

NCCAA October 2025 | Empowered Newsletter ❤️



From Sharon Goodson, North Carolina Community Action Association <communications@nccaa.net>
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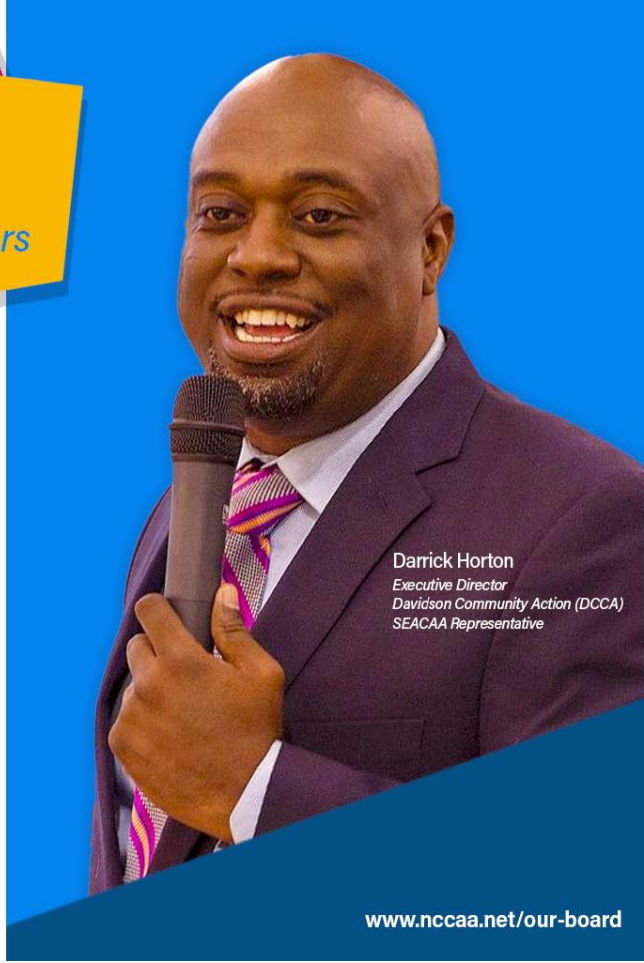
Cherryville Head Start, part of Gaston Community Action, held a parental engagement event called "Lunch Buddies" for parents to have lunch with their children.

Meet Our NCCAA Board Member: Darrick Horton

Meet
The NCCAA
Board of Directors

“My daily experience leading DCCA has informed my approach - I've learned how to build partnerships that make resources go further and learned how to connect resources with real-life needs, in the communities we serve.”

 North Carolina
community
Action
ASSOCIATION
AMERICA'S POVERTY FIGHTING NETWORK



Darrick Horton
Executive Director
Davidson Community Action (DCCA)
SEACAA Representative

www.nccaa.net/our-board

Meet Darrick Horton, Executive Director of [Davidson County Community Action, Inc..](#) (DCCA) in Lexington, NC, who serves on the NCCAA Board of Directors as a voice for families across North Carolina.

“I choose to serve on the NCCAA Board because I care about families who are struggling and want to be part of the important initiatives happening across the state,” he shares. “My daily experience leading DCCA has informed my approach - I’ve learned how to build partnerships that make resources go further and learned how to connect resources with real-life needs, in the communities we serve.”

What gives Darrick hope is the resilience of families and the commitment of our staff who serve them. Looking ahead, he believes change begins with breaking down hurdles: “I’d like to make it easier for people to get help quickly, without so many barriers in the way.”

We are grateful for Darrick’s leadership and his commitment to communities across North Carolina.

[Visit NCCAA LinkedIn, Facebook or Instagram](#) to see additional board profiles.

NC Community Action Agencies Prepare for Potential Government Shutdown



As the possibility of a federal government shutdown looms, Community Action Agencies across North Carolina are preparing to protect essential services and support vulnerable communities. We recognize that a shutdown could disrupt critical programs that families, seniors, and low-income households depend on—such as housing, nutrition, energy assistance, workforce development, and early childhood education.

What This Means for You:

- **Families & Community Members:** Some programs may face delays or temporary suspension. We will continue to connect you with available resources and share updates quickly.
- **Employees:** Stay in close contact with agency leadership for guidance on work schedules, contingency planning, and program adjustments.
- **Vendors & Partners:** Contractual obligations may be temporarily adjusted. Your patience and collaboration are deeply appreciated.

While federal funding may be delayed, our agencies remain steadfast in our mission. We are working closely with state and local partners to minimize disruption, safeguard core services, and keep our communities informed.

Community Action was created in moments of national challenge, and we continue to stand strong with resilience and resolve. In uncertain times, our commitment remains clear: to fight poverty, empower families, and serve our communities with compassion and purpose.

Leading With Purpose

NCCAA Staff Members have been on-site at **Passage Home**, Wake County's Community Action Agency, to offer support and collaboration.

"Passage Home is a dynamic organization filled with wonderful people who truly understand and care about those living in poverty. Supporting this team has been a professional highlight, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to contribute to their efforts to help local residents build better lives. We are so grateful to Krystina Chavis for serving as the interim director."

— Sharon Goodson, NCCAA Executive Director

This is a powerful example of leaders coming together to ensure that our agencies continue to grow in effectiveness and impact.



Pictured: Aurelio Dorris, Sharon Goodson, Sheryl Andrews, Frankie Miller

Stay tuned for the announcement of Passage Home's new CEO via **social media**.



Irish Etheridge is a Picture of Resilience



HEAL NC participant Irish Etheridge has experienced more than her share of loss. Irish's childhood was shaped by abuse and a deep sense of isolation, yet she carried within her the strength to keep going. As an adult, she lost two family members to gun violence, both in 2021.

Through HEAL NC, Irish is finding a community that sees her, listens to her, and walks with her as she continues her journey of resilience.

HEAL NC is a partnership of NCCAA and **WAGES** funded by The Duke Endowment. Our mission is to serve Head Start parents with complex needs including substance use, mental health concerns, early life trauma, and more.

When you meet her, Irish is lighthearted and warm. She has a genuine zeal for education.

During 2025, Irish endured a stomach virus, a painful dental problem, and other health challenges. Meanwhile, she was caring for her disabled mother. In April she took care of her daughter after the daughter was hit by a car.

Another daughter has been struggling since her father was killed four years ago. It's been tough.

Still, Irish managed to meet a big personal goal – graduating in May with a master's degree in Christian Theology. She is now working toward a second master's and hopes to earn a doctorate one day. She loves to discover new ways to minister to others with the knowledge she has gained.

As to HEAL NC, Irish said she has received a depth of support that makes a difference. When she was anxious due to a health scare this spring, her Success Coach texted frequently to check in. That communication lifted her up, she said.

When asked what kind of support she needs moving forward, she kept it simple: "Keep pushing and encouraging me."

Learn more about HEAL NC at <https://www.nccaa.net/heal-nc>.

Celebrating the Legacy of E. Marie Watson



Pictured: E. Marie Watson family members along with Sharon Goodson of NCCAA and Ruby Bryant of Johnston-Lee-Harnett Community Action



Johnston-Lee-Harnett Community Action, Inc. held a reception to celebrate the legacy of the late E. Marie Watson, esteemed former Executive Director, and to recognize the donors who have supported the legacy fundraiser.

This special initiative aims to rename the Johnston County Headquarters the E. Marie Watson Building in her honor and is seeking financial support to advance the renaming and raise unrestricted funds for urgent community needs across the three counties.

Learn more and participate: <https://www.jlhcommunityaction.org/>

News from Around The Network





Dr. Tim Harrell, Wayne County Commissioner and WAGES Board Chair.

Event Highlights Voices for Children & Families

WAGES is proud to be part of Wayne **Children's Action Network** alongside **NC Child**: The Voice for North Carolina's Children and many dedicated community partners. This month's gathering strengthened connections and built new relationships with key voices for families in Wayne County.

Special thanks to Dr. Tim Harrell, Wayne County Commissioner and WAGES Board Chair, for sharing thoughtful remarks on issues facing local children and families. We were also honored to hear from Gabriella Carrasquillo, 2025 Wayne Early Middle College High School graduate and former NC Child Youth Advocacy Council member, who joined us via video message. Gabriella reminded us that meaningful change often begins with small steps—focusing on families and listening to youth voices.



FWW Receives Mission Development Grant

Last month, **Franklin Vance Warren Opportunity, Inc.** received a \$40,000 grant from the **SECU Foundation** in support of the Mission Development Program. The funds will be used to strengthen organizational capacity and sustainability in support of programs supporting Henderson County and the region. Franklin Vance Warren is one of 14 recipients of the grant.

Read more about it [here](#).



Celebrating Excellence in Teacher Engagement

Macon Program for Progress Head Start teachers play a vital role in supporting families as their child's first teacher. Through classroom connections, family engagement, and tools like **Ready Rosie**, they help strengthen the home-school partnership and empower families every day.

Congratulations to MPP's 2024–2025 Top Ready Rosie Teacher Engagement Performers:

- New Horizons I: Lora Duvall and Kristi Queen
- New Horizons II: Merissa Dehart and Joyce Webb
- New Horizons III: Deborah Lanning and Emma Owens

A heartfelt thank you to *all* of our dedicated teachers for your passion, consistency, and commitment to families. Your impact reaches far beyond the classroom, and we are proud to celebrate you!



Self Help Credit Union Supports IDA Program



Experiment in Self-Reliance received a sponsorship donation from **Self Help Credit Union** to support its New Century Individual Development Account (IDA) program.

The IDA Program focuses on helping clients build assets to achieve homeownership or enhance their small businesses. Participants receive economic literacy training, first-time homebuyer training, and support from a Success Coach to help create a personalized schedule of matched savings toward a down payment on a home or matching funds to enhance their small business.



PurpleTooth Visits Head Start Classes

A big thank you to **PurpleTooth** Pediatric Dentist in Mount Holly, NC, for visiting Highland Charter Head Start and Rankin Head Start classes to check on the children's teeth.

The children thoroughly enjoyed the visit, and **Gaston Community Action** is grateful that they put the centers on their schedule. A great example of community partnership at its finest — working together to keep our children smiling bright!



Support from High Country Charitable Foundation



WAMY Community Action was a 2025 grant recipient of the High Country Charitable Foundation, which supports non-profits in Avery County.

This grant will help WAMY continue to meet the essential needs of the community. Read more about HCCF and the grants [here](#).



Featured in the Smoky Mountain News

Pushing through troubled waters: Mountain Projects saves lives after Helene, but sustainability questions remain

WRITTEN BY LILY LEVIN

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2025



Haywood Public Transit vans drove through flooded roads to get to Autumn Care.
Patsy Davis photo

Michelle Parker hadn't finished unpacking the last of her belongings that had survived Tropical Storm Fred in August 2021 when her home was destroyed by Hurricane Helene September 27, 2024. Within three years, two devastating floods had displaced her and her husband Jeff.

[Read the full article](#)



Kinston Mayor Visits Marvin B. Spence Head Start



Kinston Mayor Don D. Hardy recently visited the Marvin B. Spence Head Start Center, part of **Greene Lamp Community Action**, to spend time with youth scholars ages 3–5. The children’s excitement, curiosity, and thoughtful questions made the visit truly inspiring.

Together, Mayor Hardy and the students talked about the importance of good manners, explored different career paths, and learned how local government serves the community. He also highlighted the vital roles of police officers, firefighters, utility workers, and environmental service workers in keeping Kinston safe and thriving.

Reflecting on the visit, Mayor Hardy shared:
“It was a joy to see their enthusiasm as they learned about the people and services that touch their daily lives. These young scholars are our future, and I left feeling hopeful and encouraged by their energy, their questions, and their eagerness to learn!”

A big thank-you to Mayor Hardy for inspiring our students and reminding us that the future is bright with young leaders in the making.



CAO Welcomes New Early Childhood Team Members

Thanks to the support of a **Dogwood Health Trust** Grant, **Community Action Opportunities** has announced the expansion of its Early Childhood Workforce with eight new staff members — four Lead Teachers and four Teacher Assistants.

These new team members bring fresh energy and expertise to our classrooms, helping us continue to provide high-quality learning experiences for children and families in our community.



Community Action at work in Charlotte



Charlotte Area Fund (CAF) CEO Nicholas Wharton joined **Nick Sturdivant WCNC Charlotte** to share how Community Action Agencies are driving economic mobility and transforming millions of lives nationwide—powered by CSBG federal funding and strengthened through bipartisan support.

Charlotte Area Fund Joins FOC Program Convening



Collaboration fuels change! **Charlotte Area Fund** staff recently attended the LISC 2025 **Financial Opportunity Center® Program** Convening, “Strength in Community: Together We Rise,” in Chicago.

The convening brought together partners from across the country who are shaping the future of financial empowerment. Through the Financial Opportunity Center® model, clients are paired with a dedicated coach to build a personalized plan for financial stability. This proven approach combines: Financial coaching, Employment support, and benefits assistance.

Together, these services help individuals increase income, reduce expenses, and move toward lasting financial wellness.

[Learn more about FOC](#)





Inspiring the Next Generation of Educators

The **Western Piedmont Community College Early Childhood** class from Freedom High School recently visited a **Blue Ridge Community Action** Head Start classroom, where students had the opportunity to tour the center, observe classrooms, and participate in activities with children. This hands-on experience is part of BRCA's ongoing commitment to mentor and support the next generation of Early Childhood Educators, helping them build the skills and passion needed to shape young learners' futures.

News From NCAP

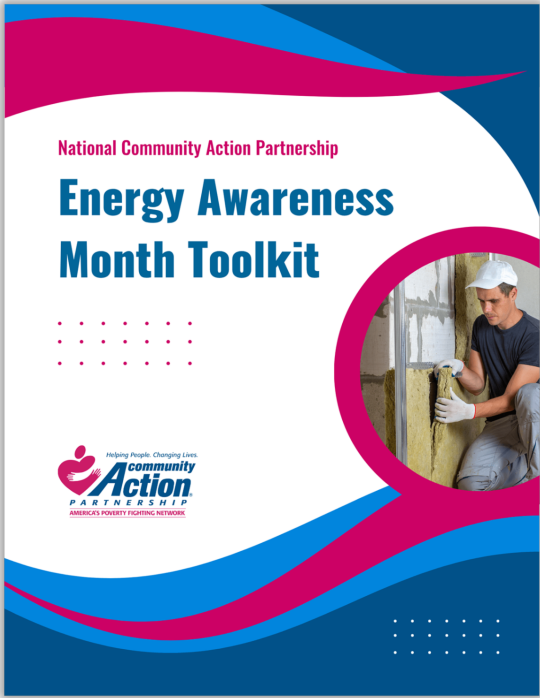
2025 Energy Awareness Month Toolkit Now Available

October is Energy Awareness Month, and NCAP has released its **2025 Energy Awareness Month Toolkit** to support your outreach efforts. The toolkit includes ready-to-use social media content, email messaging, talking points, and graphic templates to help raise awareness about the energy challenges families face—and the ways Community Action and weatherization programs are making a difference.

Topics include:

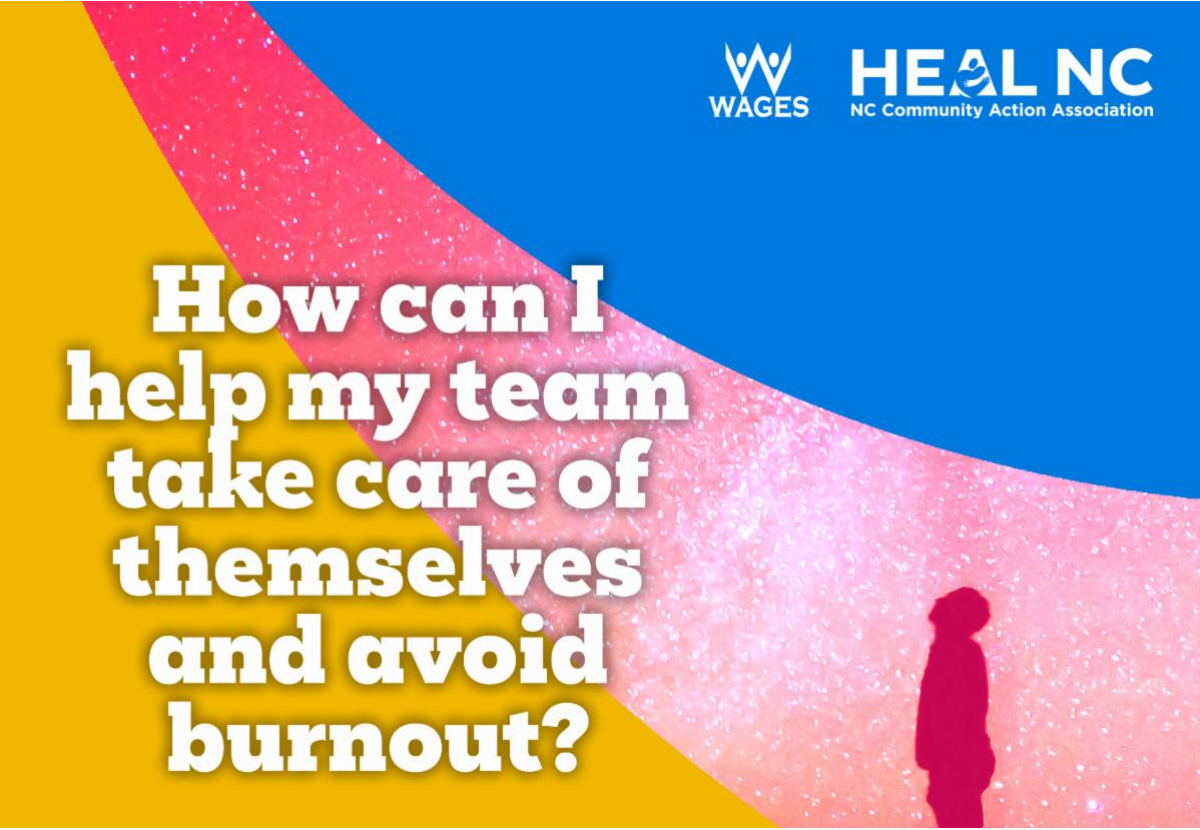
- Household energy savings
- Indoor air quality impacts
- Local workforce development benefits
- Weatherization Day (October 30)

This resource is designed to make it easy for agencies to educate, engage, and advocate throughout the month.



[Download the Toolkit](#)

WAGES and HEAL NC Host Workshops to Help Team Members Avoid Burnout



WAGES and HEAL NC are offering workshops in Wayne County based in the Community Resiliency Model (CRM), which teaches participants to re-set the natural balance of the nervous system with easy-to-understand concepts that bring reliable relief. CRM helps people help themselves and others. Beneficial to small teams and the general public, CRM helps navigate life's difficult situations.

More Information

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WAGES Community Engagement Coordinator
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Phone: 919-734-1178 ext. 212

Career Spotlight

Links to Career Pages in the NCCAA Network

(Link goes to home page when career page isn't offered)

Far West

Blue Ridge Community Action, Morganton
Blue Ridge Opportunity Commission Inc., N. Wilkesboro
Catawba County, Hickory
Community Action Opportunities, Asheville
Four Square Community Action, Inc., Murphy
Macon Program for Progress, Franklin
Mountain Projects, Waynesville
WAMY, Watauga, Avery, Mitchell and Yancey Counties

West

Charlotte Area Fund, Inc., Charlotte
Davidson County Community Action, Lexington
Experiments in Self-Reliance, Inc., Winston-Salem
Gaston Community Action, Inc., Gastonia
I-Care, Inc., Statesville
Salisbury-Rowan Community Action, Salisbury
Sandhills Community Action Program, Southern Pines
Union County Community Action, Monroe
Yadkin Co. Economic Development District, Boonville

Central

Alamance Co. Community Services Agency, Burlington
Franklin-Vance-Warren Opportunity, Inc., Henderson
Johnston Lee Harnett Community Action, Inc., Smithfield
Passage Home, Raleigh
Southeastern Community Action Partnership, Lumberton
Welfare Reform Liaison Project, Greensboro

East

Action Pathways, Fayetteville
Choanoke Area Development Assoc., Rich Square
Coastal Community Action, Newport
Economic Improvement Council, Edenton
Eastern Carolina Human Services Agency, Jacksonville
Greene Lamp, Inc., Kinston
NEW Community Action, Rocky Mount
Wayne Action Group for Economic Solvency (WAGES), Inc., Goldsboro

Share your community action career opportunities on our web page and have them distributed to 7000+ emails through the NCCAA newsletter! Send your job listings to communications@nccaa.net.



Send us your Stories!

Working together to share the impact of Community Action

Does your Community Action Agency have impactful content to share? Let's collaborate. The NCCAA develops creative content year-round to celebrate, educate and inform. Let's amplify the voices of organizations in our network! Let's share the impactful work of community action and tell the stories of our clients! **Reach out for collaboration:** communications@nccaa.net.

Share Community Action News with a Friend

As a member of the NCCAA community, we work to empower low-income families, change people's lives for the better and improve the communities we serve. We are all dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other. Please take a moment and forward this news to a co-worker and grow the community of professionals dedicated to this important work.

Click to Sign Up

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