



2022  
ANNUAL REPORT



FY2022



# ANNUAL APPEAL DONORS

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## SUPPORTING MEMBERS \$100-\$299

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Whitney Bros. Oil, Corp.  
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Coghlin Services Fund  
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Worcester Community  
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William Van Dam

United Way of MA Bay &  
Merrimack Valley

## CHAMPIONS \$501-\$999

AbbVie Employee  
Engagement Fund

James R. Buonomo &  
Paula Rowse Buonomo  
Fund of Greater Worcester  
Community Foundation

Kathleen Dow  
Christine Fant

Mary & Robert Knittle  
Satya Mitra

Red Hat Matching Funds  
William Van Dam

## LEADERS \$1,000+

George I. Alden Trust  
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Digital Federal Credit Union

Enterprise Holdings  
Foundation  
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Employees of National Grid  
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UMass Memorial Health Care,  
Inc.

A MESSAGE  
FROM OUR



# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**MARYBETH CAMPBELL**  
Executive Director



**DONALD G. XENOS**  
Board Chair

## THE PAST YEAR WAS FILLED WITH UNCERTAINTY FOR SO MANY OF US.

Whether you were worried about your health, finances, or overall quality of life, you were not alone. We have all been touched by some hardship that required us to rethink, rework, or even reinvent ourselves. That is true for WCAC and the way in which we connect with our staff, our clients, our partners, and our legislators. **WE HAVE LEARNED SO MUCH FROM WHERE WE HAVE BEEN AND THE CHALLENGES WE ARE WORKING THROUGH TOGETHER.** I am excited about the possibilities the new year holds for reinvigorating our determination and focus on our mission and values to improve the communities where we live and work. I am proud of the creative ways we partner with people to find new solutions to age-old issues. *"As long as poverty, injustice, and gross inequality exist in our world, none of us can truly rest."* – Nelson Mandela.

**OUR RESILIENCY CENTER**, which is the heart and soul of our work, has grown from concept to reality thanks to everyone who believed in our vision and joined the effort. There is much to do and we can't do it alone. We are grateful to our many partner organizations who have come together to openly share information, resources, and common space in an effort to break down barriers to benefits for our neighbors. We are committed to driving this train full steam ahead until poverty and injustice are eradicated.

The year ahead brings forth a fresh approach to our work and an openness to change. Thanks to a great collaborative effort, **WCAC RELOCATED OUR HEADQUARTERS** to a newly renovated space at 18 Chestnut Street in Worcester. We are joined by several other non-profit agencies with whom we share clients. The goal is to reduce the stress, time, and effort it takes people to receive services. In addition, **WE HAVE PURCHASED A VAN TO MOBILIZE OUR SERVICES** and to reach people in communities with less access to Worcester. Our office has been designed to improve client experiences by providing parking and public transportation access, enhanced meeting spaces, and more significant resource and referral opportunities through shared program space. The environment reflects our belief in dignity for all, the transformative work WCAC does, and the quality of services we provide. We are indeed an agency on the move.

**Marybeth Campbell**  
Executive Director

**Donald G. Xenos**  
Board Chair

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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Kristen Lemire

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VISIT OUR HOMEPAGE  
AT **WCAC.NET** FOR  
MORE INFORMATION  
ABOUT OUR PROGRAMS  
AND SERVICES.

CONNECT WITH US

@**WCACINFO** ON FACEBOOK AND TWITTER, AND  
@**WORCESTERCOMMUNITYACTION** ON INSTAGRAM



## PROGRAM OUTCOMES



# HEATING & ENERGY ASSISTANCE

- WCAC's Home Energy Assistance Program (**LIHEAP**) processed 13,967 applications, delivering over **\$14.5 MILLION** in **HEATING BENEFITS** via 58 vendors to 10,657 households.
- **50%** of those **HOUSEHOLDS** receiving heating assistance were households with at least **ONE ELDERLY RESIDENT**; **12%** were households with **CHILDREN** under the age of six; **37%** of households were either **SELF-EMPLOYED** or otherwise **EARNING WAGES**; **3%** were receiving **UNEMPLOYMENT**.
- WCAC processed **804 PAYMENTS** totaling **\$245,000** through the new **WATER AND SEWER RELIEF** program.
- **1,862 HOUSEHOLDS IMPROVED ENERGY EFFICIENCY** and/or their energy burden was reduced through WCAC's energy efficiency programs with **983 HOUSEHOLDS** receiving **HEATING SYSTEMS REPAIRED** or **REPLACED**, keeping them safe and secure with heat.



**983 HOUSEHOLDS**  
WITH HEATING SYSTEMS  
**REPAIRED** OR  
**REPLACED**



**50% OF HOUSEHOLDS**  
RECEIVING HEATING  
ASSISTANCE HAD AT LEAST  
ONE **ELDERLY** RESIDENT



WORCESTER  
COMMUNITY  
ACTION  
COUNCIL





# GOING GREEN

**ALTHOUGH SOCIAL JUSTICE AND CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION HAVE BEEN ON THE FOREFRONT OF PUBLIC DISCUSSION, ENERGY EQUITY REMAINS A CONCERN.**

Low- and moderate-income households could easily be left behind. However, due to forward-thinking funding from the Department of Energy and our utility partners National Grid and Eversource, WCAC is able to make air-source heat pumps and weatherization services available to eligible households throughout our service area at no cost to tenants or homeowners.

An air-source heat pump can provide efficient heating and cooling for your home. When properly installed, an air-source heat pump can deliver up to three times more heat energy to a home than the electrical energy it consumes. This is possible because a heat pump transfers heat rather than converting it from a fuel like combustion heating systems. Air-source heat pumps have been used for many years in nearly all parts of the United States, except in areas that experienced extended periods of subfreezing temperatures. However, in recent years, air-source heat pump technology has advanced so that it now offers a legitimate space heating alternative in colder regions.

"WCAC is proud to be helping people afford energy while addressing the critical need to reduce our carbon footprint and mitigate climate change," said WCAC Director of Energy Resources Mary Knittle. "We are expanding our staff to meet the need of this exciting opportunity to save the planet."



WCAC is proud to be helping people afford energy while addressing the critical need to reduce our carbon footprint and mitigate climate change.

**MARY KNITTLE**

*WCAC Director of Energy Resources*





# EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE

- Early Head Start Home Educators conducted **1,372 IN-PERSON VISITS** for infants and toddlers, serving a total of **79 FAMILIES** in 2021-22.
- With the support of Early Head Start staff, **3 PARENTS ATTAINED** their **CITIZENSHIP**, one family bought their **OWN HOME**, one mom moved from **HOMELESS TO** having her **OWN APARTMENT**, one parent completed school for **NURSING ASSISTANT** and another for **CNA**. Two completed **ESL CLASSES** and several parents **STARTED NEW JOBS**.
- Head Start served **106 PRESCHOOLERS** during the 2021-2022 school year, 36 enrolled in full-day and 97 in a part-day program, allowing **113 PARENTS** to hold **EMPLOYMENT** with another **48** either in **JOB TRAINING** or **SCHOOL**.

- **65 PRESCHOOLERS** were identified as **DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS** with one of seven languages other than English in use as the primary language of their family at home.
- **80 PRESCHOOL CHILDREN 'GRADUATED'** from WCAC's Head Start program ready to enter Kindergarten.
- The **HEAD START** program was supported by **305** individuals providing **VOLUNTEER** services throughout the school year, including 194 of whom are current or former Head Start/Early Head Start parents.
- Healthy Families of Southern Worcester County (**HFSWC**) provided a total of **1,481 VIRTUAL HOME VISITS** to families promoting positive parenting choices and the prevention of child abuse and neglect to **48 FIRST-TIME PARENTS**.



**80 PRESCHOOLERS**  
GRADUATED FROM WCAC'S  
HEAD START PROGRAM READY  
FOR KINDERGARTEN



**48 FIRST-TIME**  
**PARENTS** PARTICIPATED  
IN HFSWC PARENTING  
CLASSES







# FLOURISHING IN THE CLASSROOM

**THE STRUGGLE TO FILL POSITIONS THROUGHOUT THE EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE INDUSTRY HAVE BEEN WELL DOCUMENTED THROUGHOUT THE COVID PANDEMIC.** WCAC itself has been unable to open one of our 12 licensed Head Start classrooms due to lack of staff. But initiatives like **PROJECT FLOURISH** have turned that challenge into opportunity.

**FEVIAN MEKHAIEL** grew up in Egypt, the middle child of five. She holds a bachelor's degree in Psychology and has always had a passion for analyzing personalities and child behavior. Shortly after getting married, she and her husband emigrated to the United States for his employment. As a first-time parent in a new country Fevian admits the move was rather isolating until she was referred to WCAC's Early Head Start program. Her youngest was connected with early intervention services before being eligible for enrollment in center-based Head Start program at age 3. She became active with the program as a parent volunteer, often helping translate for other Egyptian families enrolled with the program and was subsequently recommended by staff for Project Flourish.

Modeled after apprenticeships in traditional trades, Project Flourish supports the advancement of early career professionals through a combination of classroom instruction, mentoring, professional networking, pay increases when benchmarks are reached, and, upon graduation, professional certifications. Graduates receive an EOLWD Apprenticeship Certificate and become eligible for Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care Teacher licensure. Additionally, they earn required professional development hours towards Lead Teacher licensure as well as the nationally recognized Child

Development Associate certification from the Council for Professional Recognition. Having successfully completed her coursework, Fevian now works as a Lead Teacher at WCAC's Webster Head Start Center.

"I love working with children – my own and other families. WCAC was very good to push me to believe in myself," she said. "Now I don't feel like I'm going to work but that I'm going to see friends."

She credits Project Flourish with boosting her confidence and teaching her a variety of skills critical to her ability to lead a classroom from teaching tools to understanding a myriad of educational frameworks and regulations. She said she even began comparing notes and exchanging ideas with a sister who teaches in Egypt.

"Everything we say to them stays with them," she says. "I want to make them feel important and let them know that I trust they can do it... our children now are the future of tomorrow, the next generation of the country."



Everything we say to them stays  
with them. I want to make them feel  
important and let them know that  
I trust they can do it.

**FEVIAN MEKHAIEL**

*Lead Teacher, WCAC's Webster Head Start Center*



## PROGRAM OUTCOMES



# EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT

- **514 YOUTH** received **EMPLOYMENT** through WCAC's Job & Education Center employment programs including the 2022 YouthWorks Spring and Summer Jobs Program. Youth received robust skills and work-readiness training.
- For Summer 2022 **63%** of the youth were in their **FIRST JOB**, earning \$2,100 over the six-week work experience.
- **537** youth or adults participated in **JOB READINESS**; **529** received **JOB PLACEMENT ASSISTANCE**.



**10 STUDENTS** EARNED A **HISET** OR ANOTHER NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED **CERTIFICATION**

- WCAC's education program continued to function in a **HYBRID MODEL**, providing both in-person and virtual learning opportunities.
- **10 STUDENTS** earned their **HISET** or another nationally recognized certification such as OSHA, customer service, or Green Jobs.
- **31 STUDENTS** achieved **BASIC EDUCATIONAL GROWTH** in order to gain employment or proceed to an additional certificate program
- **110 YOUTH** received case management through the Safe and Successful Youth Initiative



**514 YOUTH** WERE **EMPLOYED** THROUGH WCAC'S JOB & EDUCATION CENTER



## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP



# GREEN TEAM

**WORCESTER COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL** and the **WORCESTER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE'S GREEN CORPS** program partnered together this year to make

a difference in our community. Over the summer WCAC employed 26 youth through the YouthWorks program who helped clean up almost 4,000 pounds of trash from local streets, parks, and waterways. They also installed pollinator gardens in multiple locations across the city which will play an important role in preserving some of our most important,

yet endangered, insect populations. Each week the YouthWorkers participated in Career Readiness sessions, learning from local business leaders, and developing important skills like resume writing and career planning. We look forward to our continued partnership with the Worcester Green Corps in 2023 and investing in the environmental health of Worcester.





# SECURE JOBS



**THE SECURE JOBS INITIATIVE BRINGS TOGETHER  
STATE AGENCIES, HOMELESS SERVICES PROVIDERS,  
AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES**

to support families in increasing their economic mobility by connecting them with housing supports and community-based providers in twelve communities across the Commonwealth. WCAC is provider for the City of Worcester. Providers focus on **HELPING FAMILIES BECOME EMPLOYMENT READY**, while addressing any barriers which may interfere with their economic mobility goals. By connecting housing and workforce development services, Secure Jobs offers comprehensive supports that families need to obtain employment through client-centered economic mobility plans tailored to their individual needs.

At WCAC, **MANAGER OF EMPLOYMENT & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS TODD SMITH** and **CASE MANAGER CHARLOTTE VERA**, support between 35-50 families each year. Issues such as domestic violence, evictions, and even natural disasters can bring about referrals to the Secure Jobs program, which places families in some ten to fifteen shelters and scattered sites throughout the City of Worcester.

"Most of the clients we work with are very motivated to succeed," says Smith. "They know what they want, they just don't know how to get there." Through work readiness skills, resume building, and workforce training, Smith and Vera help set clients on a path to success while working to address other barriers they may be facing. Transportation, restoration of driving license, mental health supports



Most of the clients we work with are very motivated to succeed. They know what they want, they just don't know how to get there.

**TODD SMITH**

*Manager of Employment  
& Community Partnerships*

and even providing recreational opportunities for clients' children are just some of the many issues the two have helped clients with over the past year.

Vera, in her first year as a case manager at WCAC, uses her shared lived experience to connect with clients. "I had my first son when I was just 15," she says. "I had to take a lot of trainings to make my way up. There's no shame in sharing my story to help empower others." It gives them (clients) hope – if they see I could do it, they believe they can too." She said the professional relationships she developed through her previous employment at both Catholic Charities and Worcester Family Health Center have proven valuable in making connections for her Secure Jobs clients.

## PROGRAM OUTCOMES



# RESILIENCY CENTER/ FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT

THE VITA PROGRAM  
GENERATED MORE THAN  
**\$1,532,000** IN TAX RETURNS



**32** VOLUNTEERS PREPARED  
INCOME TAX RETURNS FOR **571**  
**LOW-INCOME** HOUSEHOLDS



THE AVERAGE CLIENT  
RETURN WAS **\$2,684**



→ **THIRTY-TWO VOLUNTEERS** prepared federal and state income tax returns at no cost for **571 LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS** through WCAC's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program generating **\$1,532,000+** in **RETURNS** to the community. The **AVERAGE RETURN** was **\$2,684**.

→ 112 individuals experiencing economic hardship received consultations or ongoing coaching sessions from WCAC's Financial and Cliff Effect coaches.

→ Seven clients utilized a **ZERO-INTEREST LOAN** of **\$600** via Axuda.



## PROGRAM OUTCOMES



# EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

→ **360 FUEL DELIVERIES** and **UTILITY PAYMENTS** totaling **\$695,000** were made to households facing no-heat emergencies, funded through generous private donations to WCAC's **EMERGENCY FUEL FUND, CARES RELIEF FUNDS** and in partnership with local fuel vendors.



**360 EMERGENCY** FUEL  
DELIVERIES AND UTILITY  
PAYMENTS MADE





# PUT ME IN, COACH

## IN WORKING TOWARDS ADVANCING A MISSION OF “MOVING PEOPLE TO ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY,”

WCAC offers programming operating collaboratively under the umbrella of our **RESILIENCY CENTER** – intended to educate, empower, and connect people to financial opportunities and support them to reach their self-identified goals. A key area of growth for WCAC during 2022 was the addition of two **CLIFF EFFECT COACHES** to our team.

The coaches work one-on-one with clients, often first addressing a crisis which brings them to WCAC, then work to establish longer-term goals to reach economic mobility.

**ALTHOUGH SHE ONLY JOINED WCAC’S STAFF IN APRIL, MELISSA TRINIDAD’S CONNECTION TO WCAC RUNS DEEP.** All three of her children, now 27, 17 and 16, attended WCAC’s Early Head Start and Head Start programs which sparked both her interest in community involvement and ultimately led her to the nickname ‘Resource Queen’. With vast volunteer community experience as well as past professional work experience as an intensive care coordinator at YOU Inc., as a personal care attendant, property manager, youth coordinator for the local Community Health Network Area (CHNA), among others, she taps into those experiences daily to support her clients.

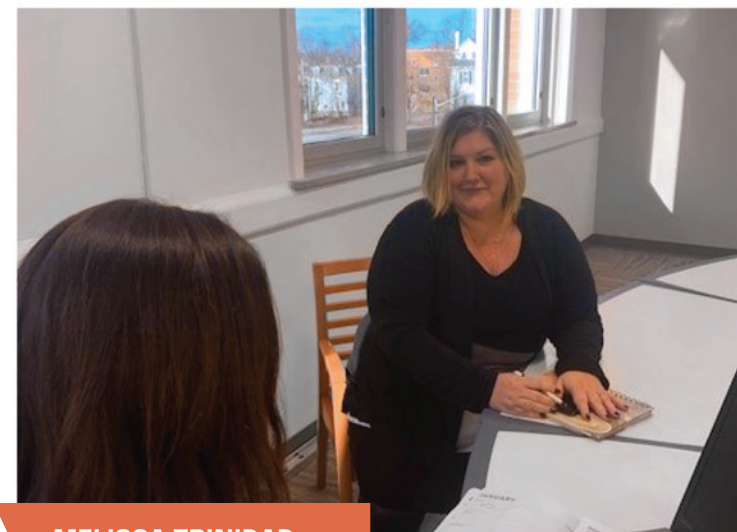
“I always wanted better for myself, for my family and for my community,” she says. “Through my own lived experience, I can empathize and connect better with clients. Understanding the system is one thing but having the skill to navigate is another. Something which on paper looks easy often has lots of barriers and frustrations.”

## BERNARD DELANEY FIGUEROA IS THE OLDEST OF SEVEN SIBLINGS BORN AND RAISED IN PUERTO RICO.

He says he knew from a young age that he wanted to help others. He holds a bachelor’s degree in Social Work from Interamerican University of Puerto Rico and first found his calling through an internship with the Department of Families. Recruited to the United States to work at a residential program for Seven Hills, Bernard quickly became a team leader which led to positions at the Stetson School, LUK, Centro and the Family Resource Center before joining WCAC in September.

“Having grown up in the projects helped me make the decision to provide support to others and make a change in my community,” he says. His shared lived experience helps him connect with WCAC clients. “As a coach I want to give them the tools and help them navigate... guide them in taking the steps they need to reach their goals,” he says, noting it is a balance between the needs a client has with the work they need to do to be successful. Whether pursuing assistance with rent, home heating or mental health support, he says he strives to keep his clients realistic and finds great satisfaction in achieving small wins.

Both coaches agree seeing the determination and drive of their clients is inspiring. Whether looking to overcome domestic violence, address probate or civil court matters, face medical issues, transportation challenges, or housing insecurity, often clients aren’t aware of the many resources available. “We are able to instill a little bit of hope,” says Trinidad. “By having organic conversations and building relationships we are able to help people break down barriers and help them figure out what they need.”



**MELISSA TRINIDAD**



By having organic conversations and building relationships we are able to help people break down barriers and help them figure out what they need.

**MELISSA TRINIDAD**  
WCAC Cliff Effect Coach



**BERNARD DELANEY FIGUEROA**

FY2022



# IN-KIND GOODS AND SERVICES

## HEAD START

Jenna Adnrolewicz	Mariam Kous
Carmen Altiery	Linette Maldonado
Yolanda Alvarado	Wendy McFarland
Susan Bourdelais	Jarrade Nieber
Catholic Charities – South Worcester County	Andrew Paradis
Maria Chaves	Brenda Polleys
Felicia Cierpich	Beth Poplawski
Maureen Clifford	Ivan Quinones
Anita Clutter	Ceriluz Rosario
Amanda Coccia	Matthew Sabacinski
Kimberly Collazo	Holly Scott
Joyce Crawford	Robert Totaro
Nicole Curboy	Colleen & Daniel Turgeon
Melanie Dunlevy	Kayla Turner
Alycia Dzik	Pamela Turner
Samaris & Amadys Escobar	Stephanie Vega
Yamilka Figueroa	Christopher Watson
Amanda Fournier	Webster Five Bank
Kristina Gonzales	Webster First Federal Credit Union
Robin Hengen	YMCA Family & Community Partnership (YFCP)
T Jablanski	

## HEALTHY FAMILIES

Department of Transitional  
Assistance

WIC South Central

Tufts Health Plan

Catholic Charities

Department of Children & Families

Kennedy Donovan Center

New Hope, Inc.

Family Resource Center of  
Southbridge/You Inc.

Southbridge Community  
Connections/You Inc.

YPS/YouInc.

## FUEL & ENERGY

Community Action of Pioneer Valley

Community Software Group

## ADMINISTRATION

WCAC Board of Directors

Community Software Group

Diamond Chevorlet

Fallon Health

Liberty Movers

PENTA Communications, Inc.

Percy's Appliances

Santander Bank

Unum

VITA Volunteers

Webster Five

WorkPlace

## JOB & EDUCATION CENTER

Adael Mejia	Lincoln Village
Yariel Lopez	Strawberries Early Learning Center
Ecotarium	The Guild of St. Agnes
Advantage Truck Group	Recreation Worcester
Miss Betty's Step in Time	WPI
Dario Diesel	
Goddard School of Worcester	



FY2022



# PRIVATE GRANTS & DONATIONS

## RESILIENCY CENTER

United Way of Central MA  
Capital One

## HEAD START

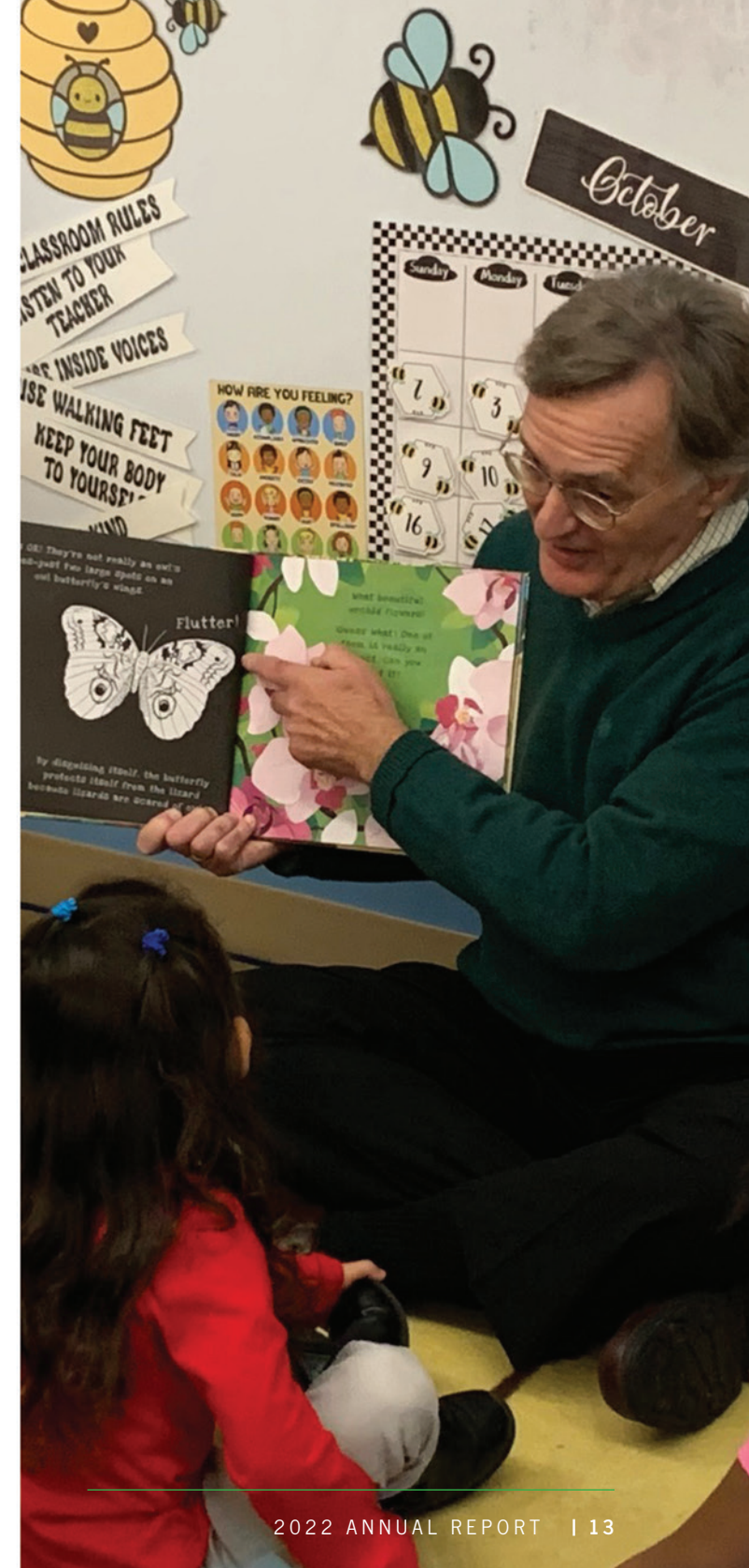
United Way of South Central Massachusetts

## JOB & EDUCATION CENTER

Bank of America  
Capital One  
City of Worcester  
The TJX Foundation

## EMERGENCY FUEL FUND

Anonymous  
Dr. Christine Bielick  
Cornerstone Bank  
Helen Flaherty  
Erin Guyette  
Holy Spirit Episcopal Church  
In Memory of Diane Irwin  
Shirley Jackson  
Kristen Lemire  
Susanne & Danny Muehlschlegel  
National Grid  
Mirick O'Connell  
Dr. Nicholas Smyrnios  
Sabriya Syed  
UniBank  
United Way of Central MA  
Webster Five



FY2022



# FINANCIALS

## SOURCES OF FUNDS

Mass. Dept. Housing & Community Dev. Pass Thru Fed & State	\$27,809,757
Earned Revenue Fees	4,547,092
Federal Funding – Head Start	2,848,458
Federal Funding – Other Pass Thru	1,863
City of Worcester – Pass Thru Fed & State	2,394,866
In-Kind Contributions	424,559
The Children's Trust Fund	304,656
GWCF – Pass Thru State Funds for Undocumented Relief	982,896
State Revenues – Other	609,917
Mass. Dept of Public Health	103,697
Corporate, Foundation & Private Grants	344,016
United Way	268,338
Mass. Dept. of Early Education & Care	335,188
PPP CARES Loan	89,237
Mass. Dept. of Education	123,265
Individual Donations	18,925
Other Income	574,282
<b>TOTAL SOURCES OF FUNDS</b>	<b>\$41,781,012</b>

*\*Unaudited Financial Statement  
WCAC's fiscal year is October 1 to September 30.*





## USE OF FUNDS

*with In-kind*

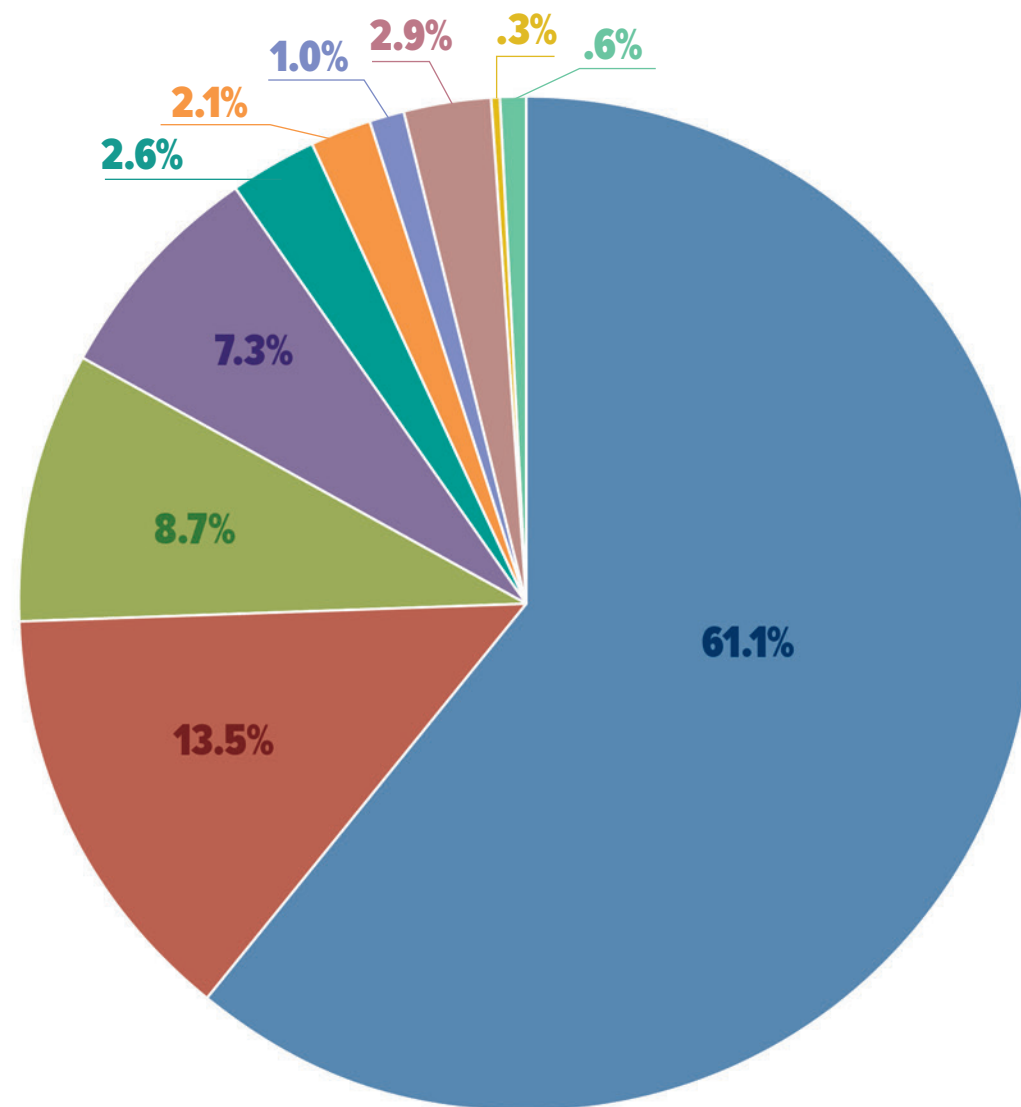
Fuel Assistance	\$24,935,676
Weatherization/Energy Conservation	5,515,169
Head Start	3,566,134
Job & Education Center	2,986,351
Community Services Block Grant	1,041,811
Covid 19 Relief	868,309
Healthy Families	408,865
Resiliency Center	1,174,179
Fundraising	103,142
Other Admin	232,070
<b>TOTAL USE OF FUNDS</b>	<b>\$40,831,706</b>



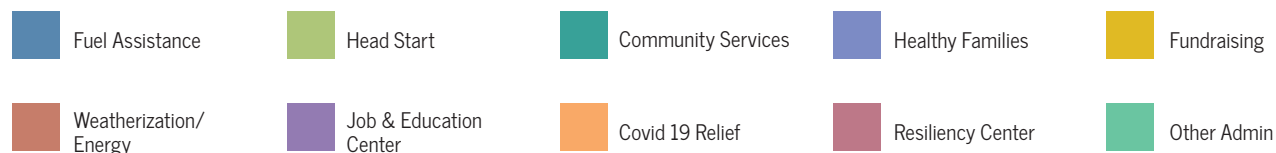
### SERVING THE CITY OF WORCESTER AND 45 NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES:

Auburn, Blackstone, Boylston, Brimfield, Brookfield, Charlton, Clinton, Douglas, Dudley, East Brookfield, Hardwick, Holden, Holland, Hopedale, Hubbardston, Grafton, Leicester,

Mendon, Milford, Millbury, Millville, Monson, New Braintree, North Brookfield, Northborough, Northbridge, Palmer, Oakham, Oxford, Paxton, Rutland, Shrewsbury, Southbridge, Spencer, Sterling, Sturbridge, Sutton, Upton, Uxbridge, Wales, Warren, Webster, West Boylston, West Brookfield, and Westborough.



## USE OF FUNDS





**WCAC**  
BREAKING THE CYCLE OF POVERTY ONE NEIGHBOR AT A TIME

Worcester Community Action Council, Inc.  
18 Chestnut Street, Suite 500  
Worcester, MA 01608  
Phone 508.754.1176 | Fax 508.463.9696  
[www.wcac.net](http://www.wcac.net)

THE ANTIPOVERTY AGENCY  
FOR CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS



## WORCESTER COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL INC.'S VISION:

“To break the  
cycle of poverty  
one neighbor  
at a time.”

