



Community Action Center Builds Resilient Communities

Special Report to the Community 2020

Message from the Director

COVID-19-related business shutdowns and the stay home orders in 2020 increased the need for food and shelter on a scale we have never seen before in Whitman County. As people lost their jobs, they turned to Community Action Center for emergency food and help paying bills. We met many families who had never needed to use the food bank before. Dozens of people had to navigate services like rental and energy assistance for the first time, so folks kept a roof over their heads and the heat on when they feared losing everything.



You, our community, and our staff stepped up unreservedly to meet new needs. Almost everybody on staff worked in the food bank at some point in 2020 as we hustled to get food to the people who otherwise would not have enough to eat. It was stressful, emotional work, but we had your support.

It's just incredible to me how generous you and our community have been during COVID-19. Generosity has been the key to covering the increase in costs to distribute more food and keep more people housed than ever before. Without being asked, folks like you are giving financial donations and telling us, "Pass this on," or "Use this wherever the need is greatest."

Thank you for your generosity—and for all the ways you are building a resilient community.

Jeff Guyett, Executive Director





The Food & Shelter Folks

We believe all Whitman County residents should have access to healthy homes and nutritious food. We work to build resilient communities by promoting:

- The self-reliance of individuals and households;
- Cooperation among communities;
- Greater awareness of the causes of poverty and effective solutions.

STAFF

When you let people know they have some breathing room with their rent, you hear that sigh of relief over the phone. All of us in Housing Solutions have a lot of life experience and are very empathetic. We know it's a tough thing out there right now.

– Georgia Beck, Housing Specialist



RESIDENT

This place is so beautiful, and it makes my life so much better.

– Miranda Fister, Housing Resident



BOARD MEMBER

My health took a turn for the worse, and I went through my savings and lost everything within three years. I was homeless. When I came to CAC, I was welcomed, respected, and they helped me make the connections I needed—I have a home, now! We all have different stories, but can end up in a similar place: alone, broken, and in a system that doesn't work. To people who need help, I am here to say there is help.

– Paula Laney, Board Member

SMALL BUSINESS OWNER

With COVID and not being able to be open, I had to lay off all my core workers. With the COVID grant we were able to bring back two of my workers part-time. It has helped tremendously to keep our doors open.

– Michelle Kelly, Michelle's Closet



Board of Directors • 2020-21

Peter Holland, *Retired*
Alana Inlow, *Graduate Student, WSU*
Glenn Johnson, *Mayor of Pullman*

Tom Johnson, *Retired*
Paula Laney, *Community Member*
Annie Pillers, *Whitman County Coroner*

Melanie Schaefer, *Stewart Title*
Bill Skavdahl, *Values & Vision*
Chris Skidmore, *Whitman County Public Health Director*

2020 Timeline

January-September: Riverview Apartments construction underway

March-May: COVID-19 economic shutdowns: CAC responds to increases in demand for emergency food and housing support

June-August: CAC distributes \$85,000 in COVID-19 microenterprise assistance grants of \$5,000 each to local small businesses

September-October: Labor Day wildfires destroy 70% of homes in Malden; CAC responds with temporary power poles and long-term housing assistance

Year in Review

Community Food

By implementing no-contact curbside pickup and an appointment system, people had flexible (and less crowded) ways to receive food. Due to COVID-19, the number of Community Food volunteers is limited and health screenings are required for all volunteers. Education on Basic Food (formerly "food stamps") is now offered in an all-virtual format.

Weatherization

From mid-March to mid-July, the health risks due to COVID-19 meant staff could not enter clients' homes safely, so weatherization work was put on hold. After submitting a safe start work plan to the Department of Commerce, work in homes was started in the safest manner possible. After daily health screening of clients and workers, significant effort is made to minimize risk to our clients and staff as homes are weatherized.

Energy Assistance

Starting in March, Energy Assistance distributed COVID-19 assistance funding from our federal program (LIHEAP) and from Avista. The federal program also changed from a wintertime program to an all-year program. Families with incomes up to 150% of the federal poverty level are now eligible. These changes mean we can serve more community members!

Housing Solutions

Special funding from the CARES Act and Washington State Department of Commerce, helped to prevent people who were affected financially by COVID-19 from becoming homeless. Each family received an average of \$2,500 to cover rent or mortgage payments. These funds are a drop in the bucket compared to families' needs, and we appreciate donations to keep families who've lost their income in their homes!

Housing Choice Vouchers

COVID-19 created delays in processing Housing Choice Voucher applications for folks seeking housing, but we are still here for the community and continue to issue vouchers! Clients are helped over the phone and by processing paperwork through the mail. To combat red tape and delays, an online portal will open in mid-2021. This will allow applicants and tenants to report household changes, and landlords to advertise available homes.

CAC Affordable Housing

With the addition of Riverview, we now offer 231 homes in the community. We have been flexible with residents in carrying out phone, mail, and socially distanced housing recertification appointments, adapting to COVID-19.

Pullman Serves it Forward

Launched in April, Pullman Serves it Forward distributes gift cards from local restaurants to food bank visitors and others experiencing food insecurity. Community donors pay for the gift cards, and Community Action Center makes sure they end up in the hands of people who need them. Families who need food have a chance to eat a healthy prepared meal, and local restaurants benefit from sales to keep their doors open. Many thanks to Jeanne Weiler and Jamie Callison for their work on this initiative!

[#PullmanServesItForward](#)

Malden and Pine City Fires

On Labor Day, a wildfire swept through Malden and Pine City. The fire burned more than 15,000 acres and destroying 121 homes, eight commercial properties, and 94 other structures. 293 adults and 72 children lost their homes. It is estimated only 40% of property owners had insurance to cover the cost of rebuilding. We are awed by the resiliency of the Pine Creek Community folks as they rebuild their homes and lives. Community Action Center is coordinating emergency housing, long-term rental support, and temporary power during property cleanup and for temporary shelter for those living on their lots.



Riverview Apartments

Riverview opened in fall 2020 and is 50% occupied, with 26 households moved in. The complex offers 56 units built to be permanent homes for families transitioning out of homelessness, for veterans, seniors, and people with disabilities, and others.

COVID-19 Small Business Grants

Community Action Center distributed \$85,000 in Whitman County Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds from the Washington State Department of Commerce, helping to stabilize 17 small businesses with five or fewer employees during COVID-19 shutdowns.



October-December: Riverview residents begin to move in

November: Second round of COVID-related shutdowns threaten residents' economic recovery

November: Receives approval to implement USDA Grant for collaborative Mobile Farmstand

December: Rental assistance funds begin to be deployed for fire victims and other households



By the Numbers

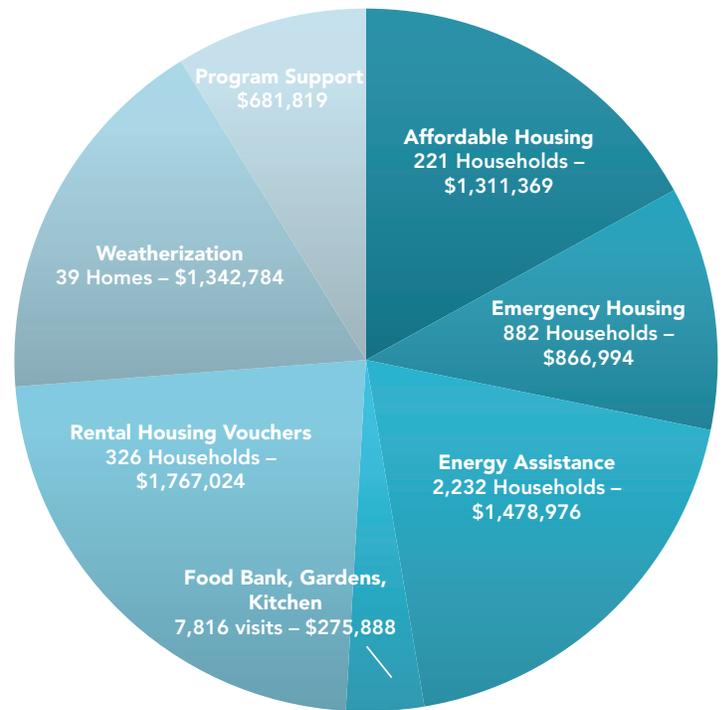
	2019	2020
Families who received energy assistance to keep lights and heat on	1,526	2,232
Families living in Community Action Center's Affordable Housing	166	221
People experiencing hunger who received food at Community Food	6,766	7,816
Pounds of food distributed at Community Food	130,430	146,180
Homes weatherized for comfort and energy efficiency	94	39
Temporary power poles installed in Malden to restore power to property owners	0	25
Families who kept a roof over their heads through COVID-19 eviction prevention	0	128
"Pullman Serves It Forward" restaurant meals distributed	0	3,000
Small business owners staying afloat through COVID-19 grants	0	17

How You Can Help

We are all pulling together to come through COVID-19. You can help us build a strong, resilient Whitman County!

- **Cash donations**, to help pay for emergency housing for folks displaced by wildfires. Please donate at: <https://www.cacwhitman.org/donate/>
- **Food and toiletry donations** for Community Food, especially: peanut butter, canned soups, canned vegetables, boxed meals, cereal/oatmeal, and dietary restriction foods. You can bring donations to 350 SE Fairmont Road in Pullman weekdays from 8:00-4:00 (closed for lunch 12:00-1:00). Please call the front desk (509-334-9147) to make an appointment to donate food. When dropping off the food, please come to the parking lot, call the front desk at 509-334-9147, and we will have a staff member come to your car to take the donation.
- **Regular, dependable Community Food volunteers.** We are not able to host WSU student volunteers due to COVID-19. This situation has had a negative impact on our ability to distribute food from the food bank. Consider committing to helping us with food distribution for four hours at regular intervals, such as weekly or monthly.

Your Investment in Our Community



2020-2021 COVID-19 & Community Support Funds

COVID-19 Rent Assistance	\$1,234,357	(Spent out)
Emergency Quarantine/Isolation	\$271,518	(Spent out)
COVID-related Subsistence Funds	\$855,452	Ends 2022
Extra-COVID Energy Assistance	\$600,276	Ends 2022
Pine Creek Fire Recovery (non-COVID)	\$205,000	Ends 2021
Total	\$3,166,603	



Community Action Center ★
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