go on through June 30. Staff and volunteers are currently doing 20 to 30 returns per day for late filers, she said, some of whom have several years' worth of taxes to get done.

Bakersfield resident Mark Angeles has used CAPK VITA two years in a row to get caught up on previous years' unfiled tax returns. "My quality of life has totally improved," he said recently, after filing his taxes with CAPK VITA and being notified that he had a return coming.

This year's program results are especially noteworthy because a lack of IRS funding for the local VITA effort meant our workforce, made up primarily of volunteers (the "V" in VITA), could only be about two-thirds as big as last year's.



Sandi Truman, Program Manager, helps a VITA client with her income tax return forms

But 32 volunteers came through for us, as did funders Wells Fargo, Valley Republic Bank, Bank of the Sierra, and Daniells Phillips Vaughan & Bock Certified Public Accountants. In-kind partners include: Community Trust Federal Credit Union, Community Financial Resources/U.S. Bank, City of Wasco Housing Authority, Kern High School District, CSUB, Employers' Training Resource and the Owens Valley Career Development Center's Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Program.

Later this year, CAPK VITA will move from its current Wible Road location to 300 19th Street in downtown Bakersfield, where it will share facilities with 2-1-1 Kern County and CAPK's Energy Program. To stay up to date with VITA happenings, please visit: www.capk.org.

From our Executive Director

Dear Friends of CAPK,

April 1, 2014, marked the beginning of CAPK's partnership with the Consulate of Mexico in Fresno's Consulado Sobre Ruedas (Consulate on Wheels) Program, which takes consular services outside of Fresno to other Valley cities. The news was received with great excitement by our partners and especially residents of Bakersfield and Kern County with ties to Mexico, including many of the clients we serve through our programs.

The Mexican Consulate reached out to us because they were searching not only for conveniently located facilities, but also a strong community partner for their Consulate on Wheels, Bakersfield effort.

CAPK readily offered the Friendship House Community Center at 2424 Cottonwood Road in Southeast Bakersfield, which is home to a large Hispanic population of Mexican descent. Thanks to a mutual agreement reached after just a couple of meetings between Consulate leaders and CAPK management, Mexican nationals now have Consular services available every Tuesday and two Wednesdays a month.

Furthermore, CAPK's 2-1-1 Kern County information and referral helpline has information available by phone and on the Web for locals seeking assistance from the Mexican Consulate without having to travel all the way to Fresno.



JEREMY T. TOBIAS



CAPK staff and friends at the 2014 March for Babies held at Liberty Park on April 12.

For more details, including how interested persons can set up appointments with the Consulate (as all services are by appointment only), please call 2-1-1.

13th Annual Humanitarian Awards Banquet

I would like to thank our sponsors, as well as everybody who attended this year's Humanitarian Awards Banquet, which was held on Thursday, May 8, 2014, at the

Petroleum Club of Bakersfield. To read more and see pictures from this successful event please turn to *page 7* of the newsletter.

2014 March for Babies

And finally, if you recall, CAPK was a proud sponsor of the 2014 March for Babies. The event was a major success with over 500 people marching on April 12. Thanks to everybody who helped us make this event successful, including the many CAPK employees who contributed their time and money. A special congratulations to the "Shafter HS/EHS TNT-Tiny n' Tuff" team for winning second place in the T-shirt contest!

Significant Changes Coming to CAPK's Energy Program

CAPK's Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) counts 2014 as a year of much change and growth.

First, the program, also known as the Green Energy Program for the last couple of years, is shortening its name to the "Energy Program." The name change more accurately reflects its nature as both a home weatherization improvement and emergency utility assistance program.

Second, the LIHEAP office is moving this summer from its current business location on Sillect Avenue to 300 19th Street, in downtown Bakersfield. This move will make CAPK's LIHEAP more accessible to target clients and naturally draw qualifying families from the surrounding community, where, according to U.S. Census Bureau data, there are approximately 3,500 low-income households within a two-mile radius.



GARY TAYLOR, Weatherization Installer

Also, since CAPK's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program and 2-1-1 Kern County information and referral will be relocated to 19th Street as well, the cross-referral of clients among these programs will make for an efficient one-stop-shopping experience for families that qualify for several of our services.

Finally, and possibly most importantly, the program's funding from the U.S. Department of Energy/California Department of Community Services and Development (CSD) is increasing from \$5 million per year to \$7.4 million in 2014, \$7.9 million in 2015, and \$6.6 million each year thereafter through 2018. These increases are happening thanks to carryover moneys from previous years, as well as a 10-year update in the allocation formula based on changing demographic trends and needs.

CAPK to Become Regular Contributor to Kern Business Journal



Beginning with its June/July 2014 issue, the *Kern Business Journal* will count Community Action Partnership of Kern among its regular contributors of articles.

The journal, which is published bimonthly by *The Bakersfield Californian*, features stories about and by local businesses—including nonprofits. Each issue focuses on a different theme: agriculture, education, energy, sales, health, etc.

Because CAPK is one of Kern's largest nonprofits, with programs that touch many areas of life and business (e.g., Head Start, Shafter Youth Center and Friendship House Community Center – education; the Energy Program – energy; CAPK Food Bank, HIV Prevention & Testing, and Women, Infants & Children (WIC) – health; Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) – economy/finance) we have plenty of stories to contribute.

A number of CAPK funders and partners—Kaiser

Permanente, Wells Fargo, Bank of the Sierra, Chevron, Valley Republic Bank, Dignity Health, to name a few—are regular KBJ contributors or advertisers. CAPK's ongoing contributions to the journal will ensure that our agency's impactful work is noticed by these important partners and other members of the business community.

CAPK article submissions will be coordinated through the Planning, Research and Development Division, which will work with our various programs to highlight our agency's many accomplishments. The June/July Energy Issue will feature the imminent growth of our Energy Program thanks to a hefty infusion of government funding, and the Food Bank Warehouse's big-ticket wish-list item of solar panels to offset its high energy costs.

For a free subscription to the *Kern Business Journal*, call (661) 392-5777, or read online at

www.kernbusinessjournal.com.

Head Start Read Across America Day

What better way to celebrate the beloved Dr. Seuss's birthday than bringing the Cat in the Hat alive to a classroom of enthusiastic pre-kindergarteners. On March 3, national Read Across America Day, more than 100 volunteers shared and celebrated their love of reading with children enrolled in all 44 of CAPK's Kern County Head Start centers. Although Dr. Seuss books were a clear favorite with many of the youngsters – especially if the reader was dressed as the mischievous Cat in the Hat – every book read resulted in miles of smiles and happy hugs all around.



KIYOSHI TOMONO



From left: Sandra Gonzalez, Yolanda Gonzales, Jermy Tobias, and Rosie Barron.

Some of the “celebrity” readers included Kern County Supervisor Leticia Perez, Bakersfield City Councilman Russell Johnson, KGET news anchor Kiyoshi Tomono, KGET weatherman Kevin Charette, and Hot 94.1 radio DJ Danny Morrison. Many thanks to every one of the volunteer readers, Leslie Mitchell, Lead Curriculum Specialist, and all the Head Start Center Directors and their staffs for making this year's Read Across America Day a huge success!

A New Community Garden Flourishes at the Friendship House

With the help of Father Jack Estes of the Garden Project, the Friendship House Community Center (FHCC) community garden has taken root! On March 22, 2014, the community came together to construct and install planter boxes, an irrigation system, and to lay down garden soil. The layout of the community garden consists of three easily accessible planting beds. An archway leading to the garden and lattices for growing vegetables will also be installed. The Friendship House hosted a planting party, where program participants and the community were invited to plant seasonable vegetables in the new community garden.

To maintain the community garden, Garden Project volunteers will return each season to turn over the soil and plant seasonal produce. The garden harvest will be enjoyed in to provide nutrition education and cooking classes for FHCC participants.

On May 10, the Greater Bakersfield Chamber of Commerce's Leadership Bakersfield will be

installing a fruit orchard at the Friendship House, along with a shed filled with gardening tools. With support from our friends and community volunteers, the FHCC will have a beautiful garden and orchard, to be enjoyed by the community for years to come.

We thank Fr. Jack Estes and the Garden Project, our community volunteers, Chevron, FHCC staff and Advisory Board, and members of Leadership Bakersfield of the Greater Bakersfield Chamber of Commerce for making the community garden a reality.



CAPK Leaders attend Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C.

Community Action Agencies across the nation are celebrating their 50th anniversary this year. In March 2014, CAPK Executive Director Jeremy Tobias and staff attended the National Action Community Foundation's (NCAF) Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. Along with Community Action Agency leaders from across the country, they met with congressional representatives to highlight services provided to help low-income families and children to overcome poverty. They also highlighted the need for continued support and funding for programs such as Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and Head Start/Early Head Start, and the Community Service Block Grant (CSBG).



Smokey Bear visits Shafter Youth Center

On a warm spring day in March, the children at the Shafter Youth Center and the next door Shafter Early Head Start Center were in for a special treat. Smokey Bear stopped by, along with his friends from the U.S. Forestry Service, to teach the kids all about the dangers of playing with matches, and demonstrate how to “Stop! Drop! And Roll!” in case their clothes should catch on fire.

The children got an up-close view of a real fire truck and learned how to use a powerful fire truck water hose to extinguish fires. They also learned how to crawl out of a “smoky situation” in the Kern County Fire Department’s Fire Simulation Trailer. We extend our gratitude to the Kern County Fire Department, the U.S. Forestry Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and especially to

Smokey Bear, for teaching important fire safety skills to our kids.



CAPK SPOTLIGHT

NEW 2-1-1 KERN COUNTY MANAGER

On April 24, Michael Saltz joined the CAPK team as our new 211 Kern County Program Manager. Watch for a full introduction in the next issue of our Newsletter. Welcome on-board Michael!

WELL WIC CERTIFICATION

CAPK Women, Infants and Children (WIC) locations are now recognized by the California WIC Association as Certified Well WIC Worksites. This certification is given for making staff wellness a priority at every level. The program and associated work sites were observed promoting healthy living for employees and the community at large. Congratulations to CAPK WIC!

YOLANDA OCHOA

We are proud to announce that CAPK Board Member Yolanda Ochoa was recently honored as Volunteer of the Year by the Kern County Sheriff's Activities League. Congratulations Yolanda!



From left: Tomeka Powell, Rose Marie Wahl, Yolanda Ochoa and Leticia Perez

CAPK Food Bank Hard at Work

The CAPK Food Bank continues to work hard this spring to meet the increased need for emergency food assistance. The ongoing drought in California has resulted in fewer jobs, lower agricultural production, and higher food prices, all of which have hurt the low-income population of Kern County. CAPK Food Bank has joined forces with several partners to meet the growing need in our community:

“Stuff the Bus” – Golden Empire Transit District

On Friday March 21, we partnered with GET to hold the annual all-day “Stuff the Bus” food drive. We collected 8,409 pounds of food (a 68% increase over last year) and raised \$8,675 in cash donations (nearly doubling last year’s donations). We extend our gratitude to all the sponsors, volunteers, and donors who made this event a success!



Farm Credit West and Co-Bank

We acknowledge our friends at Farm Credit West and Co-Bank for making a generous donation of \$5,000 to the Food Bank.

Great American Milk Drive – Feeding America

Though milk is the number one nutritious product requested by food bank clients, it is rarely donated because it’s perishable. In response to this dilemma, we are partnering with Feeding America on the Great American Milk Drive, the first-ever national program to help deliver gallons of milk to hungry families in our community.



You can be a part of the solution, too, if you like here’s how to donate: visit www.gotmilk.com and enter your zip code to ensure the donation stays in your community. Funds will be converted into vouchers, redeemable at local grocery stores, which will be delivered by our Food Bank into the hands of families.

13th Annual CAPK Humanitarian Awards Banquet



From left: JIM CAMP, LOUIS GILL,
and JEREMY TOBIAS

Our Annual Banquet is CAPK's sole agency-wide fundraising event. Proceeds help programs with limited funding address unmet community needs. It is also an opportunity to recognize outstanding individuals and partners who are making a difference in our community.

This event would not be possible if it weren't for the generous contributions from our sponsors: **Platinum Level** - Wells Fargo; **Gold Level** - Clifford & Bradford Insurance Agency; **Silver Level** - Mutual of America and Diamond Technologies; **Bronze Level** - GEMCare, Oasis Air Conditioning, Wells Fargo Insurance, Michael K. Brown Landscape and Maintenance, and Kern County Fifth District Supervisor Leticia Perez.

Congratulations go to this year's award winners: Louis Gill, Humanitarian of the Year; Camping World, Community Partner of the Year; and Judy Coronado, Xiomara Cortez, and Jasmine Cordova, Volunteers of the Year.



CHRISTOPHER MEYERS, Ph.D.

This year's keynote speaker was Christopher Meyers, Ph.D., Executive Director of the Kegley Institute of Ethics and professor of Philosophy at CSUB, who gave a thought-provoking look at how far we have come as a

society and how far we have to go in the fight against poverty. Professor Meyers spoke about the 75th anniversary of *The Grapes of Wrath* and how it relates to the 50th anniversary of America's War on Poverty.



CAPK Food Bank staff along with their Manager, Ken White and Director, Carmen Segovia, enjoy the evening.

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CAPK Battles HIV/AIDS and Other Chronic Infections in Kern County

There are many things to consider when fighting HIV/AIDS and other blood-borne or sexually transmitted infections, according to CAPK's Prevention Programs Manager Dennis Hendrix.

"HIV, viral hepatitis, syphilis, chlamydia, gonorrhea...they are all diseases linked to and worsened by poverty," said Hendrix, current Chair of the Kern County AIDS Advisory Board and a member of the California Planning Group of the Office of AIDS for the California Department of Public Health. He said the highest rates of infection are found in neighborhoods and populations where poverty, substance abuse, high-risk sexual activity, homelessness and lack of access to health care are also prevalent.

The shame and social stigma associated with these diseases can prevent clients from seeking help, he said, highlighting that service providers need to be client friendly:

appropriate and welcoming in such a way that clients will be encouraged to seek services, stay in treatment and monitor their disease effectively—including any co-occurring conditions.

"Any chronic illness, including substance abuse and mental illness, is tied to risk," Hendrix said. For example, a co-occurring physical illness could weaken someone's immune system, and a mental health condition or substance abuse could cloud a person's judgment with regard to risky behaviors, such as sharing needles or engaging in unprotected sexual activities with high-risk partners.

These issues are being examined at the state and local level, he said, to deal more effectively with lack of access to care, with an emphasis on increased testing, intervention and treatment services.

Besides CAPK, the Kern County AIDS Advisory Board is composed of representatives from supervisorial districts and such local organizations

as Clinica Sierra Vista, Planned Parenthood, the Kern County Departments of Public Health Services and Mental Health, the Kern Council of Governments, and persons affected by HIV—those living with the disease, as well as their friends, family members, caregivers and service providers.

The program provides clients with outreach and education, testing and referral, access to treatment and ongoing services. For information, please contact (661) 336-5236 x1134 or dhendrix@capk.org.



UPCOMING EVENTS

MAY 5, 2014

Friendship House Summer Program registration begins
Forms will be made available Monday-Friday from 2:00 pm - 6:00 pm

MAY 23, 2014

Last day of classes for part-day Head Start

MAY 28, 2014

Nutrition education and cooking classes
9:30 am and 4:00 pm @ Friendship House, 2424 Cottonwood Rd.

MAY 28, 2014

Ribbon cutting ceremony for new orchard
4:00 pm @ Friendship House, 2424 Cottonwood Rd.

MAY 29, 2014

Part-day Head Start staff off duty



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