



PATHWAY out of POVERTY

In 2017, MCC launched an accelerated welding program designed specifically for the homeless and near homeless in Muscatine and the surrounding area. This collaboration with MCSA, MCC, Iowa Works, and committed area businesses has been life-changing.

In March, a new series of welding classes began.

Please take time to watch this outstanding documentary about our recent welding program collaboration. The video was produced by [Muscatine Community College](#) and [Muscatine Access Channel 9](#).



Students and MCSA staff.



New welding program aimed at helping those struggling financially

MUSCATINE — The collaboration between Muscatine Center for Social Action and East Iowa Community Colleges is offering professional development and...

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Staff from MCC, MCSA, Iowa Works, Hoffman Inc., and Raymond celebrate with some of the welding students.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SHELTER FUNDRAISER



Tony talks to Ray Wendt from Toyota about their sponsorship and the New Beginnings event.

Domestic violence shelter to hold fundraiser

MUSCATINE — There is always someone there to pick up the phone at MCSA domestic violence shelter.

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[READ MORE](#)



NEW BEGINNINGS SPONSORS

Platinum Sponsors



Gold Sponsors



Silver Sponsors



Please support our area businesses with like values that support MCSA and others in our community.

We would like to thank an anonymous donor for his gift of \$5,000 to the MCSA Domestic Abuse Shelter in memory of his late wife. She had been in a prior abusive marriage for many years. This donor wanted to do something to help other woman and children currently experiencing domestic violence.

thank you

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VOLUNTEER



Joyce Vesey has volunteered at the Domestic Violence Center for 19 years.

Our volunteers are vital to our success. Joyce Vesey is a long-term Domestic Violence Shelter volunteer.

We are so grateful for Joyce's compassion and commitment to those we serve.

Please read the recent Muscatine Journal article featuring Joyce.

[READ THE ARTICLE](#)

POINT-IN-TIME COUNT (PIT)

At **4am** on February 1st a crew of 17 individuals representing MCSA went out into the streets of Muscatine for a nationwide Point- In-Time (PIT) Street count, searching for individuals living in places not meant for human habitation (cars, vacant buildings, under bridges, etc).



Someone's camp/home found during the 2018 PIT Street Count.

The photo shows a stark visual of someone's living area - no one was there at the time. Those of us searching had commented on how cold we were, and it was the kind of bone chilling cold that stays with you for hours. These folks are tough...tougher than most of us could ever be. We have a new appreciation for them and the strength they possess to live out in the elements.

Volunteers left blessings bags and info on how to reach MCSA. In the end, we walked away thankful that we did not find anyone in-person and are hopeful someone needing a place to stay will choose MCSA over being out on the streets.

We would like to thank those that joined us on the PIT street count, the donors that give to MCSA so we can provide a safe temporary home for those in need and our dedicated employees and volunteers that choose to make a difference every day.



The hearty MCSA employees and volunteers who performed the PIT Count.



Jody Riibe is asking for donations to Muscatine Center.
Social Action.
11 hrs · 🌟

This morning, Jerry and I woke up at 3:30 to go out in dark, cold Muscatine to volunteer for the 2018 Homeless Point-in-Time count. This is required for receipt of federal housing funding. The team of about 15 (staff and volunteers) searched around our community to check on those possibly seeking shelter outside. (It was NINE DEGREES, people.)

My team did find a campsite under a bridge, but the human living there was away or hiding from us. Who knows. It was painful to be in the presence of this "home." A photo or news film doesn't do it justice.

What did I learn from this experience? More than I can express... You have to be tough as nails to be homeless. It's frightening and lonely. The homeless have to be continually in search of a place that might be safe, protected from the worst of the weather, and out of sight. Now I will always be looking for places that could be considered "housing" for the deeply desperate. And the people who work for MCSA are truly God's love on earth. Thanks for all you do, Charla Schafer and team. ❤️

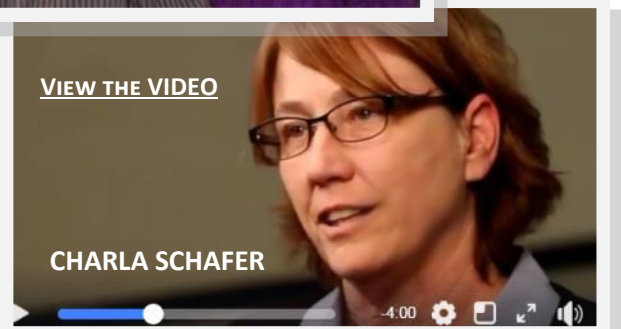
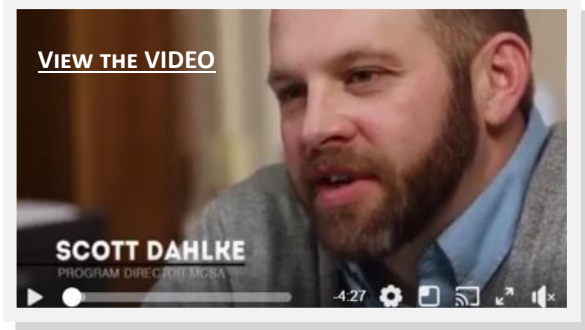
A volunteer's perspective on the Homeless Point-In-Time Count. We thank Jody for her kindness and her humanity.

We are thrilled to announce a new community health service is being added at MCSA. Trinity Muscatine Public Health will begin offering walk-in and appointment services with a Registered Nurse two days a week beginning mid-summer. This wellness clinic will provide greater access and improved comprehensive healthcare for low income children and adults in the centralized downtown location.

We are thankful for the partnership with Trinity Muscatine Public Health, AND clinic support from the Muscatine Health Support Foundation, and Monsanto for helping with additional equipment costs. This service will join other vital on-site community health and family services, including the University of Iowa Pediatric Dental Clinic, an adult vision clinic run by volunteer Dr. Pete Korpi, Robert Young Behavioral Health Services, Family Empowerment, and the Jubilee Center which provides an after-school program for children with disabilities.

CALVARY COLLABORATION

The talented team at Calvary produced these three videos highlighting area poverty and MCSA services.



Members of [Calvary Church](#) filled 500 bags with supplies needed for MCSA. Their parishioners have also been providing evening meals at MCSA during the months of March, April and into May. We are grateful!



Pastor Ty Thomas of Calvary talks to Tony on "Hy-Vee Today" about their support of the MCSA mission.

[VIEW THE VIDEO](#)

AFFORDABLE HOUSING



Muscatine Journal

MCSA: Affordable housing is the first step in reducing poverty through systemic change

According to the housing study, Muscatine's median rent is around \$762, higher than in Davenport, Burlington, Clinton and Washington. The report also indicated the more than 2,400 households living on an annual income less than \$25,000 can only afford up to \$400 in rent a month.

There is a shortage of around 1,000 units for these low-income families. At MCSA, she said most of its clients are spending between 60 and 80 percent of their incomes on rent, not including the initial deposit, utilities and other necessities.

[READ MORE](#)

CHURCH VOLUNTEERS REMODEL 6-PLEX

We are consistently humbled by the thoughtful, hardworking folks in our community who so selflessly help others.

The folks in the photo are just a few of the many that have been working since December of last year to rehab a 6-plex apartment building for MCSA to bring more affordable housing units online in our community.

Thank you, team leader, Wilma Griggs Roach, and everyone that has volunteered their time and talents, many coming from **High Prairie United Methodist and Sweetland United Methodist Church**.



Some of the volunteer rehab team.

RAPID REHOUSING GRANT



MCSA wins grant to start rapidly rehousing homeless citizens in Muscatine

MUSCATINE — The Muscatine Center for Social Action won a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development that will help pay for a program to...

MUSCATINEJOURNAL.COM

[Learn More](#)

HUD announced MCSA's new Rapid Rehousing initiative will receive more than \$179,000 over the next two years through the Continuum of Care program. A new resource to the community, previously not available.

Bonnie Nichols of MCSA said the homeless shelter piloted the Rapid Rehousing Program this past May, currently 19 families or individuals have been placed in households across Muscatine. As part of the program, the households receive move-in and rent assistance, services from a case worker and food. Rapid Rehousing is a nationwide initiative to make better use of community resources and we're excited to take this step to start this program in Muscatine.

For staff at MCSA, rehousing initiatives are another way to break the cyclical nature of poverty. Scott Dahlke said one of the main purposes is surrounding clients with care, so they continue to succeed and can eventually afford a home without assistance.

MCSA leaders said the organization is still in need of donations for its other ongoing programs and emphasized this new Rapid Rehousing Program is separate from the day-to-day services MCSA currently offers. [READ MORE](#)

NEW PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE LANDLORD PARTNER

What made you decide to step into the Affordable Housing solution in Muscatine and to partner with MCSA?

For us, we've always been fond of the high quality programs and service provided by MCSA. When we learned they were seeking partners to provide quality housing for some qualified residents, we knew this program would be a good fit for us.

How has it worked out for you so far?

It's been great. The two tenants living in our residence are really doing well, in part due to the ongoing support they receive from MCSA staff.

What would you tell other landlords that are contemplating getting involved?

I would encourage them to meet with Scott Dahlke and his staff to learn about the program. They will find that MCSA truly has the best interests of the landlord and tenant at heart.

What does it mean to you and your family knowing you are making a difference?

Through our partnership with MCSA, we're glad to know that we are playing a small role in helping improve the lives of others. As a landlord, we're committed to providing quality, safe housing for our tenants which in turn helps them get off to a new start. It's definitely a win-win for all of us.

What do you hope others learn from your involvement?

I hope other landlords will consider including their property in the program since there is such a need for affordable housing in our community. It truly been a pleasure working with MCSA to start this program and we hope to include more rental units in the future.



Dr. Michael & Shelly Maharry

ZION LUTHERAN HOUSING PARTNERSHIP



Zion Lutheran Church offers MCSA four apartments and a house in a permanent supportive arrangement with MCSA. This partnership has provided housing to many that might otherwise suffer from housing insecurity.

This year we received a grant from Zion that also allowed us to purchase bed frames for the Domestic Violence Shelter, gas cards and bus tickets for Homeless Prevention clients, and two convertible fridge/freezers for 312 Iowa Avenue. We are grateful for their partnership!

HOUSING PRESENTATION

Please join us to learn more about this important topic! There is no cost to attend. Light refreshments will be served.



the Impact of Housing IN MUSCATINE



Dr. Jerry Anthony, Associate Professor at the University of Iowa School of Urban & Regional Planning and acclaimed national expert on housing, will present on how a healthy housing market:

- Expands economic development
- Improves healthy living
- Increases financial support of schools

Mark your calendars and join us to learn more.

Wednesday, May 9th

Muscatine Community College Student Center

152 Colorado Street

Choose from either repeating session:

7:30 am to 8:30 am—or — Noon to 1:00 pm

Sponsors:



Poverty: the Single Biggest Threat to Children's Well-Being

By Charla Schafer

I recently heard Leann Toughy, the mother from the "Blind Side" speak. (Sandra Bullock played her in the movie). She said when she started helping Michael that everyone thought she just wanted another child. She added, in an exasperated tone, "I didn't even like the two I had. Why would I want another one?"

As a mother of three boys, I immediately signed up for her fan club. Can we all agree children are a hassle? They are a lot of work at times. But, what we inexplicably know is that we love the children in our community, want them to have happy childhoods and grow into amazing adults.

So, what is the single biggest threat to a child's well-being? Many are probably thinking their siblings ... but it is, in fact, poverty. When Leann approached the Principal at the school inquiring about Michael, she was told, "Don't get involved, Leann, he is not going to make it." But, as we know, the story turned out a bit differently because Michael was allowed to find his true potential, graduating from high school, as well as college.

According to the Pell Institute, there is a 9 percent chance that a child born into the bottom income quartile will complete college by the age of 24; compared to 77 percent in the upper-income quartile. No, not every child from every socio-economic group needs to attend college; but every child needs to graduate high school, and income shouldn't predict collegiate success.

We have heard a great deal over the past years about the "No Child Left Behind" ideal, but, it was presented as if it were an academic issue. Quite simply, "No Child Left Behind" begins with meeting Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Children must be fed and have stable, safe, quality housing before they can learn ... before they can reach their full potential.

Twenty-five percent of the homeless in the state of Iowa are children. In 2016, MCSA served over 400 children and their families that were homeless or on the verge of homelessness.

It is estimated that one in five children struggle with food instability in Muscatine. And we know a child can't fill their head while their stomach is empty. I went to an event in the spring where they asked 125 at-risk Muscatine High School students if they have seen their mothers or grandmothers go hungry. It was estimated that 40 percent of the students shook their heads or raised their hands in concurrence.

Hunger and homelessness are very real in our community. The systemic cause is a lack of affordable housing. The outcome is untapped potential for our youth and perpetuation of poverty.

The more years a child resides in affordable housing, the higher the likelihood of financial stability at adulthood and the less likelihood of incarceration. A recent housing study released by the City of Muscatine reported that our community is 990 units short of affordable housing for the 2,429 households with incomes of less than \$25,000.

Many will say, "the poor just need to get a job." According to Communication Across Barriers, 'two-thirds of those in poverty are working an average of 1.7 jobs trying to make ends meet for their families. The majority of the clients we see through programs at MCSA are paying 60-80 percent of their income for housing. We see as high as 90 percent, leaving nothing left over and no room for a "hiccup" expense.

Some say, 'We don't have to help, there are Section 8 housing subsidies for those in need.' However, there are currently 330 households on the Housing Choice Voucher waiting list so a household applying today could wait nearly two years for assistance. (There is funding available to support 340 vouchers).

We have historically demonstrated our societal concurrence that a child's education is critically important to our community through our commitment of property taxes to support of local schools. We have to broaden this thinking and scope to create systemic change around quality affordable housing to allow our children to reach their full potential.

Or we could take the recommendation of the Principal at Michael Orr's school, and "not get involved." For our children's sake, I hope we are a more stubborn community than that.



MENTOR OPPORTUNITIES



MCSA and Muscatine Community College are looking for more career and educational mentors. [CLICK HERE](#) to read a recent article from the Muscatine Journal. Following is an excerpt... “To become a mentor, volunteers must be at least 21 years old, have a high school diploma and complete a background check and training process.” Kim Warren said “mentoring could be as simple as going with a student to the financial aid office or being there to listen.”

“We want someone to help a member of our community navigate the system and figure out what goals do you have, what career you want and what you need to do to reach those goals,” Warren said. “This is one of those volunteer opportunities where someone can really change the course of someone’s life, help them navigate the complexity of the education system and realize their full potential.”

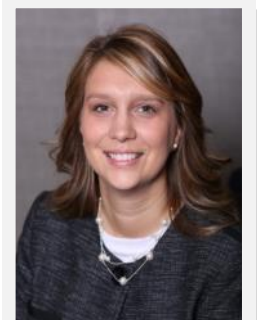


Haylie Franklin, Housing Stability Navigator and Mentor, oversees the MCSA Mentor Program

NEW BOARD MEMBER

We welcome Angie Johnson to the Board of Directors at Muscatine Center for Social Action (MCSA). Angie, born and raised in the Muscatine area, was named Trinity Muscatine’s Executive Director in 2017, and is excited to continue the work of ensuring high-quality local health care availability in her hometown while achieving the hospital’s vision of Best Outcome Every Patient Every Time.

“Working to find solutions that best support the most vulnerable in our community is greatly rewarding. I am passionate about diminishing the stigma associated with mental health and homelessness- and being a part of the MCSA team that helps feed that passion.”



Angie Johnson

BOOK PROJECT of MCSA RESIDENTS



We are excited to announce Becky Whitmore, MCSA Volunteer, has completed the book “Rusted from the Rain” - a project of current and former residents of MCSA, “this compelling anthology of poems and essays reflect their determination of spirit and unwavering strength. These honest words echo their harsh realities, their search for identity and hope, and their feelings of pride in knowing their words have value”.

Books are on sale at MCSA for \$10 or you can [ORDER HERE](#). All proceeds go to further educational opportunities for MCSA clients.

Becky is also the author of “Boots At Home” a children’s book about living at MCSA.

PET FOSTERING



Business to offer home away from home for dogs in Muscatine

MUSCATINE — Two Muscatine photographers with a soft spot for animals will soon offer a home away from home for residents' dogs.

MUSCATINEJOURNAL.COM

[Learn More](#)

We are so grateful for the pet fostering Beth VanZandt has been providing to our shelter guests. Ten pets have found a temporary home with Beth over the last nine months, allowing their families to come to the safety of MCSA. Beth even brings them in weekly for a visit!

Beth has recently opened her own day care for dogs. We wish her much success. [CLICK HERE](#) to read the article.

FOLLOW the MUSIC

"Follow the Music: A Day Celebrating the Legacy of Dick & Mary Jo Stanley" is scheduled for Sunday, May 20th.

Organizers include, Hancher Auditorium, Stanley Foundation, University of Iowa Museum of Art, Community Foundation of Greater Muscatine, Muscatine Symphony Guild, Muscatine Art Center, Stanley Consultants and MCSA.

Watch for details.



Dick & Mary Jo Stanley

A SAMPLING of GENEROSITY



[Jefferson Elementary School](#) 5th-graders received a Pay-It-Forward grant. The students thought about things that make them feel safe and comfortable and purchased those items for the children at MCSA. Doesn't it just warm your heart?

We welcomed the middle school youth from [Shepherd of the Cross](#) and [Grace Lutheran](#) Churches. They did yard work at our 4th street property and planted flowers. A wonderful group!

A SAMPLING of GENEROSITY



We are grateful to this amazing group of young leaders. [Muscatine Community School District](#)'s Student Council raised and donated \$5,000 during their student hunger drive for MCSA.



A big thank you to the students and families in Mr. Dickinson's homeroom class at [Louisa Muscatine High School](#). They collected these much-needed toiletries.



These awesome Academy students and teachers from [Muscatine Community School District](#) spent a morning painting in our lower level as part of the [United Way of Muscatine #DayOfCaring](#)



We appreciate the donations and support from these students from Muscatine High School's ESL class.



Sarah Jean O'Neal and her son, members of [Church of Christ](#), braved the weather to bring down Easter baskets, hard boiled eggs with coloring kits and cupcakes.

Their trip made the day special for our families.

We thank them and everyone at Church of Christ for their kindness and generosity!

A STORY of NEW SHOES



Those staying at the Shelter were able to pick out their own brand new shoes. Forty-four pairs of children and adult shoes were purchased. It was a very powerful day! For most, their feet are their primary mode of transportation.

Donna Beegle, national poverty speaker and advocate, recently posted, "Research shows that being able to have choices builds a sense of belief that you can make life happen..."

MONSANTO GENEROSITY



The Monsanto team and Santa hosted a Christmas Celebration, providing toys to those served by MCSA and cooked an amazing dinner for all in attendance.

It was a full house and one filled with joy and good spirits. We are grateful for Monsanto's continued generosity!



We are so thankful that these three gentlemen from [Monsanto Company](#) built out additional office space in our lower level!

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **April 18th**— [DaBeet's Fundraiser](#) - MCSA Domestic Violence Shelter receiving a percentage of sales
- **April 23rd**— [Shop for a Good Cause](#) (4pm—7pm) Fresh Vintage, The Hall Tree & Elly's Tea sharing a percentage of sales with the MCSA Domestic Violence Shelter
- **April—May—June**—[Buffalo Wild Wings](#) will share a percentage of sales to MCSA Domestic Violence Shelter - mention "Team A"
- **May 9th**—Impact of Housing presentation, Muscatine Community College
- **May 20**—Follow the Music: A Day Celebrating the Legacy of Dick & Mary Jo Stanley—watch for details



In 2017, we had 253 volunteers for a total of 1,760 hours. That equates to 44 weeks of work.

In 2017...

- We sheltered 303 men and women and 104 children that were homeless or fleeing domestic violence
- The average stay was 26 days for the single men, 45 days for those in the family shelter, and 30 days at the domestic violence shelter
- We served 217 households with 317 children that were on the verge of homelessness
- We housed 77 individual in 53 permanent supportive housing units



MCSA: 563-264-3278

- 312 Iowa Avenue - Muscatine, IA - 52761
- Email: mcsa@mcsaiowa.org

Domestic Violence Shelter Crisis Line: 563-263-8080

- Location Undisclosed, Muscatine, IA 52761

University of Iowa Pediatric Dental Clinic: 563-263-0895

- Lower level of MCSA

Facebook: [Muscatine Center for Social Action](#)

YouTube: [Muscatine Center for Social Action](#)

Website: www.mcsaiowa.org

The Muscatine Center for Social Action is a non-profit 501 c(3) organization dedicated to serving those in need.

