

ERIE *Building Economic Success, Strengthening Community* *Empowering Families* **TOGETHER**

Volume 13, Issue 6
June 2009

*An informational newsletter
for GECAC employees*

Georgia Del Freo, Editor

Poverty in the Erie community prevents many individuals and families from reaching their fullest potential. Moreover, it has a detrimental overall impact on the community's quality of life and economic growth.

GECAC, United Way, and the Mercyhurst College Civic Institute, have received a grant from The Erie Women's Fund to address poverty at both the systemic and individual levels. By building human and social capital, neighborhoods can be improved, lives enriched, and families and the community will become more economically secure. Informed by best practices this initiative includes: **Dialogue to Action Teams (DACT)**, bringing together community members in targeted areas to engage in dialogue leading to a concrete action plan to improve quality of life for all, but most directly for those with low-incomes, and **Family Action Teams (FACT)**, implementing a mentoring program for low-income families within the targeted neighborhoods so that these families might move toward economic self-sufficiency. Mercyhurst Civic Institute is the lead agency for the DACTs and GECAC is the lead for the FACTs.

The underlying philosophy of this initiative is that poverty is a community issue requiring a comprehensive community-wide response inclusive of all sectors. The involvement of existing organizations and initiatives that seek to address poverty is being sought. The initiative also is reaching out to involve business,

government, faith-based groups, low-income individuals, educational institutions and non-profit agencies in all aspects of the project.

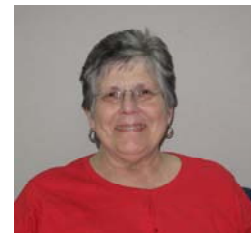
For the FACT component, GECAC has recruited 11 families living in or near the pilot area (East 8th to 12th; Parade to Gilson). These families currently are going through the *Getting Ahead in a Just Getting By World* curriculum by Phil DeVol. Each Monday and Friday evening from 5:30-8 pm until the middle of July, the families will be gathering at the Erie Family Center for dinner and class where they will be investigating the current state of their neighborhood and setting individual and community goals.

While the families are going through *Getting Ahead*, GECAC also is recruiting Community Partners. Community Partners are individual volunteers who will be paired with the families. Community Partners will be trained in Ruby Payne's *Bridges out of Poverty*.

After graduating from *Getting Ahead*, the families will serve as Leaders of their Family Action Teams, which will consist of the Family Leader and 2 or 3 Community Partners. The families will set goals for their families and the Community Partners will provide support to the families to help them reach these goals. All FACTs will gather for dinner on a monthly basis to share successes and discuss obstacles.

If you are interested in more information or becoming a community partner or family leader, contact **Nyima Porter** at ext. 651.

Employee of the Month



Carole Samokar

June's Employee of the Month is **Carole Samokar**, Head Start case manager. Carole has worked with the program for 35 years. According to her nominators, "she has seen the program grow and change and has managed to grow and change with it. She exemplifies everything a great case manager should be: compassionate, hardworking and is always striving to improve the status of her families. She is very successful at developing relationships that get results with the families she works with. She is very productive and reaches 100% of her goals each month. She goes out of her way to accommodate all."

*Way to go Carole, GECAC
Employee of the Month!*

It's Not Too Late! Even if you haven't signed up, you can still walk to support GECAC in the Walk for a Healthy Community. The Walk is tomorrow June 6th. Registration starts at 8. See you at Beach 1!

GECAC Gazette—Unit News

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Aging — Rep. Lauri Jewell

The Foster Grandparent Program has several openings. If you know of a senior citizen who is low-income and would enjoy working with children in a classroom setting in exchange for an hourly federal stipend (that does not effect any benefits the senior is receiving) please call **Lauri Jewell** at ext 462 or **Deb Gruver** at ext 463. Right now the age limit is 60 or older but that will change in October or November to 55 or older.

June 2nd is the **Senior Support Coalition Rally** in Harrisburg. The purpose of the rally is to show support for Preserving Lottery Funds for Senior Home & Community-Based Services in the 2009-2010 State Budget. **Matt Trott** and **Debra Mennecke** will be attending.

The Aging Division welcomes new staff: **Kristen Green**, Food Stamp Outreach and Options Caseworker, **Bettie Dickens**, Center Aide at the RBW Central City Senior Activity Center, and **Annjerrica Prince**, Waiver Clerk Typist. Welcome to the Aging Team!

The Independent Council on Aging recently elected officers. Our very own **Matt Trott** was elected Secretary and **Ray Maholtz** was re-elected President.

Child Development — Rep. Mae Roberts

Congratulations to **Kelly Banks** and her husband, Tim on the birth of daughter, Anna Elizabeth. Anna was born May 12th, weighed 6 lbs 6 oz and was 19" long.

Head Start conducted a "door-to-door Outreach" on Tuesday, May 25th. We are recruiting 3, 4 and 5 year olds for the Fall.

Applications for children are being accepted. To place an application, call **Lisa Bryant** at ex. 490.

Executive/Finance — Rep. Vivian Williams/Linda DeFelice

GECAC co-hosted a poverty simulation with United Way Women in Action and The Erie Community Foundation's Erie Women's Fund. Thank you to all of the GECAC staff and senior aides who assisted with this event.

The Erie Capacity-Building Collaborative (ECBC), led by GECAC, recently announced its 2009 capacity-building grant recipients. Twenty-two groups will receive funds to help strengthen their organizations and impact more people. In addition to grants, ECBC offers a free workshop series on best practices in nonprofit management. If you're a member of a group that you think could benefit, please contact **Amanda Brown Sisssem**, ext. 563 or **Jeremy Bloeser**, ext. 493.

ET&CS — Rep. Linda Waid, Jill McIntyre

Welcome to **Alice Ryan**, Home Health Aide Instructor.

Workforce Dev. — Rep. Sue Van Slyke

Welcome new Staff: **Steven Walters**, Outreach Case Manager I, **Justin Miles**, Training & Placement Specialist in the Supportive Work Program and **Jerry Jerome**, Job Seeker Specialist serving WIA Adults and Dislocated Workers.

The 25th Annual PA Partners Convention was held May 6th-8th at Hershey Lodge, in Hershey, PA. The theme this year was "Leading Change through Innovation-Celebrating 25 Years." Staff attending were: **Jean Burrell**, **Rita Robinson**, **Gail Dylewski**, **Anita McCoy**, **Maureen Kennedy** and **Melissa Wride**.

May 20th was the Annual Career Fair held at the Bayfront Convention Center. Nearly 100 employers and training vendors participated and over 3000 Job Seekers attended the successful event. All GECAC Workforce Development staff assisted with the Fair.

GECAC Activities News

Remember to **pre-purchase your cookbook by May 15th for only \$9**. After May 15th, the price will increase to \$9.50. **Gift certificates are available so purchase several for yourself, family and friends**. See any activities rep or call Georgia Del Freo, ext. 446. The publisher is anticipating books will reach us in early June.



Tickets are on sale now for this year's **All-American Picnic on Saturday, July 25th from 1-5 pm**. Cost is just \$5 per family (activities member, 1 adult guest and any dependent children of either the member or their guest.) See any activities rep for your ticket by July 10th.

Join Activities Association on a trip to the **Seneca Niagara Casino** in Buffalo, NY on **Saturday, June 27th**. The cost is \$20.00 per person for activities members and their guests or \$25 per person for non-members and their guests. **Included in this price will be \$20 slot dollars and a \$5 food coupon**. The bus will leave the Millcreek Mall at 9:00 am. and will depart from the Casino at 5:00 pm. Ready for a day out but not sure you want to spend the whole time at the casino? It's right next to the American side of the falls so you will have plenty to do. Call Maryann ext 470 or Georgia ext 446. Paid reservations due by June 12th.

