



## 2025 Community Action Awards

### Volunteers

*The Volunteer Community Action Award recognizes exceptional individuals who have demonstrated extraordinary commitment and service as volunteers within Community Action Agencies across the state. These individuals exemplify the spirit of neighbor helping neighbor and the mission of Community Action to fight poverty and strengthen communities.*

#### **Kathleen "Kat" B.**

*Nominated by Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency*

Kat Byers exemplifies the heart of Community Action. A former program participant turned leader, Kat began her journey in 2019 with the Head Start Policy Council. Over five years, she contributed more than 300 volunteer hours while serving in various leadership roles, including Policy Council Chair and NMCAA Board Member. Kat's commitment to family engagement and parent empowerment continues to make a lasting impact.

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#### **Lorelei K.**

*Nominated by Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency*

Retired nurse Lorelei King has dedicated over 1,100 volunteer hours to supporting older adults in her community. Through her work with RSVP and local Commissions on Aging, Lorelei has served as a Meals on Wheels driver, fundraiser, board member, and advocate. Her compassion and dedication embody the spirit of giving back and uplifting others.

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#### **Kathryn N.**

*Nominated by EightCAP, Inc.*

For over six years, Kathryn Nerychel has served as a devoted CASA volunteer, advocating for children in the court system with empathy and creativity. Whether attending sporting events or sending thoughtful notes and gifts, Kathryn ensures the children she supports feel seen and valued. With over 1,100 volunteer hours, she's an indispensable part of the CASA team.

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### **Hazel S.**

*Nominated by Washtenaw County Office of Community and Economic Development*

Celebrating nearly 20 years as a Foster Grandparent, Hazel Sanders has dedicated approximately 20,000 hours to helping children succeed academically and emotionally. Serving in some of Washtenaw County's highest-need schools, Hazel is a trusted presence who uplifts both students and teachers through her steady support and care.

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### **Patty and Tony S.**

*Nominated by Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency*

Patty and Tony Soma have contributed over 200 volunteer hours to OLHSA, serving on multiple advisory committees and as Consumer Sector Board Members. Their tireless work for the Walk for Warmth campaign helped raise over \$72,000 to keep families safe and warm. Recognized as the 2023 "Heart of the Walk," the Somas are true champions for their community.

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## **Clients**

*The Client Community Action Award recognizes individuals for the incredible personal growth, resilience, and positive transformation they have achieved—often in the face of significant challenges—through their participation in Community Action programs. Their stories reflect the power of support, opportunity, and determination in creating lasting change for themselves and their families.*

### **Sarah E.**

*Nominated by Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency*

In just two years, Sarah Elizabeth has transformed her life. After finding safe housing with the help of NEMCSA, she joined the Financial Self-Sufficiency Program, secured full-time employment, improved her credit, and will soon become a homeowner. Sarah's journey is a powerful example of resilience, determination, and success through Community Action.

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**Daniel R.**

*Nominated by Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency*

Following the loss of his brother, Daniel Remington faced homelessness and personal hardship. With support from NMCAA and the Nehemiah Project, Daniel not only regained stability but gave back—offering rides and support to fellow shelter residents. His strength, kindness, and gratitude shine through in all he does.

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**Jake M.**

*Nominated by Chippewa Luce Mackinac Community Action Agency (CLMCAA)*

Jake, a single father, turned to CLMCAA when he and his newborn son, Hunter, became homeless. With Hunter's complex medical needs, Jake traveled weekly from the Upper Peninsula to Ann Arbor while working to regain stability. CLMCAA supported him with housing, transportation, and basic needs. Today, Jake has stable housing, employment, and care for his son—showing incredible perseverance in the face of major challenges.

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**Shelly H.**

*Nominated by Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency (NEMCSA)*

After the sudden loss of her husband, Shelly lost her home and livelihood. She lived in a friend's camper while working with NEMCSA to rebuild. Through housing support and help from local partners, she secured stable housing, became a caregiver, and is now pursuing further certification. Shelly remains optimistic, determined, and a strong example of resilience and recovery.

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**Mandi S.**

*Nominated by Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency (NEMCSA)*

Mandi, a single mother, came to NEMCSA's BOSS Program during a crisis—facing housing instability, separation from her children, and past trauma. With unwavering determination and support, she achieved full-time employment, regained custody, became a first-time homeowner, and enrolled in college. Mandi's journey reflects the power of Community Action to transform lives.