

Annual Report

2021 - 2022



Gaston Community Action, Inc.

"Teaching and reaching communities through resources and education"

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*O*ur Vision

“Providing quality services to empower families to eliminate barriers to success.”

*O*ur Mission

“Teaching and reaching communities through resources and education.”

*C*ommunity Action Promise

Community Action changes people’s lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.



About Us

The Beginning of GCA

Gaston Community Action, Inc. is a private non-profit corporation chartered by the State of North Carolina to operate anti-poverty programs in Gaston County on October 22, 1964. Structured in accordance with standards and requirements of the Federal Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 and subsequent amendments. Community Action Agencies equip low-income citizens with the tools and potential for becoming self-sufficient. The structure of programming is unique: federal dollars are used locally to offer specialized programming in communities. It is a coordinated effort to address the root effects of poverty and to, ultimately, move families and individuals to self-sufficiency.

Agency Overview

The agency administers programs in Cleveland, Gaston, Lincoln, and Stanly Counties. Funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and Human Services Administration for Children and Families, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services of Economic Opportunity. GCA employs a staff of about 120 and operates on an annual budget of over 7 million.

GCA has continuously provided services and advocacy on behalf of the poor and disadvantaged since its inception and charter. Our programs are planned after holding public hearings to solicit community input. Head Start educates 431 preschool children in Gaston and Lincoln Counties. The CSBG program is directed toward making low-income residents of the four counties self-sufficient by providing help with employment, housing, education, and transportation.



Board of Directors

Michael Lane—Chair

Deborah Oates —Vice chair

Emily Winfrey— Secretary

Joyce Coleman—Treasurer

Ola Mae Foster—At Large

Mary Gibson

Nancy Maynor

Sonya Lewis

Williams Lindsay

Clair Watkins

Robert Pope

Cherie Feemster

Vontina McGrant

Keith Poston

Patsy Howell

GCA's Board of Directors

**is comprised of 18
members representing
three sectors;**

- **Public** (appointed by the county commissioners)
- **Citizen** (elected by the low-income residents)
- **Private** (appointed by civic groups)

**CONSULTANT TO THE
BOARD**

Wanda Wyont

Letter from the CEO's desk

Chief Executive Officer Letter

A moment of reflection brings to mind what happened to the entire world in 2020. Most people would say the pandemic offered all of us greater challenges that we would have not chosen. Yet, it is in that moment Gaston Community Action, Inc. (GCA) greatest challenge that we learned and grew into a new way of doing things.

The world was attacked by a virus that no one was familiar with. The Governor of North Carolina shut down the state and only allowed essential employees to work. Gaston Community Action, Inc. is and was considered to be an essential organization. Therefore, the staff of GCA had to continue to serve our clients.

Policies to ensure the quality of services and safety for the clients and staff were developed and implemented. Every area of GCA's operation, from administration to programmatic, had been impacted. Gaston Community Action, Inc.'s Board of Directors and staff came together. A plan for success was mapped out as to how GCA can continue to serve our clients in Cleveland, Gaston, Lincoln, and Stanly Counties.

GCA applied for a Federal Grant from the Health and Human Services (HHS) to operate a Head Start Summer Program during COVID-19 and was approved. The GCA and Head Start staff took on the challenge and did what was necessary to keep our children in a safe environment. Everyone, including the children and the staff, were required to wear a mask; wash and clean their hands often. Centers were cleaned and sterilized each day before the children returned.

Additional funding provided from the Health and Human Services allowed GCA to assist families that were affected by COVID-19. The services provided assistance with housing, food, clothing, and transportation, education tuition, rent and mortgage assistance.

No matter what devastation may come our way, Gaston Community Action, Inc. will not give up on providing our clients with a high-quality service. Although the pandemic is being better managed, we will continue to stay abreast of meeting the needs of our communities and seek funding to address those needs.

Sincerely,

Joseph W. Dixon, MSW

CEO





HEAD START



**Annual Report School Year 2021—2022
In fulfillment of the requirements of the
Preparing Head Start for School Readiness
Act of 2007(644(a)(2)(B))**

*Copies of this report are available on GCA's website and al-
so available to the community members upon request*

Kristin Thomas, Head Start Director

As the impact of the global pandemic continues to be felt across our communities, kindness and compassion have never been more important. This past year was one full of challenges and changes in education with school closures, resource disparities, workforce hardships, and other inequities at the forefront.

Despite the temporary changes we made, Gaston Community Action, Inc. (GCA) remained focused. We continued to support families and children. The tremendous effort it took to get children back into the classrooms safely during the pandemic was teamwork that could not have been accomplished without the cooperation and dedication of our hard-working staff.

Everything starts with relationships where people feel valued, safe and secure. This past program year, our team of educators formed lasting bonds and relationships with children and their families in their classrooms. They rose to new challenges that required innovative solutions. Families connected with their children's teachers and classroom staff in ways they have never done before.

Teamwork and idea sharing among staff helped resolve problems that arose in a new and uncertain teaching world. GCA leaders found opportunities to make lasting changes that would not have been discovered prior to the onset of COVID-19. Despite the virtual learning, masking, cleaning, sanitizing, safety protocols, and closing and opening of classrooms, we discovered that young children are remarkably resilient.

As leaders in early childhood education, we believe that every child, regardless of their circumstances at birth, has the ability to reach their full potential. I believe that once you are in Head Start it stays in your heart and soul. It is our privilege to continue to bring the Head Start model to life in Gaston and Lincoln Counties. Together, we are moving forward. We hope you will join us for another year on this remarkable journey.

Sincerely,

Kristin Thomas

Head Start Director



GCA'S APPROACH TO SCHOOL READINESS GOALS FOR CHILDREN

Head Start defines school readiness as children possessing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in school, for later learning, and life. The Head Start approach to school readiness means that children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children's learning, and schools are ready for children.

Gaston Community Action, Inc. Head Start is committed to ensuring that children who leave our Head Start program are prepared when they enter the kindergarten program in the public schools. The teaching staff use various strategies including the Classroom Learning Assessment System (CLASS) observation tool to enhance best practice to ensure all children enrolled are working toward meeting goals in all domain areas. These domain areas are assessed daily. The five essential domains are:

- Approaches to Learning and Play
- Social-Emotional Development
- Cognition and General Knowledge
- Language Development and Literacy Knowledge and Skills
- Physical and Health Development

With the implementation of these domains, GCA HS will ensure that children (including those with disabilities) are fully equipped with the necessary skills to successfully transition to kindergarten. The training and mentoring of teaching staff are critical in meeting school readiness goals. Parents are included in goal setting in order to help the child's progress.

FAST FACTS

- Head Start Employs 85 employees
- Contracts with local agencies to provide preventive health, nutrition, disability and mental health services to children.
- Operates 7 Head Start Centers (3 in Lincoln County 4 in Gaston County)
- Serves children 3 and 4 years of age with birth date by August 31 of that year
- Operates five (5) NC Pre-K classrooms three (2) Highland Charter Head Start 324 N. Highland Street, Gastonia, NC two (3) Lincoln Park Head Start Center 140 Industrial Park Rd. Lincolnton, NC
- Operates 7:30 AM – 2:00 PM each day in conjunction with Gaston and Lincoln County school calendars
- Total enrollment is 431 at all times. Children who drop/add are replaced timely.
- Number of three year old's served—241
- Number of 4 year old's served—188

FUNDING SOURCES

The Head Start Program received funding from the following sources in FY 2021—2022

Funding Source	Amount		
	7/1/21 - 3/31/22	4/1/22 - 6/30/22	TOTAL
Head Start, OHS, DHHS	3,859,137	915,781	4,774,918
GCA Non-federal share	674,457	243,455	917,912
Gaston Pre-K	75,600	21,600	97,200
Lincoln Pre-K	127,200	31,800	159,000
USDA	29,671	8,816	38,487
Other	<u>12,035</u>	<u>215</u>	<u>12,250</u>
TOTAL FUNDING	4,778,100	1,221,667	5,999,767

BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES

BUDGET EXPENDITURES			
	7/1/21- 3/31/22	4/1/21 - 6/30/22	TOTAL
Personnel	1,899,543	486,404	2,385,947
Fringe Benefits	647,599	155,745	803,344
Travel			0
Equipment	87,200	0	87,200
Supplies	230,638	24,699	25,337
Contractual	107,075	32,180	139,255
Facilities/Construction			0
T&TA	92,661	22,672	115,333
Other	517,757	109,407	627,164
Indirect Costs	521,170	147,105	668,275
GCA Non-federal share	<u>674,457</u>	<u>243,455</u>	<u>917,912</u>
Total	4,778,100	1,221,667	5,999,767



Head Start Annual Report Budget Justifications Fiscal Year 2021—2022

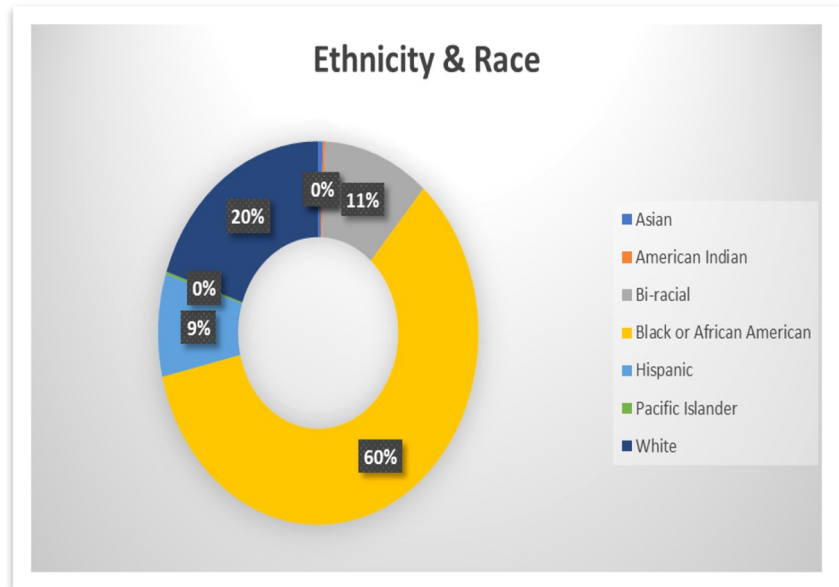
Personnel	2,385,947	Includes compensation for all Head Start employees for services rendered to the program.
Fringe Benefits	803,344	Includes FICA, health insurance, life insurance, disability insurance, workers comp insurance, SUTA and retirement paid on behalf of eligible staff.
Equipment	87,200	Includes roof replacement at Lincoln Park Head Start center.
Supplies	255,337	Includes janitorial supplies, office supplies, disabilities supplies, program supplies & medical/dental supplies.
Contractual	139,255	Includes child dental treatment, child medical treatment, equipment rental/lease, child mental health contract, school lunches, contract food & delivery, & nutrition consultant.
T&TA	115,333	Includes employee development and training & technical assistance for staff.
Other	627,164	Includes all other expenditures necessary for Program function such as communications, postage, local travel, space costs, field trips, translation, dues & registration, publications, printing, advertising, policy council & parent activities, equipment maintenance & repair, liability insurance, transportation costs, professional services, facility repairs & licensing, & technology costs.
Indirect Costs	668,275	Includes all allowable expenditures within the indirect cost pool to administer the Program.
GCA Non-federal share	<u>917,912</u>	Includes property or services that benefit the Head Start program and are contributed by non-Federal third parties without charge to the grantee.
Total	5,999,767	

Financial Audit Results: For the year ended June 30, 2021, the auditor issued an unmodified opinion. There were no financial statement findings and no questioned costs.



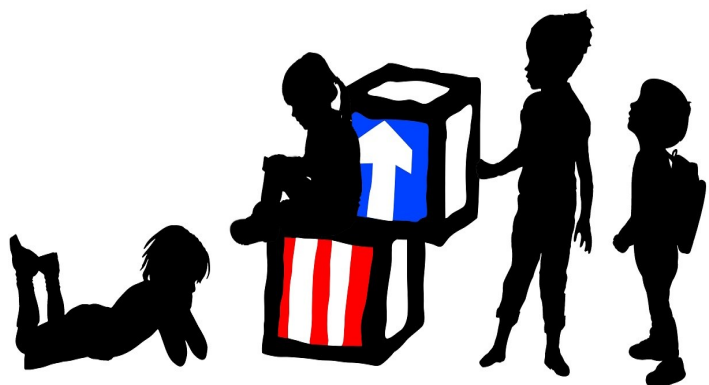
401 Families Served

Gaston Community Action, Inc. Head Start served 401 families. 228 are single-parent families; 70 are two-parent families; 7 are homeless and 5 are foster families.



Gaston Community Action, Inc.'s Head Start is funded through the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start. Our funded enrollment is 431 children. Children who leave the program are replaced by those on a waiting list.

429 Children Served



PARENT ENGAGEMENT/MALE ENGAGEMENT

Gaston Community Action, Inc. Head Start strongly encourages parent participation. Parents are their child's first teachers and are the key to the design and success of the program. Parents are encouraged to participate in a variety of activities, including:

- Parent/staff zoom meetings and trainings for male involvement
- Policy Council meetings
- Parent-teacher conferences
- Virtual home visits
- Center volunteer
- Parent/Staff virtual trainings held monthly

The program provides newsletters and a monthly calendar to parents that include upcoming events. The menus are posted weekly, breakfast, lunch, and snack. The center news and other items of interest are also posted on the Head Start Facebook page.



TRANSITION TO KINDERGARTEN

Preparing Children for Kindergarten

172 children transitioned to Kindergarten in May 2022. Transition meetings are held in April of every year to assist parents of children who are moving on to kindergarten. The local public and charter schools schedule meetings to familiarize the families with the setting, and to routines, to make choices. Parents were given opportunities to ask questions and participate in activities. Transition includes sending documentation containing all the health developmental and educational information for the child to their assigned school if requested.

Collaboration Agreements

Gaston Community Action, Inc. collaborates with two LEAs (Gaston and Lincoln) in our service area. These agreements help coordinate disability services for children who required needed services from these local school systems.

PROGRAM NOTICE AWARD FOR FIVE-YEAR HEAD START PROJECT PERIODS

The Office of Head Start (OHS) is moving from indefinite project periods to five-year project periods for all Head Start grantees. This requires changes in OHS funding practices and oversight of Head Start Programs. Changes in oversight will include improved communication between federal staff and grantees, as well as ongoing analysis of data to determine the type of support needed by grantees. The main purpose improved oversight is to demonstrate the quality of program services, the effectiveness of management systems, and the achievement of outcomes for children, families, and communities. This is our agency's first (3) year of the five (5) year period beginning July 2019. We are in

We are monitored by our funding sources regularly. Monitoring visits are to ensure program compliance in Health and Safety; ERSEA and Fiscal.

OHS APPROACH TO SCHOOL READINESS FOR GCA's HEAD START PROGRAM

The Head Start School Readiness encompasses three major frameworks that promote an understanding of school readiness for parents and families. The three frameworks provide the foundation for implementing a systemic and integrated comprehensive child development service including family engagement. Grantees must ensure that frameworks are implemented and reports are generated.



MEDICAL AND DENTAL

Medical Homes

100% of enrolled children



have an ongoing source of continuous, accessible health care.

35 are eligible to receive medical services if necessary through the Head Start Program.

373 of the children are enrolled in Medicaid 21 are enrolled in private health insurance plans. Head Start works cooperatively through both County Health Departments, Gaston College, private doctors, and our nutrition assistant to perform heights, weights, blood pressure, dental screening, blood lead screenings, and review of immunization records.

Dental Exams



221 enrolled children received continuous,

dental care.

Nutrition

Menus are provided in English and Spanish for parents and public review.

We participate in the Child



Serving Gaston & Lincoln Counties

The Head Start center has a central office in Gastonia and (7) Head Start Centers in Gaston and Lincoln counties.

CENTRAL OFFICE

223 N. Morris Street

Gastonia, NC 28052

(704) 866-8721

www.gastonca.org



Gaston County

Cherryville Head Start—5 Star

203 Elm Street

Cherryville, NC 28021

(704) 435-8946

40 Students—2 Classrooms

Highland Charter Head Start—5 Star

324 N. Highland Street

Gastonia, NC 28052

(704) 866-9874

119 Students—7 Classrooms—2 NC Pre-K Classrooms

Rankin I—5 Star

714 Rankin Ave

Gastonia, NC 28052

(704) 861-2285

60 Students—3 classrooms

Rankin II—5 Star

304 N. Highland Street

Gastonia, NC 28052

(704) 866-6345

68 Students—4 Classrooms

Lincoln County

Oaklawn Head Start—5 Star

410 Linden Street

Lincolnton, NC 28092

(704) 735-4702

34 Students— 2 Classrooms

Deaton Head Start— 5 Star

101 Deaton Ave

Lincolnton, NC 28092

(704) 732-3201

17 Students—1 Classroom

Lincoln Park Head Start—5 Star

140 Industrial Park Road

Lincolnton, NC 28092

(704) 732-1216

93 Students—5 Classrooms

2 NC Pre-K Classrooms



Community Service Block Grant



2021 - 2022 Outcomes



Alicia Exum, CSBG Director

GCA operates the Total Family Achievement Program (TFAP) with federal funds from the Office of Community Services (OCS) under the Community Service Block Grant (CSBG), administered by the NC Department of Health & Human Services (NCDHHS) under the Division of Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO).

The CSBG program is designed to alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty in communities in efforts to promote self-sufficiency. TFAP utilizes CSBG funds to serve the counties of Cleveland, Gaston, Lincoln, and Stanly with a vision of providing quality services to empower families to eliminate barriers to success, and a mission to teach and reach communities through resources and education.

In July 2020, OEO was able to disseminate and administer the CARES Act supplemental funding from OCS to CSBG programs across the state of NC, to assist additional families during the COVID-19 pandemic with economic financial hardships under the CARES NC program. The CARES program specifically targets COVID-19 affected individuals and families in the community with income eligibility below the 200% income poverty guideline from 7/01/2020 through 09/30/2022. This funding supports a range of emergency assistance activities including employment, education, health, transportation, housing, and other activities that may have served as a basic survival need adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

GCA CSBG program had a targeted goal to serve 200 individuals and families with CARES funding. From 2020-2022 operating years, GCA CARES Program was able to exceed this goal and assist a total of 364 individuals and families.

During the 2021-2022, a total of 448 individuals and families received assistance with both CSBG funding programs.

Sincerely,

Alicia Exum, MBA

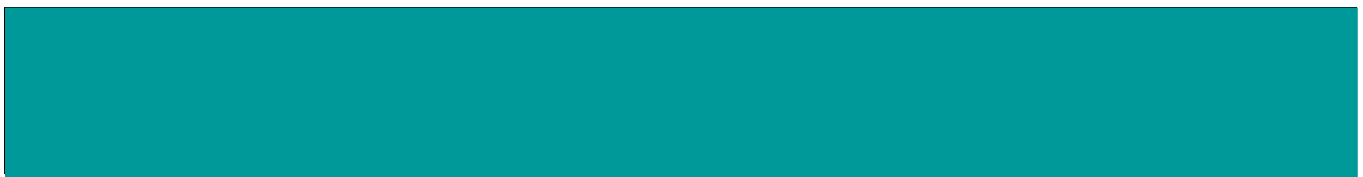
CSBG Program Director





Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) TFAP Outcome Measures

TFAP Outcome Measures	Target (Expected to Achieve The outcome in reporting period)	Achieved
The number of participants families serve	170	180
The number of participants families rising above the poverty level	13	15
The number of participants families obtaining employment	12	7
The number of participants families obtaining better employment	12	6
The number of participants families obtaining jobs with medical benefits	4	5
The number of participants families completing education/training programs	8	5
The number of participants families securing standard housing	11	3
The number of participants families provided emergency assistance	65	54
The number of participants families provided employment supports	27	17
The number of participants families provided education supports	7	4
NC CARES Outcome Measures		
Number of families served	200	364
Low Income families rising above the income Poverty Level	0	20
Number of families obtaining employment	0	17
Number of families obtaining better employment	0	4
Number of Participants obtained jobs with medical benefits	0	1
Number of Participants completed education/training programs	0	0
Number of Participants secured standard housing	0	7
Number of families provided emergency assistance	200	329
Number of Participants provided employment support	0	23
Number of Participants provided education support	0	7





Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) TFAP & CARES Demographic Synopsis

Source of Income

417	Income from employment only
13	Income from Employment and Other Income Source
13	Other Income Source Only

Other Income Source

7	TANF
78	SSID
45	Pension
57	Child Support
87	Unemployment Insurance

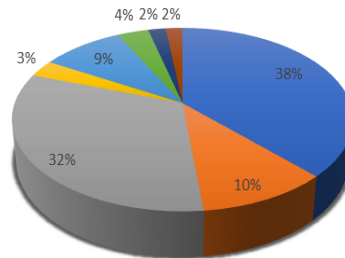
Work Status

60	Employed Full-Time
38	Employed Part-Time
196	Unemployed

Housing

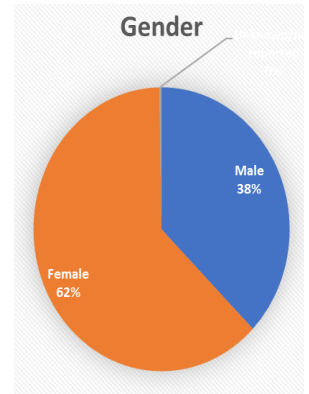
533	Own
375	Rent
46	Homeless
4	Unknown

Household Type

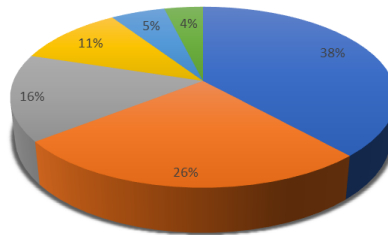


■ Single Person ■ Two Adults No Children ■ Single Parent Female
 ■ Single Parent Male ■ Two Parent Household ■ Multigenerational Household
 ■ Other ■ Unknown/not reported

Gender

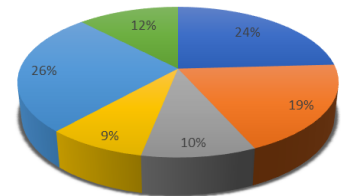


Household Size



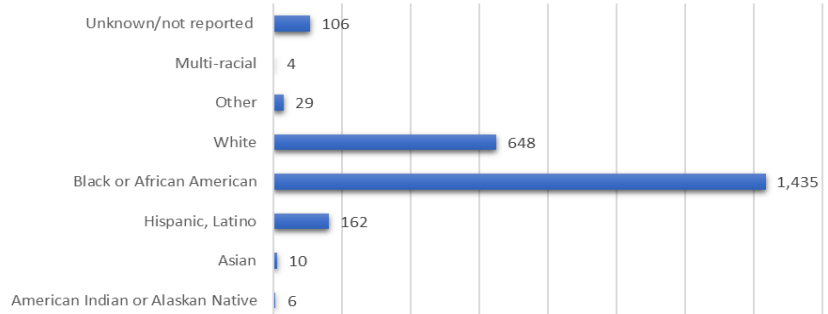
■ Single Person ■ Two ■ Three ■ Four ■ Five ■ Six or more

Education Level



■ Grades 0-8 ■ Grades 9-12 ■ 12 grade + Some Post-Secondary ■ 2 or 4 years College Graduate ■ Unknown ■ Grades 0-8

Ethnicity



■ Ethnicity

SUCCESS STORY

A Cleveland County resident entered the program unemployed and facing eviction. She had lost her job at a local daycare, and due to being a single mom with limited support, she was unable to leave her employment to pick up her children from school. While in the CSBG-TFAP program, we were able to assist the Participant with housing assistance, working on a business plan to start her soul food restaurant, and maintaining her household.. Today she has a thriving business that was able to remain afloat

during the pandemic. She also was able to cater events such as birthday parties, weddings, showers, etc. She is now able to live self-sufficiently and be a blessing to others by giving back to her community.



Serving Gaston, Cleveland, Lincoln, and Stanly counties

The CSBG has a central office in Gastonia and offices in Cleveland, Lincoln and Stanly counties.

CENTRAL OFFICE

223 N. Morris Street

Gastonia, NC 28052

(704) 866-8721

www.gastonca.org

Gaston

Alicia Exum

Robin Conner

Leslie Lowery

Tomeka Black

Cleveland

827 S. Washington Street

Shelby, NC 28150

(704) 480-0722

Jackie Thompson

Wavie Wallace

Lincoln

1224 Flint Street

Lincolnton, NC 28092

(704) 480-9744

Cynthia Vinson

Stanly

507 Old Charlotte Road

Albemarle, NC 28001

(704) 985-1928

David Brown

Susan Salzman, CFO

During this time of uncertainty, Gaston Community Action, Inc. (GCA) stepped up to the challenges facing our organization and the families in the communities where we serve and the staff remained fully committed to helping people and changing lives.

One of the most critical parts of community-based human services infrastructure was preparing to respond and leverage a wide range of funding to best utilize the impact of those dollars in the community and help to build community resilience.

GCA finance department administered and managed a range of federal, state and local funding streams, blending those resources to fill gaps in services and to maximize the impact of each dollar. The experience of the administrative staff along with sound fiscal management practices provided the capacity to quickly receive, track and disburse funds to those most in need of resources.

Additional funding was provided by the US Department of Health and Human Services, the NC Department of Health and Human Services, NCCAA with the Duke Endowment funding, NC Division of Child Development, USDA and NC Pre-K funding.

The additional funding has been utilized to help staff and families experiencing financial hardships, provide materials to promote remote learning, and upon return to the classrooms and work environment, funding was used for cleaning and sanitizing and personal protective equipment and to provide training to address situations that we had not experienced before. We have learned over the past couple of years that where there is a need, there is a way to address it, even if it is something the agency has never done before. Relationships were developed and strengthened as we all used the power of teamwork, conviction, commitment, resolve and creativity to address problems that impacted all of our lives.

The lessons learned and the lives touched during such a challenging time truly embraces the community action promise:

Community Action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.

Sincerely,

Susan Salzman, MBA, CCAP
Chief Financial Officer



Financial Information

July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022

<u>PROGRAM</u>	<u>GRANT SOURCE</u>	<u>FUNDING</u>
Head Start	US Dept. of Health & Human Services Administration for Children and Families	4,774,918
	USDA	38,487
	Pre-K Gaston & Lincoln County	256,200
	Non-Federal Share	917,912
CSBG	NC DHHS - Division of Social Services	772,521
CSBG CARES NC	NC DHHS - Division of Social Services	509,681
Other Revenues		<u>62,664</u>
Total		7,332,383



GCA

Administrative Staff

Joseph W. Dixon, Chief Executive Officer

Susan Salzman, Chief Financial Officer

Travice Tatum-Conner, Chief Human Resource Officer

Shelly Robinson, Assistant Financial Officer

Anais Moreau, Compliance Coordinator