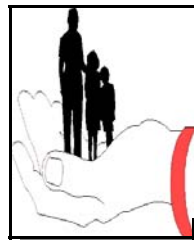


Blue Valley Community Action

1998 Annual Report



Mission Statement:
To build upon strengths by providing
diverse and innovative opportunities
to impact personal responsibility,
family well-being, and community
development.



BLUE VALLEY COMMUNITY ACTION, INC.

ANNUAL REPORT TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Blue Valley Community Action, Inc.
620 5th Street, P.O. Box 273
Fairbury, Nebraska 68352-0273
Phone: (402) 729-2278
Fax: (402) 729-2801
E-mail: bv94229@navix.net



*Serving the people of Southeastern Nebraska
and North Central Kansas.*

1966-1998

December 1998

Board of Directors
1997-1998

Executive Committee

Don Deats, President

Eunice Beran, Vice President

Michael Simonsen, Secretary

Ruth Miller, Treasurer

John Walton, Equal Opportunity

Norene Fitzgerald, Personnel

Additional Members

Dale Kerkman

Anna Kinnison

Albert Simacek

Suzanne Shaw

David Swavely

Ed Aden

Dwight Nichols

Rose Towndrow

Ross Stepan

James Weichel

Thomas Wright

Mary Campbell

Fern Shamburg

Collette Barber

Gayle Barnett

Blanche Smith

Beth Mares

Lila Witt

Bonnie Schoenbeck

Keith Bottrell

Ray Naber

Larry Bonner

Susan Daily

Larry Lange

Roberta Woolston

Daryl Ream

Russell Bredenkamp

Jane Beck Smith

Tom Robson

Larry Kramer

Sylvia Warren

Earl Leonard

FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT...

Blue Valley Community Action is in its thirty-second year and continues to help improve the quality of life for almost 13,000 local residents. Each year seems to bring new challenges and new rewards.

The Board of Directors tries very hard to meet the needs of each county served by the organization by directing the staff and volunteers to be responsive and to help those less fortunate who are trying to make a difference in their own lives and the lives of their family members. It is not always possible to do all that is needed.

Blue Valley Community Action is a private non-profit charity and is very dependent upon contributions, donations, volunteers, and the abilities of staff to do successful grant-writing. Each year costs go up, but this is not always covered by increases in grants. More often than not, grants reduce or remain constant. This is where the help of the many community supporters is so critical to the organization's success.

These supporters are the volunteers who help with center activities, clothing rooms, food pantries, commodity distributions, child care and Head Start centers, on the many advisory groups or even those volunteers who make up the governing board. They are the shoppers at the clothing stores whose bargains help pay the overhead/building costs. They are the churches, school children and caring citizens who help raise money for the local center operations, food pantry necessities, school clothing, winter mittens, school supplies, holiday gifts and various other items families need but can't always manage to afford. They are the merchants and lenders who donate or offer reduced cost products for the not-for-profit corporation's projects and fund-raisers. They are the few thoughtful donors who contribute to the organization's endowment fund. They are those who contribute paper products and cleaning supplies. They are the county boards of supervisors and commissioners who set aside funds each year to help keep the operations going, the anonymous donors to our scholarships for less fortunate families so their children can attend college or trade schools and be better off than their parents. They are our silent neighbors, who write a check when asked or when they hear of our need.

This list can go on into the hundreds of individuals from Blue Valley's area that contribute so much to our organization, and usually several others, that has made BVCA's 32nd year successful and helps us all begin our 33rd year with renewed enthusiasm. We appreciate all of your help and, as president of the Board of Directors and representing the entire network of BVCA workers, I wish to give each of you a heartfelt and sincere...**Thank You.**

Don Deats
1998 President

... AND THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This annual report covers Blue Valley Community Action's thirty-second year as a private nonprofit corporation under the statutes of Nebraska and Kansas. It indicates our efforts cost over six million dollars. It indicates that 12,966 people were helped by BVCA volunteers, programs, and staff. It also indicates that 800 citizens volunteered, and that there were more community partners than ever before. These successes would not be possible without the much appreciated support of many hundreds of citizens, donors, and volunteers. Our thanks to all who have helped strengthen individuals, families, and communities through their support of BVCA and its many community efforts.

Unfortunately, the report never can tell the full story. A report such as this seldom can. I'd like to let you see a glimpse of the behind the scenes story. BVCA volunteers come from many communities and rural areas, many service organizations, many retired individuals, many church groups, recipients of services who often turn around and volunteer for others, many employees volunteer for other projects either in BVCA's multiple program areas or for other community organizations, and many employees work weekends, evenings, and before sun-rise in addition to their full day on the job. BVCA has some of the most dedicated volunteers in the world, working full time in several cases. Many work a particular day each week all year long. Some travel to the homes of elderly residents to help with odd duties they have difficulty managing. Some have faced emotionally troubled citizens with such depressing life stories, you wonder how they can come back each day to deal with such things. This organization has many needs, but dedicated staff and volunteers is not one of our shortfalls.

I know an annual report isn't supposed to ask for the readers appreciation, it is supposed to present activities that trigger such appreciation. I hope, however, this little insight into our operations and the many sacrifices volunteers and staff of this community organization make for the health and well being of the residents in the Blue Valley service area, does elicit such appreciation. I know seeing from the inside, it does in me.

Who are our volunteers, our President has tried to list some, but I'll say...look around. You see their faces and talk to them everyday. We are neighbors. I like to think, we are good neighbors. We do what we can when our neighbors suffer hardships. When we are better off, we try to ensure they are a little better off also. We have found we can do much more together than on our own. In closing, let me personally thank our supporters and encourage others to join us. The opportunity to enjoy life, make a difference, and feel good is here...so are many challenges, and we need you now.

Richard D. Nation
Executive Director

Management Team 1997-1998

Executive Director
Richard D. Nation

Comptroller
Jodene Werner

Blue Valley Crisis Intervention *Loree Rix-Crouse, Director*

*Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault
Crisis Intervention
Public Information
Saline Collaborative Project
AmeriCorps*

Family & Community Services *Ardith Hoins, Director*

*Nutrition Services
Health Services Networks
Family Development
Emergency Shelters
Transit Services
Eldercare
Foster Grandparents
County Coordinators and Centers*

Housing & Rural Development *Jerri Kerr, Director*

*Community Housing Development
Weatherization and Home Rehabilitation
Homeowner Assistance Services
Joint Housing Authority Management*

Youth Services *Kathryn Molczyk, Director*

*Blue River Family Resource Center
Blue River Child Development
Head Start-Nebraska
Head Start-Kansas
Friend Preschool*



MILESTONES 1998

HOUSING & RURAL DEVELOPMENT

In recognition of the Housing and Community Development efforts in creating affordable housing, the Nebraska Affordable Housing Commission awarded BVCA the “Housing Our Community Award” at the annual Affordable Housing Conference.

BVCA also received national recognition and received an “Award of Excellence” from the Fannie Mae Foundation for the development of affordable rental housing in Crete.

Two individuals from the Housing and Community Development department, Faith Medina and Jerri Kerr, have received certification as “Housing Development Finance Professionals” from the National Development Council.

The Weatherization Specialist, Kelly Davis, was selected as one of two individuals in the State of Nebraska to serve on a Peer Review Team of subgrantees’ performance in the weatherization program and attended training in Salt Lake City. Performance monitoring was conducted in Laramie and Gillette, Wyoming.

CDBG Administrator Certifications were awarded to Jerri Kerr, Faith Medina, and Jodene Werner.

BVCA received Community Development Block Grants for first-time homebuyers for BVCA’s nine counties and a separate grant for Fillmore County.

The Housing Department has formed a partnership with the City of Fairbury, Fairbury High School, and Southeast Community College to construct a single family unit to use as a home buyer project.

FAMILY & COMMUNITY SERVICES

Doris O’Neal and Ardi Hoins received an engraved silver tray for 15 years of service in working with the job training organization of JACS (Joint Action in Community Service).

At a dinner on May 21, 1998, Sunny Kontor was recognized by “Modern Woodmen of America Camp 1775” for her community service.

BVCA was the first sponsoring agency of Character Counts in Nebraska April, 1998.

On March 31, 1998, Fillmore County Rural Transit participated in Nebraska Association of Transportation Providers “Cookie Day” at Nebraska legislature. “Bus-shaped” cookies were distributed.

The Character Counts program in conjunction with BVCA’s Foster Grandparents Program and area schools and day cares were recognized in a national publication of National Corporation for Community Services.

A representative from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation visited the Eldercare programs around Saline County and the Blue River Family Center in May 1998.

Belva Cassell was named Business and Professional Woman of the Year (BPOE).



MILESTONES 1998

YOUTH SERVICES

Our York County parent, Carol Wiggins, received the State and Regional Parent Scholarship Award.

Kay Mares, our Health Professional, has been certified as a CPR/First Aid Trainer.

Doris Thornburg, a Head Start employee for 22 years, retired this past summer. We wish Doris well in her retirement years.

In September, we were notified of funding for an Early Head Start Program in Gage and Saline Counties. We will begin hiring and training staff in early spring 1999.

We were pleased to have one of our teachers, Robin Timmerman, receive the State and Regional Teacher of the Year Award.

Two Head Start staff, Cindy Sorenson, Seward County, and Bev Ladehoff, Butler County, completed their Child Development Associates (CDAs).

BLUE VALLEY CRISIS INTERVENTION

Karen Bachman, Program Coordinator, has been certified as a Sexual Assault Response Team Member. As a member of the Sexual Assault Response Team, Ms. Bachman, in addition to law enforcement and medical personnel, will provide a cohesive, safe, and respectful response to victims of sexual assault.

The 1998 AmeriCorps Statewide Peer Mediation Youth Leadership Camp was a success. The three-day camp was held in Aurora, Nebraska. Twenty-one youth from Beatrice, Lincoln, Grand Island, Scottsbluff, Kimball, and Gering participated. Focus during the camp was on leadership, diversity, HIV/AIDS prevention, drug and alcohol prevention, life skills, volunteerism, community service, and team building. The primary organizers of the camp were BVCA AmeriCorps Members Lani Trissler, Mary Meredith, and Beth Roelfs.

Blue Valley Crisis Violence Council, formerly known as Saline County Violence Council, is expanding into Gage County. With the expansion into Gage County, and future expansion into all BVCI service counties, it has been determined that featuring Saline County in the name of the organization would not indicate a cooperative network for all service areas. Successful initial meetings have been held with criminal justice officials in Gage County, who have expressed a strong desire to build a coordinated response to domestic violence.

Blue Valley Crisis Council is developing the first Batterer's Group in southeast Nebraska, to facilitate behavior change in those who use violence as a means of control. The 26-week Batterer's program will serve Saline and Gage Counties, with referrals also being received from Jefferson County.

Current volunteers were awarded a meal provided by staff to thank them for their unconditional efforts in providing support and services. Volunteers have committed to be an integral segment of fund raising activities throughout the BVCI service area. Blue Valley Crisis Intervention staff have renewed their commitment to an active Volunteer Program. Volunteers continue to be recruited.



BLUE VALLEY COMMUNITY ACTION, INC.

RESOURCES & SUPPORT

STATE OF NEBRASKA GRANTS:

CSFP	\$77,881
WIC	\$118,440
HIV/AIDS	\$14,460
Immunizations	\$24,876
Sexual Assault	\$21,095
Domestic Violence	\$81,481
VOCA/VAWA	\$56,277
CSBG	\$220,592
Department of Education	\$36,162
Child Care Food	\$81,786
Homeless Assistance	\$64,033
Disaster Grant	\$104,758
HOME	\$315,000
CDBG	\$9,414
Weatherization	\$155,930
CATCH	\$26,956
Turning Point	\$1,331
Child Abuse Prevention	\$611
Native American Training	\$10,328
Capacity Building	\$2,105
Home Buyers	\$28,659
Jefferson Co. Good Beginnings	\$2,278

STATE OF KANSAS GRANTS:

SRS Construction Grant	\$30,000
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UNITED WAY SUPPORT:

Cornhusker United Way	\$5,000
Gage County United Way	\$2,784
York United Way	\$1,596
United Way of America	\$9,654

PRIVATE FOUNDATION SUPPORT:

Robert Woods Johnson	\$8,713
NE Children & Families Foundation	\$1,494
Peter Kiewitt Foundation	\$1,650
Family Resource Center Coalition	\$19,800

PRIVATE INVESTMENT REVENUES:

Corporate	\$89,605
Pickles	\$66,844
Private Housing Investment	\$865,932
Administration Fees	\$58,705
Management Fees	\$129,674
Development Fees	\$21,084

RENTAL INCOME:

Fillmore County Units	\$67,663
HOME Rents	\$13,318
BRFRC-Crete	\$29,519



BLUE VALLEY COMMUNITY ACTION, INC.

RESOURCES & SUPPORT

LOCAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT:

Butler County	\$2,600
Fillmore County	\$3,310
Gage County	\$6,000
Jefferson County	\$4,075
Polk County	\$2,643
Saline County	\$7,584
City of Crete	\$2,724
Village of DeWitt	\$550
Village of Dorchester	\$510
City of Friend	\$1,178
Village of Swanton	\$303
Village of Tobias	\$280
Village of Western	\$400
Seward County	\$7,716
Thayer County	\$3,085
York County	\$6,701
City of Lincoln	\$42,034

US GOVERNMENT DIRECT GRANTS:

Head Start	\$1,267,995
Foster Grandparents	\$194,711
AmeriCorps	\$39,625
Parent Information Center	\$368,120
Rural Health Outreach	\$196,174
Butler HPG Grant	\$62,455

LOCAL PRIVATE SUPPORT:

Pantries	\$19,411
Clothing Sales	\$84,611
Local County Projects	\$147,256
Agency Projects	\$14,600
In-kind Contributions	\$1,445,739
Donations	\$28,335

LOCAL CHILDCARE FEES:

Friend Preschool	\$7,180
Blue River Child Development	\$327,811

OTHER REVENUES:

Fillmore Transit	\$93,314
Butler Transit	\$29,727
York Transit	\$300
Community Partnership	\$6,238

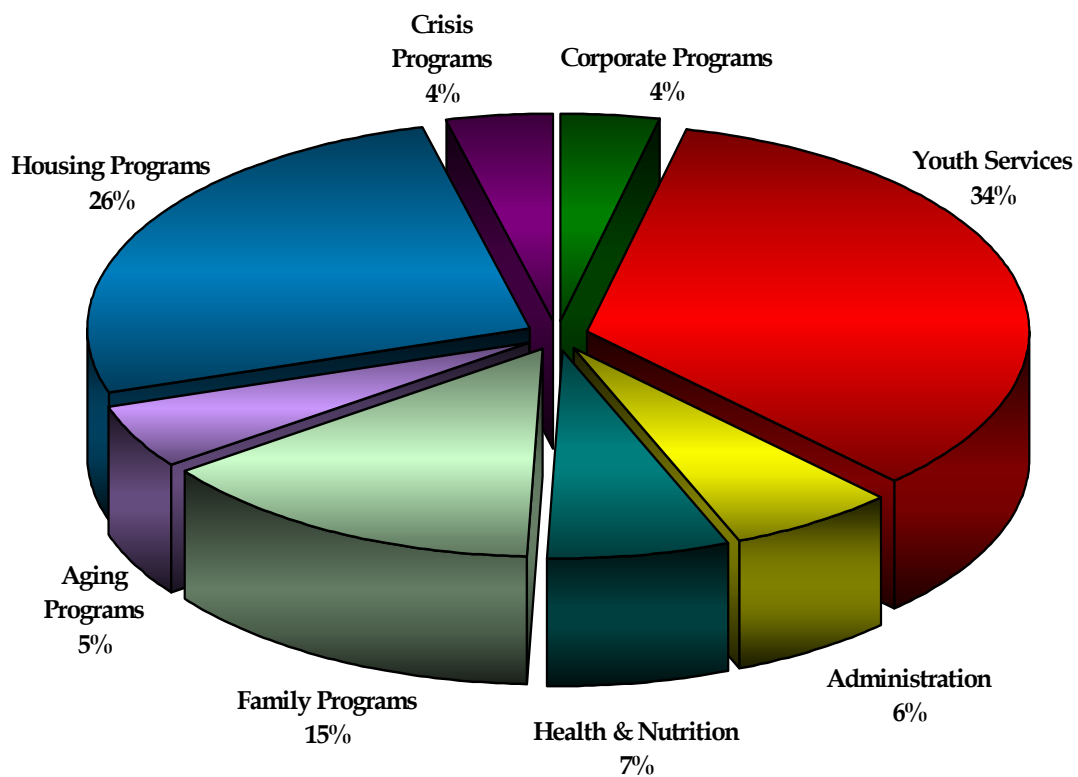
TOTAL SUPPORT FOR 1997-1998:

\$7,410,830*

**BVCA is also the general partner in five housing partnerships not included here.*

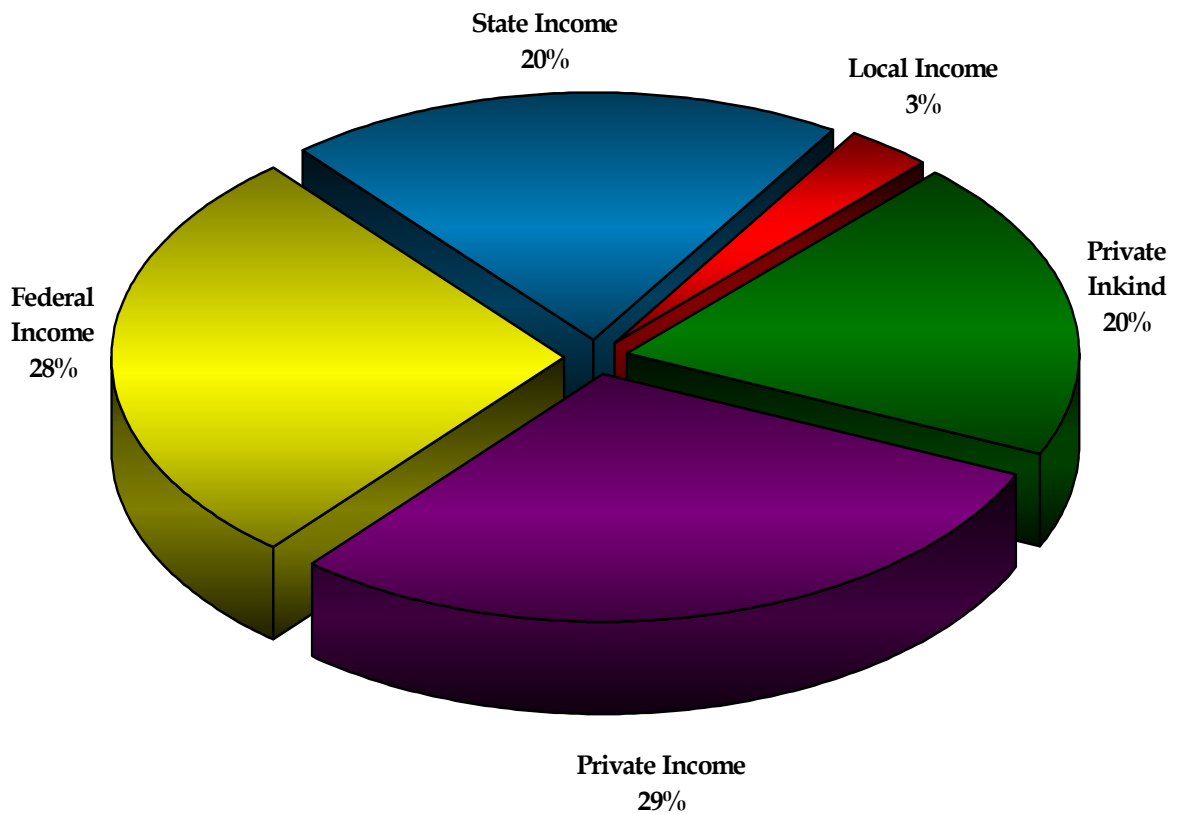


BLUE VALLEY COMMUNITY ACTION, INC. 1997-1998 EXPENSES



Total Expenses \$7,226,204

BLUE VALLEY COMMUNITY ACTION, INC.
1997-1998 REVENUE



Total Revenue \$7,410,830



BLUE VALLEY CRISIS INTERVENTION

Blue Valley Crisis Intervention was formed in 1991 to provide emergency services and emotional support to victims of domestic abuse or sexual assault. It is the goal of Blue Valley Crisis Intervention to ensure that victims are able to identify options and have access to available resources. To realize this goal, emotional support and emergency crisis intervention services and an ongoing program of community education and awareness are provided in an effort to prevent and reduce violence. Victims and their families are empowered to recognize their own abilities, make informed decisions, and plan a future free of violence.

Blue Valley Crisis Intervention services are available in Gage, Jefferson, Thayer, York, Fillmore, Seward, and Saline Counties in southeast Nebraska. A 24-hour crisis line (1-800-876-6238), transportation, temporary shelter, legal advocacy, medical advocacy, emergency financial assistance, individual and group support, and community education are available services. All services are completely confidential and free of charge to anyone who requests assistance, regardless of economic status.

During 1998, face-to-face crisis support was provided to 280 victims and their families (an increase of 6% from 1997). 4,308 units of crisis support were provided via the 24-hour crisis line (an increase of 24% from 1997). In addition to crisis support, Blue Valley Crisis Intervention provided victims and their families with 760 beds (an increase of 51% from 1997) on 184 unduplicated safe shelter nights (an increase of 30%). Outside of statistical terms these numbers indicate that 11 times on each of the 365 days in 1998 crisis line support was provided by Blue Valley Crisis Intervention advocates, and approximately twice per day, someone was placed in a safe, confidential shelter in order to escape violence.

In an effort to prevent and reduce the violence, Blue Valley Crisis Intervention Advocates and the Public Information Officer gave 230 presentations to audiences of 5,138. Educational programs and inservice trainings regarding domestic abuse and sexual assault, dating violence, sexual harassment, and secret touch are provided to businesses, community organizations, schools, and colleges throughout the Blue Valley Crisis Intervention service area. In addition to educational programs and inservice trainings, information is provided through radio interviews and newspaper articles.

One of the greatest prevention assets offered through Blue Valley Crisis Intervention is AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps Members develop programs that focus on the prevention and reduction of youth violence by directly interacting with youth to develop and maintain school mediation, peer mediation, conflict resolution, and student tutoring programs. These programs provide a diverse group of young persons with an opportunity to resolve disputes without violence. With AmeriCorps Members' help, schools establish mediation and conflict resolution programs to reduce detentions and suspensions, encourage effective problem solving strategies, reduce teacher involvement in minor student conflicts, and improve the school climate. AmeriCorps Members have been instrumental in working with the Blue Valley Community Action Head Start Program to implement a Character Counts Program which is based on the six pillars of moral development (trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, citizenship).

BLUE VALLEY CRISIS INTERVENTION

In 1997, Blue Valley Crisis Intervention received grant funds from the Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice to implement a community coordinated response to domestic abuse and sexual assault in Saline County (Blue Valley Crisis Violence Council, formerly known as Saline County Violence Council). In 1998, Blue Valley Crisis Intervention again received grant funds for the Blue Valley Crisis Violence Council, which will expand into Gage County. The Blue Valley Crisis Violence Council Criminal Justice Advocate facilitates policy meetings with county attorneys, law enforcement officials, county probation officers, county judicial officials, and Blue Valley Crisis Intervention employees, acting as the liaison between entities to ensure the safety of victims, to ensure consistency in services, and to ensure accountability in actions.

To promote a more sensitive response to victims of sexual assault, Saline County has developed a Sexual Assault Response Team (SART), which consists of medical personnel, law enforcement officials, and a Blue Valley Crisis Intervention Advocate. The goal of the Sexual Assault Response Team is to ensure evidence is properly obtained to better facilitate the prosecution process, in addition to providing detailed support to victims and families.

Blue Valley Crisis Intervention acknowledges that through ongoing public awareness and education, the need and number of services provided to victims of domestic abuse and sexual assault will continue to rise. To meet the needs of survivors and victims, goals for Blue Valley Crisis Intervention's future include development of additional funding to ensure continuation of services, enhanced education and training for staff, growth of participation in the Blue Valley Crisis Intervention Volunteer Program, acquisition of free standing shelters in all service counties, and an increase of community awareness and community participation in prevention activities. While it is a challenge to acquire sufficient resources to meet the ever increasing needs of victims, Blue Valley Crisis Intervention is grateful for the funding provided by public and private resources, and looks forward to a rewarding 1999.





FAMILY & COMMUNITY SERVICES

COUNTY COMMUNITY SERVICE CENTERS

Food Pantries—emergency food, privately donated for needy families in Beatrice, Crete, David City, Fairbury, Geneva, Hebron, Osceola, Seward, Wilber, and York.

Clothing Recycling—very inexpensive clothing from private recycling in David City, Fairbury, Geneva, Hebron, Osceola, Seward, and York.

BVCA Enrollment—general intake applications for any and all BVCA managed programs, privately or publicly supported.

Volunteer Projects—opportunities for community involvement in various projects, center and office activities, seasonal projects and governance roles for several community, regional and state organizations.

Information & Referral—FCS Coordinators, Green Thumb Workers and local volunteers provide needed information about BVCA and other agencies' programs and make internal and external referrals to families in need throughout the BVCA area.

Case Coordination—FCS case workers coordinate with the client or client family and with other agencies to jointly address the family needs in a supportive environment.

Local Network Building—FCS Coordinators and volunteers work to build collaborative teams to address a variety of local and state issues, such as the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Coalition, the Food Pantry Network of Nebraska, the People Caring for People Project, transient assistance, Grocery Shopping Service, the Homeless Shelter Coalitions, Good Beginnings/Family Preservation Teams, farmers markets and other spontaneous local partnerships.

Homeless Assistance—staff collaborate with local churches, the Salvation Army, state agencies and community groups to provide food, shelter, emergency services, transit services and case coordination for individuals and families without adequate shelter. In addition, BVCA operates shelters in three communities in the service area.

Project FOCUS (Families Opting for Change Using Strengths)—families voluntarily engaging in one-to-one family development process to make positive life changes.

TRANSIT PROGRAMS

Fillmore County Rural Transit Service—reasonably priced public transportation to all citizens of Fillmore County. Trips around the county as well as outside the county.

Butler County Senior Services Transit—BVCA collaborates with the Butler County Senior Services by supplying a bus and driver to provide county and inter-county transportation services to all citizens, seniors, and disabled prioritized.

Vehicle rental - York Senior Services—BVCA rents vehicles to the York Senior Services for their transit programs. (Note: We have one bus and one station wagon.)

FAMILY & COMMUNITY SERVICES

HEALTH & NUTRITION

Immunization Clinics—in Fairbury, Friend, Crete, Seward, and Wilber. Clinics held in area schools as requested for pre-kindergarten and pre-seventh grade immunizations required.

HIV Prevention—prevention, education, referral to confidential testing.

WIC Clinics—Women, Infants, and Children nutrition and health screening, education and food vouchers in Geneva, Crete, Seward and York.

Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) Clinics—commodity foods supplement the nutrition of lower income elderly, infants, children, and mothers; offered in Beatrice, David City, Dorchester, Hebron, Humboldt, and York.

Community Access to Coordinated Healthcare (CATCH)—development of an affordable health care access system with public health nurse triage, physician referral service, ER follow-up and human service referrals via a toll free number and home visitation for counties of Fillmore, Saline, Jefferson, Gage, and Thayer.

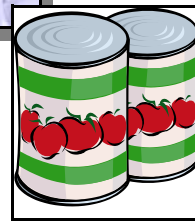
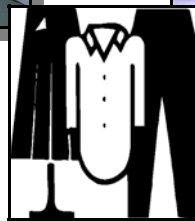
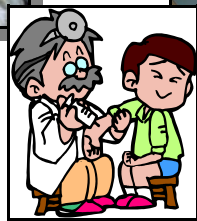
OLDER ADULT PROGRAMS

Foster Grandparents Program—this nationally recognized program offers older adults an opportunity to work with special needs children via a stipend or non-stipend basis in Gage, Jefferson, Saline, Johnson, Richardson, and Nemaha Counties.

Saline Eldercare—providing home chore, medication checks, center and meal program support, telephone reassurance, "Friendly Visitors" and other senior opportunities and services in Saline County.

Grocery Shopping Assistance—shut-in seniors and individuals who are ill or disabled call the Seward office of BVCA, who has volunteers shop from these called-in lists at local grocery stores, who then deliver to the homes for a small fee.

Other programs—such as transit services, commodities, pantries, recycled clothing, weatherization and home rehabilitation also help older adults.



HOUSING & RURAL DEVELOPMENT

BVCA recognizes the need to develop affordable housing and promote weatherization and rehabilitation for safe, decent housing in rural Nebraska communities and that economic development, family self-sufficiency and affordable housing go hand-in-hand. One of BVCA's greatest triumphs is our ability to leverage public and private resources to build affordable housing for low and moderate-income families living in our service area.

WEATHERIZATION

The weatherization program continues to focus on strategies that will make housing affordable by reducing the cost of heating and cooling the structure. From a health and safety perspective, energy rehabilitation is an important means of securing a home from the ravages of the extreme heat and cold we experience in this area. During the 1997 fiscal year, our weatherization efforts improved the housing conditions for 133 individuals from sixty-eight households.

CONSTRUCTION

Each year, BVCA has been successful in developing additional affordable rental properties in our service area. Over the past eighteen months, Trailview, Ltd. in Hebron and Pinegrove, Ltd. in Wymore were made available as affordable rental housing with eight apartments in each.

Crestland, Ltd., located in Beatrice, was made available for occupancy in March of 1998 and offers sixteen affordable rental units.

To date, BVCA provides sixty-six units of affordable rental housing serving 179 individuals. The rental housing units are in eleven different communities in five counties of BVCA's service area.

During 1998, BVCA received funding to develop a scattered site project of eight units of affordable family housing in Fairbury and ten units of affordable elderly housing in Beatrice. The project is called Valley Heights. Funds were received on a national level through USDA Rural Development and another nationally awarded grant was received from the Federal Home Loan Bank.



East Meadows Ltd. located in Crete, Nebraska



Scattered Site Duplex located in Fillmore County

HOUSING & RURAL DEVELOPMENT

REHABILITATION

BVCA continues to work with homeowners to bring housing units up to prevailing health and safety standards. BVCA has its own revolving loan rehabilitation program and funds. BVCA completed a Housing Preservation Program for Butler County.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Through the Southeast Nebraska Region Network, BVCA assisted the regional group in establishing a Strategic and Priority Plan for the use of Nebraska Affordable Housing Trust Funds. A directive was also issued by the Southeast Region Network to provide Strategic and Action planning for rural communities. BVCA is currently assisting Wymore/Blue Springs, Diller, and Odell. Additional BVCA communities of Henderson, Bruning, Pickrell, and Plymouth will also receive assistance.

HOMEOWNERSHIP

BVCA has begun providing Homeownership Education as well as grant funds for individuals to own their own homes. HOP programs have been administered in Crete, Hebron, and Wymore/Blue Springs. Twenty-eight families moved from rental housing to owning their own homes. Additional HOP programs have been awarded to Fillmore County and a Regional HOP is available to all residents in the BVCA service area.

Staff have also become involved with a REACH (Readiness, Education, Awareness Collaborative for Homebuyers) program through the Fannie Mae Foundation. BVCA will soon be recognized as a regional provider of Homeownership Education.

A LB144 collaborative grant with Southeast Nebraska Development District and Southeast Nebraska Community Action was received to further publicize BVCA's capacity of providing HOP Education for individuals interested in Homeownership.

We are excited about our successes at improving the quality and affordability of housing in our communities. Of course, there is still work to be done...and with our community partners, we intend to do it!



Crestland Ltd. Located in Beatrice, Nebraska



Single-family Home located in Milligan, Nebraska



YOUTH SERVICES

May 1, 1997 began the 32nd year of funding for our Head Start program. Our current program serves two counties in Kansas and eight counties in Nebraska. The enrollment for our centers is 264 children.

PROGRAM OPTIONS

Eight of our eleven Combination programs were changed to Center Base, which meant 17 to 20 children per classroom every day instead of ten children daily. Changing our option in these eight counties also meant we would not be doing home visits with our families on a bi-weekly basis.

TRANSPORTATION

In changing to the Center Base program, transporting children became a challenge. Several of our programs began collaborative efforts with the local school systems and the Area Agency on Aging to provide transportation. The Smith Center, Kansas, school district and the Chester, Nebraska, school district have worked with Head Start in providing transportation to our children. Parents and staff have worked on pick-up points to shorten our long bus routes. Our fourth bus has arrived. Butler, Gage, Jefferson, and York counties now have buses.

CURRICULUM

Character Counts was started in all of our Head Start programs. The AmeriCorps Members in our agency gathered information and put materials together for our centers.

FACILITIES

The facilities in Kansas are looking great. We completed our remodeling in the school facility in Mankato and moved to this more permanent location last fall. We received a grant from the Social Rehabilitation Services in Kansas and used program improvement dollars to remodel a storefront building on Main Street in Smith Center and we moved to the new facility in January 1998.

Head Start and the Sacred Heart Church in Hebron shared expenses in re-roofing the Head Start center. We have been so fortunate to have utilized this facility for many years. The Lutheran Brotherhood helped fund a chain link fence around the Butler County playground. The Presbyterian Church in York has graciously allowed us the use of another room in their facility for our Full Day/Full Year program. Several Head Start parents in Jefferson County worked during the summer building new steps at the entrance of our center. This is a nice improvement to our facility. We are pleased to have signed a two-year contract with the Presbyterian Church Board of Directors in Wymore this past summer.

FUNDING

Funding has been received for the second year from the Department of Education, which assists in providing full day care to families enrolled in Head Start. York County Head Start began a Full Day/Full Year program in January 1998. Seventeen children are enrolled. We have developed a formal partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services in providing quality childcare for families.

YOUTH SERVICES

STAFFING/VOLUNTEERS

Head Start has had two staff complete their Child Development Associates (CDAs) from October 1997 to September 1998. Six of our staff are in the process of finishing their CDAs before December 1998. Twelve staff are in the process of training and gaining experience to obtain their CDAs within the next year. We are also very pleased to have Seward High School students volunteering in our program.

TRANSITION

Transition has been a major emphasis this past year. The staff in Beatrice, York, and Fairbury met and piloted various efforts to ease the transition of families from Head Start into area school systems. Formal and informal meetings and visits with the schools were increased.

SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

During the '97-'98 school year we served 40 children with special needs. The disabilities included speech and language impairment, emotional/behavioral disorder, orthopedically impaired and children with multiple needs.

COLLABORATION

January 1998 begins our third year at the Blue River Family Resource Center. The word "collaboration" is well known not only at this Center, but also in all of our programs. The Educational Service Unit utilized one of our Head Start classrooms every afternoon for their preschool special needs program. The Service Unit also provides an aide to help at mealtime in this center. One of our Centers works with the local high school and college in providing an observation and work site for students. An Early Childhood Development Class from a local college visits our program and one student in Special Education works in a center and with our families.

A FAMILY SUCCESS STORY

A foster child who was enrolled in our program last year, returned again this year. The child and her mother are now reunited. Mom has successfully completed a treatment program and is now providing a supportive, loving home for her child.





BLUE RIVER FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER

Blue River Family Resource Center (BRFRC) had a busy year. It successfully pursued funds to implement new projects as well as support and enhance on-going efforts. Some of the highlights of these projects include the following:

BRFRC is one of four Community Parent Demonstration Projects in the state that aims to empower the child, parent, and family. It also enhances the developmental progress of children. This Nebraska SPRING project utilizes: a.) Families at Heart, b.) A campaign to emphasize the importance of the early years, and c.) Parental initiatives to accomplish our goal.

BRFRC along with the Crete Public Schools, formed a community team of 56 members and completed a Comprehensive Community Plan. This plan outlines eight identified priority needs for the area. Members of various agencies have now formed teams to meet these priority needs.

July kicked off the Coordinated Child Abuse Prevention Efforts (CAPE) project. This four-year project, funded by DHHS, aims to educate parents, children, and the community towards the prevention of child abuse as well as the promotion of support services available in our community.

Families at Heart, a BRFRC community project designed to enhance quality parenting, training and support, provided these community sessions over the past year:

- “Red Flags” of Working Families: How to Cope.
- Choice Counts.
- Annual Fall Festival—Family Nite Celebration.
- Celebration of Women.
- “10 Greatest Gifts I Give My Children”—presented by national speaker, Steven Vannoy.
- Celebration of American Education Week—including daily activities that promoted the importance of quality early education for young children.
- "The Early Years," Infant and Toddler Training—provided five months of training and support group follow-up sessions.
- Healthy Adventures for Little Ones (HALO)—brought this one day training session to Crete.
- Read for Joy—literacy and learning workshop for communities.
- Community Builders Study Groups—Parent study groups that follow up on the Steven Vannoy’s book and presentation.

*Over 500 community members attended these sponsored events at free or very low costs.

The Wellness Clinic at BRFRC is now funded to enhance substance abuse prevention efforts. This effort targets distribution of prevention information, treatment, responsible behavior, and healthy life style choices. These efforts will also include community education sessions and a free confidential phone line that provides support and guidance for youth.

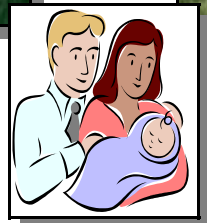
BLUE RIVER FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER

TASK (Totally Awesome Summer for Kids) is a new summer activities program designed for older, elementary-aged youth. Some of the activities included computer classes, basketball sessions, golf, bowling, weekly cooking classes, 4-H projects, reading and literacy enhancement sessions as well as “Fun Fridays” field trips. This program was at capacity serving 12 youth daily during the first year. Evaluations were very positive and proposes implementing this on an annual basis.

Youth activities were implemented this summer for middle school and high school aged youth. These activities promoted positive social experiences both through recreational and non-recreational programs, directed by the new youth coordinator and guided by the new youth council. This four-year project is in partnership with the City of Crete and funded through the Juvenile Delinquency Prevention grant and continues through the school year with opportunities to increase the funding over the next three years.

Building Community Partnerships Workshop—A final fall project, comprised of BRFRC and its community partners, developed and implemented a three-day workshop for the Native American Tribes of Nebraska. This pilot project was requested and funded by Nebraska Department of Education, Head Start Collaboration Project, and Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. Successful evaluations from this event, as well as feedback from other communities on the need for such workshops, will lead to similar projects in Crete over the next year.

Blue River Family Resource Center has served over 250 children and 220 families this past year in Phase I alone. Compiling these figures with other BRFRC services provided to families by the Wellness Clinic, DHHS, BVMH, and BVCA, extend these figures over the 500 mark. With 3,500 residents of a community of 5,000 being from families at or below the age of 35, BRFRC has made an impact on the community. The UNMC evaluation report of BRFRC reveals that this impact has positively affected the community, increased positive outcomes for children and enhanced the agencies and programs that comprise BRFRC’s community partners.



BLUE VALLEY COMMUNITY ACTION, INC.

**THE HOME OFFICE
620 5TH STREET
P.O. Box 273
FAIRBURY, NE 68352
PHONE: (402) 729-2278**

**BUTLER COUNTY HEAD START
284 1/2 9TH STREET
DAVID CITY NE 68632
PHONE: (402) 367-6037**

**FILLMORE COUNTY HEAD START
130 SOUTH 8TH STREET
GENEVA NE 68361
PHONE: (402) 759-3699**

**GAGE COUNTY HEAD START
ROUTE 2, P.O. Box 412
BEATRICE NE 68310
PHONE: (402) 223-6035**

**JEFFERSON COUNTY HEAD START
1303 B STREET
FAIRBURY NE 68352
PHONE: (402) 729-2161**

**JEWELL COUNTY HEAD START
303 N WEST STREET
MANKATO KS 66956
PHONE: (785) 378-3344**

**SALINE COUNTY HEAD START
325 E 9TH STREET, P.O. Box 72
CRETE NE 68333
PHONE: (402) 826-5221**

**SEWARD COUNTY HEAD START
201 SOUTH 11TH STREET, P.O. Box 53
SEWARD NE 68434
PHONE: (402) 643-6272**

**SMITH COUNTY HEAD START
221½ SOUTH MAIN STREET, P.O. Box 282
SMITH CENTER KS 66967
PHONE: (785) 282-6011**

**THAYER COUNTY HEAD START
335 EADS AVENUE
HEBRON, NE 68370
PHONE: (402) 768-6727**

**YORK COUNTY HEAD START
414 DELAWARE AVENUE
YORK NE 68467
PHONE: (402) 362-4299**

**WYMORE HEAD START
517 NORTH 12TH STREET
WYMORE NE 68466
PHONE: (402) 645-3441**

**BLUE RIVER FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER
325 E 9TH STREET, P.O. Box 304
CRETE NE 68333
PHONE: (402) 826-4216**

**BUTLER COUNTY FCS
323 4TH STREET, P.O. Box 22
DAVID CITY NE 68632
PHONE: (402) 367-4347**

**FILLMORE COUNTY FCS
130 SOUTH 8TH STREET
GENEVA NE 68361
PHONE: (402) 759-3564**

**GAGE COUNTY FCS
RR 2, P.O. Box 402
BEATRICE NE 68310
PHONE: (402) 223-6034**

**JEFFERSON COUNTY FCS
608 14TH STREET
FAIRBURY NE 68352
PHONE: (402) 729-5568**

**POLK COUNTY FCS
460 NEBRASKA AVENUE, P.O. Box 63
OSCEOLA NE 68651
PHONE: (402) 747-2102**

**SALINE COUNTY FCS
245 E 9TH STREET SUITE 1
CRETE NE 68333
PHONE: (402) 826-2376**

**SEWARD COUNTY FCS
640 SEWARD STREET, P.O. Box 342
SEWARD NE 68434
PHONE: (402) 643-6425**

**THAYER COUNTY FCS
135 NORTH 4TH STREET, P.O. Box 264
HEBRON NE 68370
PHONE: (402) 768-6704**

**YORK COUNTY FCS
3401 N LINCOLN AVENUE
YORK NE 68467
PHONE: (402) 362-3516**

**BUTLER COUNTY SENIOR CENTER
592 D STREET
DAVID CITY NE 68632
PHONE: (402) 367-6131**

**FILLMORE COUNTY TRANSIT
1120 F STREET
GENEVA NE 68361
PHONE: (402) 759-3345**

**FOSTER GRANDPARENT PROGRAM
RR 2, P.O. Box 415
BEATRICE NE 68310
PHONE: (402) 223-6036**

**SALINE COUNTY ELDERCARE
109 WEST 3RD STREET, P.O. Box 812
WILBER NE 68465
PHONE: (402) 821-3330**

**BLUE VALLEY CRISIS INTERVENTION
SALINE OFFICE
P.O. Box 371
CRETE NE 68333
PHONE: (402) 826-5835**

**BVCI VIOLENCE COUNCIL
214 WEST 3RD STREET
WILBER NE 68465
PHONE: (402) 821-2344**

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**DUPLEXES LOCATED IN:
GENEVA, NEBRASKA (3)
GRAFTON, NEBRASKA
FAIRMONT, NEBRASKA
EXETER, NEBRASKA
OHIOWA, NEBRASKA**

**SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES LOCATED IN:
FAIRBURY, NEBRASKA
MILLIGAN, NEBRASKA
CRETE, NEBRASKA**

Acknowledgment

Blue Valley Community Action, Inc., wishes to thank the great people of the State of Nebraska and the State of Kansas who have made this nonprofit corporation a success. It is the support of the communities, individuals and families that develop and maintain our programs and services. Without your assistance and dedication, we would not have been conceived nor could we have survived for 32 years. With your past support, we have grown. With your present support, we thrive. With your continued support, we go forth and meet the challenge of the future.

