

“At GECAC, we don’t just provide services & programs, we open doors.”

Helping People, Changing Lives



IMPACT & ANNUAL REPORT
SPECIAL 60TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION
2025



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Dear Friends and Community Partners,

On behalf of the Greater Erie Community Action Committee (GECAC), thank you for taking a moment to read our Annual Report and reflect on the work we've accomplished together this year. This report is more than a summary of programs and numbers; it's a snapshot of community being supported, barriers being removed, and hope being restored through the power of community action.

At GECAC, our mission is simple and steady: Helping People, Changing Lives. In 2025, we continued to meet **urgent needs** while also building long-term pathways to **stability**, supporting **older adults**, **strengthening families**, expanding **workforce opportunities**, and **investing in services** that respond to today's realities in Erie County.

We are proud of the impact highlighted in these pages, but we are even more proud of how that impact happens: through committed staff, trusted partnerships, engaged volunteers, and a community that believes people deserve a fair chance to thrive.

As we look ahead, we remain focused on deepening our impact, listening closely to the needs of our community, and strengthening the systems and partnerships that make lasting change possible. We invite you to stay connected, learn more, share our story, partner with us, and help ensure that opportunity is within reach for every neighbor.

Thank you for your support, your trust, and your belief in what Erie can be when we show up for one another.

With gratitude,


Dr. Benjamin D. Wilson
Chief Executive Officer


Junius Johnson
Board Chair

 **Community action works because no one does this alone—staff, partners, and neighbors showing up together is how change happens.”**

LEADERSHIP



Dr. Ben Wilson
Chief Executive Officer



Christina Kessler
Chief Financial Officer



Matthew Trott
Chief Operations Officer



Holly Sawatsky
Chief Human Resources
Officer



Kimberly McCaslin, CFRE
Chief Communications Officer



Marybelle Martin
Director
Education, Workforce &
Self-Sufficiency



Ray Maholtz, AA, BA, BMS
Director
Area Agency on Aging



Pasquale Casane
Deputy Director
Area Agency on Aging



Arden McCullum
Director of Facilities



Roger Whelan
Director
Management Information
Systems



Vivian House
Controller



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

GECAC has a tripartite board structure to promote the participation of the entire community in the reduction or elimination of poverty. The GECAC Board of Directors consists of elected public officials, private sector representatives and low-income residents.

Junius Johnson
Chairperson

US Postal Service, Retired

Alison Samuels
Vice Chairperson

Erie Bank

Michael Butler
Treasurer

Edmund L. Thomas Adolescent Center, Retired

Mary Timashenka
Secretary

WQLN, Retired

Rachel D-Aurora
Erie Insurance

James Darby
Keller Williams Realty

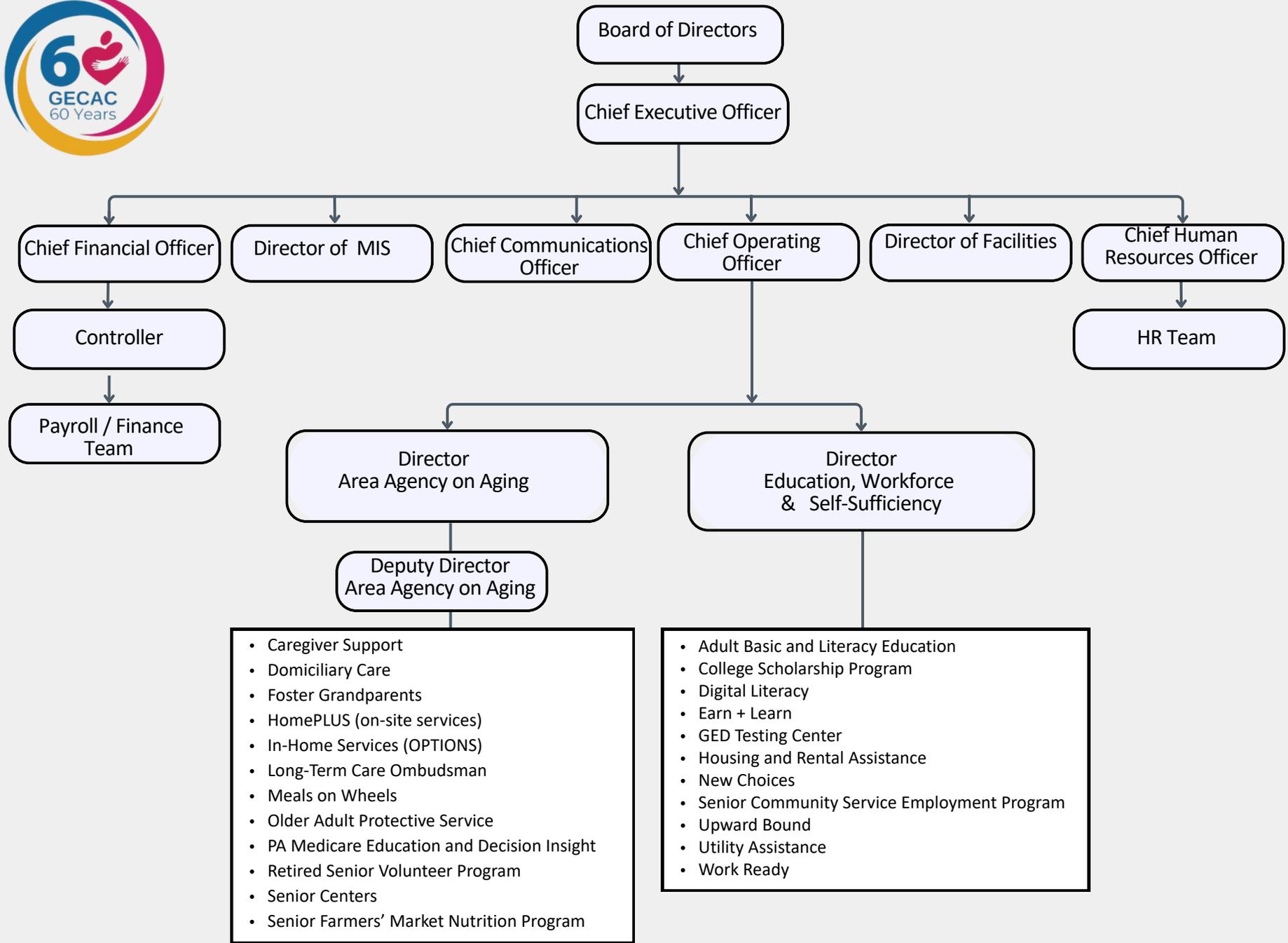
Mario Medina, Esq.
Melaragno, Placidi, & Parini

Heather Christie Morris
Erie Insurance

Christine Rush
State Representative Pat Harkins

Homer Smith, Jr.
Erie Rise Leadership Academy
Charter School, Retired

Thank you for your continued
support of our community.



- Caregiver Support
- Domiciliary Care
- Foster Grandparents
- HomePLUS (on-site services)
- In-Home Services (OPTIONS)
- Long-Term Care Ombudsman
- Meals on Wheels
- Older Adult Protective Service
- PA Medicare Education and Decision Insight
- Retired Senior Volunteer Program
- Senior Centers
- Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program

- Adult Basic and Literacy Education
- College Scholarship Program
- Digital Literacy
- Earn + Learn
- GED Testing Center
- Housing and Rental Assistance
- New Choices
- Senior Community Service Employment Program
- Upward Bound
- Utility Assistance
- Work Ready

Helping People,
Changing Lives

Our Mission:
GECAC will eliminate
poverty in Erie County
through empowerment,
education and
community partnership.

Our Vision:
Empowering the
community to foster
a better life for all.





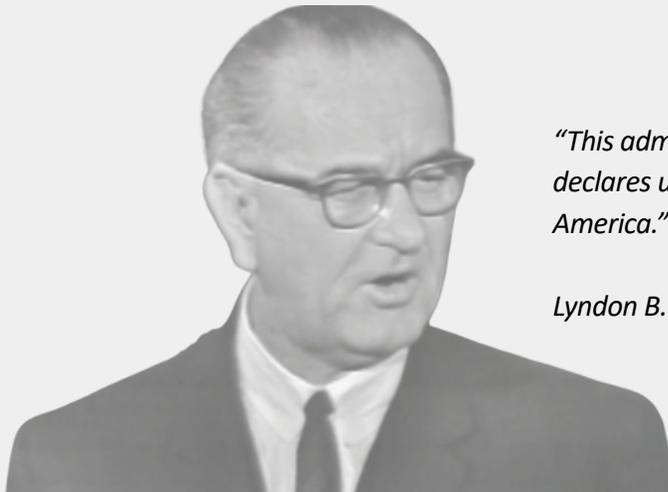
FROM THE ROSE GARDEN TO ERIE COUNTY THE BIRTH OF COMMUNITY ACTION

In August 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Economic Opportunity Act in the White House Rose Garden, launching a bold national commitment to fight poverty by expanding opportunity, education, job training, and pathways to work.

Why it mattered: It moved the country from “help in a moment” to building systems that help people gain skills, stability, and long-term economic mobility.

Erie County’s 1965 Impact: In 1965, that national momentum reached Erie County. Local leaders organized what became GECAC, founded on March 8, 1965, to build a coordinated response to poverty and connect families to opportunity.

GECAC’s early roots began as the Greater Erie Anti-Poverty Action Committee (GEAPAC), initially focused on areas like preschool education, employment, and youth programming—the building blocks of stability for families and a stronger Erie.



*“This administration today, here and now,
declares unconditional war on poverty in
America.”*

Lyndon B. Johnson, January 8, 1964





ROOTED IN THE PAST, RISING TOWARD THE FUTURE

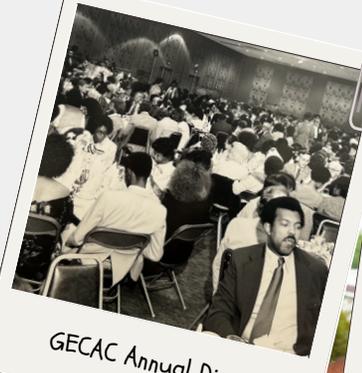
60 YEARS OF GECAC

GECAC Leadership: A Brief History

GECAC's story began with strong community leadership, including **Robert Baldwin**, the agency's first **Board Chair**, whose early governance helped establish a steady foundation for Community Action in Erie County. **R. Benjamin Wiley**, past **CEO**, helped shape GECAC's mission-centered approach and lasting commitment to serving Erie County with dignity. Mr. Wiley, along with Mr. Baldwin, strengthened the agency's capacity and role as a trusted partner, and advanced visibility and collaboration to keep GECAC responsive as community needs evolved.

Today, **Dr. Benjamin Wilson** is leading GECAC into its next chapter, focusing on modernizing systems, strengthening programs, and expanding opportunities.

Dr. Wilson's vision centers on meeting urgent needs while also addressing the root causes of poverty through strong partnerships, sustainable growth, and measurable impact across Erie County.



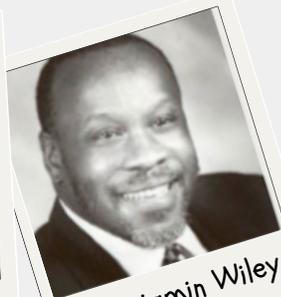
GECAC Annual Dinner



GECAC Grand Opening
Downtown Location



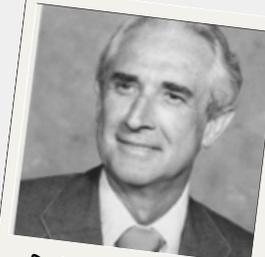
R. Benjamin Wiley



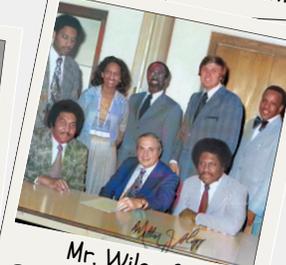
R. Benjamin Wiley



Charles B. Williamson
City of Erie Mayor



Robert Baldwin



Mr. Wiley &
Community Members



Who We Serve

At GECAC, we serve Erie County residents who are facing crisis, working hard but still struggling to make ends meet, or living on the edge of poverty. Our role is to help meet basic needs like food, safe housing, utility stability, transportation supports, and access to education and workforce pathways. While also helping people build a stronger future.

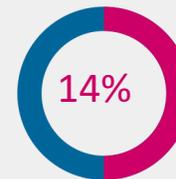
We focus on both lifting families out of poverty and preventing poverty by strengthening **stability today** and supporting **long-term self-sufficiency** tomorrow.

WHAT IS POVERTY?

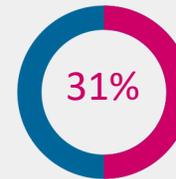
Poverty is more than a number. It's what happens when a person or family doesn't have enough income and resources to consistently cover essentials like housing, food, healthcare, transportation, and childcare.

In the United States, poverty status is typically measured by federal income thresholds set by the government, which help determine eligibility for certain public benefits and services.

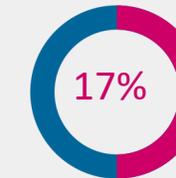
In addition to addressing poverty, at GECAC, we recognize that real-life hardship often affects families above those thresholds, especially when costs rise, and one unexpected event can push a household into crisis.



16,616 households are living in poverty in Erie County (15% of our neighbors)



34,071 households are employed, asset-limited, and income-constrained in Erie County (31% of our neighbors)



45,888 older adults living in Erie County (17% of our neighbors)

*Sources: American Community Survey 2023;
ALICE Threshold, 2022*



OUR COMMUNITY
SUPPORTERS & PARTNERS

*Thank
you!*

Thank you for making this impact possible across Erie County.



SUPPORTERS AND PARTNERS

100 Black Men of Erie
Carolyn and Herbert Ahrens
Lisa Anderson
Nancy Arndt
Sandra Bacik
Parris Baker, Ph.D.
Baldwin Brothers, Inc.
Bayfront Benefit Solutions, Inc.
Bayfront Nato, Inc./MLK Center
Gudrun Bertig
Wanda Blakely
Blue Rock Construction LLC
Booker T. Washington Center
Connie and Ed Borowicz
Margaret Brace
Paul Brinig
Laura Brown
Gary Bukowski
Michael Butler
In Honor of Toni Little and Hank Casper
Ray Shawn Butler
C. H. Reams and Associates, Inc.
Caplug Industry
Daniel Carnahan
John Carneval

Pasquale Casane III
James and Flora Catalfu
Cathedral Preparatory School
Andrew Charles
Julie Cohen
Lyman Cohen
Community Cup CHARITY
Rock Copeland
Dorothy Cote
John and Meghan Curtin
Rachel D-Aurora
Louis DeFonse
Paula Degenhart
Sherry DelleCurti
Eleanor Dibble
Patricia Dickey
Kathryn Dickinson
Diverse Erie
Rose Dobson
Jamie Dolmovich
Sue Doss
East High School Class of 1979
East Side Renaissance Inc.
ECGRA

Jennifer Edwards
Beverly Elder
Elevate Church
Elizabeth Hirz, D.A.
Epic Web Studios
The Erie Community Foundation
Erie County Community College of PA
Erie Crawford Cent. Labor Council
Erie Metropolitan Transit Authority
Erie Regional Chamber &
Growth Partnership
ErieBank
Erie Site Center of NWPA
Delbert and James Etter
In Memory of Jane Mallory
Ann Fargiorgio
First National Bank of PA
Cynthia Fleming
Ann and Gary Flick
Mr.and Mrs. James Galvin
Gantz Thomas and Carol Gantz
Joseph Garner
Gary Miller Chrysler, Plymouth, Inc.
GEEDC
Carolyn Geist

Carolyn L. Gilbo
Darryl and Patricia Grace
Green Scene Thrift Shop
Deborah Gruver
Hagan Business Machines Inc.
Kyle Hagstrom
Hamot Health Foundation
Haysite Reinforced Plastics
Highmark Health
Tina Hill
Historic Square Agency, LLC
Holy Cross Church
HomeAides
Joanne Homicz
The Hope Foundation
Vivian House
Housing Authority of the City of Erie
Tim Hrinda
Karen Hund
Jeremy Ingram
In Memory of Samuel Diehl Epley
Tami Jaggi
Krista Jeffries
JFK Center, Inc.

Clair Johnson
Hattie Johnson
Junius and Carla Johnson
Danny and Angela Jones
Maureen Kennedy-Fink
Mrs. Dorothy Kerner
Kristy Klick
Knights of Columbus Council #11229
Knights of Saint George
Joan Koppes
LECOM Medical Center
Debi Liebel
Ernest London
M. Atkinson & Associates
M. J. Surgala Trust
MacDonald, Illig, Jones & Britton, LLP
Raymond Maholtz
Kim Malone
Maloney, Reed, Scarpetti & Co. LLP
Luther and Connie Manus
Marquette Savings Bank
Erika Martin
Marybelle Martin
Martone & Peasley Law Firm
Dorothy Maund
Mr. and Mrs. Harold Maynard
Kimberly Peters McCaslin
Anita McCoy
Matt McCullough
McLane Church
Donald McQuaid
Ronnie McQueen

Namon and Brenda McWilliams
Mario Medina, Esq.
Mercyhurst Prep
Will Miley
Melanie Miller
Macie Mitchell
Bernadette Mleczko
Erma Moffatt
Charlise Moore
Margaret Morrison
Elizabeth Musone
Mutual of America
Nancy Nehez
Patsy Nichols
Melissa Nordin
NW PA Area Labor Federation
North East Knitters
Northern PA Regional College
Northwest Institute of Research
Bernadette and Bob Oatman
Judy Olmstead
Martha Osinski
Our Mother of Sorrows
Ed and Brenda Pasko
Paylocity
Penn State Erie,
 The Behrend College
Irene Platt
Richard Polach
Camillo and Dianne Presogna
Presque Isle Downs & Casino
R. B. Wiley Community
 Charter School

Reddog Industries, Inc.
Maria Redmond
Rehrig Pacific Company
Mr. and Mrs. William Reinhold
Carol Repoff
Pam Reynolds
Gloria Rhodes
Michelle Robles
Alice Rodriguez
Helen Rogers
Eric Rollins
Halina and Victor Roman
Root, Spitznas & Smiley, Inc.
Roth Marz Partnership, P.C.
Shawn Roy
Chris Rush
John Rushe
Ali Samuels
Sarah A. Reed Children's Center
Charles Sargent
Holly Sawatsky
Fred and Terri Schnepf
Scobell Company, Inc.
Senior Helpers
Seiu 668 Community Services
SEIU Local 668 Civil &
 Human Rights Committee
Diane Shannon
Nancy Sherwin
Violet Simmons
Sisters of St. Joseph of NW PA
Edward and Nadean Sitter
Julie Slomski
Slovak National Club
Helen Smith

Judith Smith
Mr. and Mrs. Homer L. Smith, Jr.
Society of Holy Trinity
Linda Spaeder
St. Hedwig Catholic Church
St. Luke Church
St. Paul Lutheran Church
St. Stanislaus Catholic Church
David Stadler
Barbara Steele
Kyle Stevens
BJames Stoik
Dorothy Strucker
Sunshine Group
Super Soul Saturday
Edward Szoeki
Beth Terp
Barbara Thornton
Mary Timashenka
Matthew and Jennifer Trott
UE Local 506
United Way of Erie County
UPMC Health Plan
Cheryl Varish
Velocity Network
Monica Verbosky
Voices for Independence
Ruth Warner
Kim and Roger Whelan
Megan and Morgan Whitby
Wayne Wilkins
Dr. Benjamin Wilson
Mary Wolf
Bridget Young



33RD R. BENJAMIN WILEY & WALTER L. OSBORNE MEMORIAL GOLF CLASSIC

Driving Impact, One Swing at a Time

2025 Results:

This year's outing raised **\$33,000**, expanding GECAC's capacity to deliver services and fill gaps that traditional funding can't always cover. These dollars help us meet people where they are, especially during moments of crisis and reinforce our mission of Helping People, Changing Lives.

Why It Matters:

Funds raised through the golf outing provide dollars:

- Supports workforce and education pathways that move families toward self-sufficiency
- Strengthens wraparound supports that remove barriers to employment and stability
- Provides timely assistance when a family is one unexpected expense away from crisis



2025 - Golf Classic
East Side Renaissance



2025 - Golf Classic
Sarah Reed Children's Center





ERIE GIVES

At GECAC, we know that lasting change happens when a community comes together. Erie Gives is a powerful example of that spirit in action.

Through Erie Gives, community members across Erie County invest directly in the services that strengthen families, support older adults, and help people build stability. This day of giving isn't just about donations; it's about a shared commitment to helping people and changing lives.

We are grateful to the Erie Community Foundation, a trusted partner that leads Erie Gives and helps ensure local giving reaches local impact.

Because of community support, GECAC August 2025 through Erie Gives and community support GECAC received **\$6,495**. These Resources help us respond to real needs.

To every donor, supporter, and community champion: thank you for believing in our mission and investing in the people of Erie County.

Thank YOU! Erie County!



2025 Erie Gives



2025 Erie Gives



RB WILEY LEARNING CENTER CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Built in 1905 as Emerson School, the building now known as the R.B. Wiley Learning Center has long stood as a landmark on Erie's West Side.

While the facility is currently vacant, GECAC is committed to revitalizing and restoring this historic structure to once again serve the neighborhood and strengthen community opportunity.

GECAC is working closely with partners, including Our West Bayfront and local neighborhood churches, to identify the best, **community-informed** options for how the building can be used to meet local needs.

GECAC is grateful to the **Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA)** for **helping jumpstart this effort**. ECGRA awarded **\$100,000** to support critical repairs and early-stage improvements needed to move the project forward.

As planning continues, GECAC is actively coordinating with additional local and state partners to expand funding and support for the restoration of this treasured asset in the heart of Erie's West Bayfront.



RB Wiley Learning Center



Brick Work 2025



60TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

In 2025, GECAC proudly celebrated 60 years of Helping People, Changing Lives. This milestone was more than an anniversary. It was a powerful reminder of what's possible when a community comes together to support our community, strengthen families, and expand opportunity.

Our celebration honored the generations of staff, Board members, volunteers, partners, and supporters who have carried this mission forward since 1965.

Together, we reflected on the roots of Community Action and the progress made across the decades, while also recommitting to the work ahead.

As Erie County continues to face challenges that affect families, older adults, and working households, GECAC remains focused on meeting immediate needs while building pathways to long-term stability.

Thank you to everyone who joined us, shared in this moment, and continues to invest in the next chapter of Community Action in Erie County.



2025 Award Recipient
Dr. Ferki Ferati



PA Representative Merski &
Dr. Wilson - GECAC CEO



OUR IMPACT



Our **Utility Assistance Program** helps stabilize budgets by minimizing utility expenses.



We connect older adults to **nutrition resources** and meal supports that promote health and stability.



We work to **safeguard older adults** and ensure they have a voice, support, and access to help when they need it.



Our **GED support** helps learners build confidence, stay on track, and prepare for the next step.



We offer **job training**, certifications, and skill-building for expanding career pathways.



We coordinate in-home supports that help seniors **remain safely in their own homes** and avoid unnecessary nursing homes placement.



We administer **housing and rental assistance** programs to connect families to stable housing.



We equip **students with the tools to succeed** beyond high school—strengthening study skills, academic performance, and college planning through year-round support.

110

Trusted Employees

\$14 MILLION

Invested into hardworking families and seniors



COMMUNITY OUTREACH IMPACT

At GECAC, we do more than deliver vital services—we find real solutions to the challenges facing Erie County. When we see a need, we act. Through strong partnerships with churches, schools, local organizations, and businesses, we bring the right people and resources together to make a difference.

Food Bag Distribution:

As food prices skyrocketed and many of our consumers had their SNAP food benefits greatly reduced, GECAC addressed their food insecurity by providing bags of shelf-stable food and grocery gift cards. More than 423 households received food.

Giving Tree:

Through our Giving Tree, GECAC brought the community together to help our clients and their families experience a brighter holiday. Nearly 625 families received gifts from their wish lists.

Spruce Up Erie County:

GECAC helps those in need across Erie County who are unable to afford cleaning and hygiene products due to poverty. GECAC distributed free supplies to 727 people through our Spruce Up Erie County events.

Warming Erie County:

Each Fall, GECAC distributes coats, gloves, hats, scarves, and socks to people across Erie County before the extreme temperatures arrive. Nearly 870 people in need of warm clothing attended our Warming Erie County events.

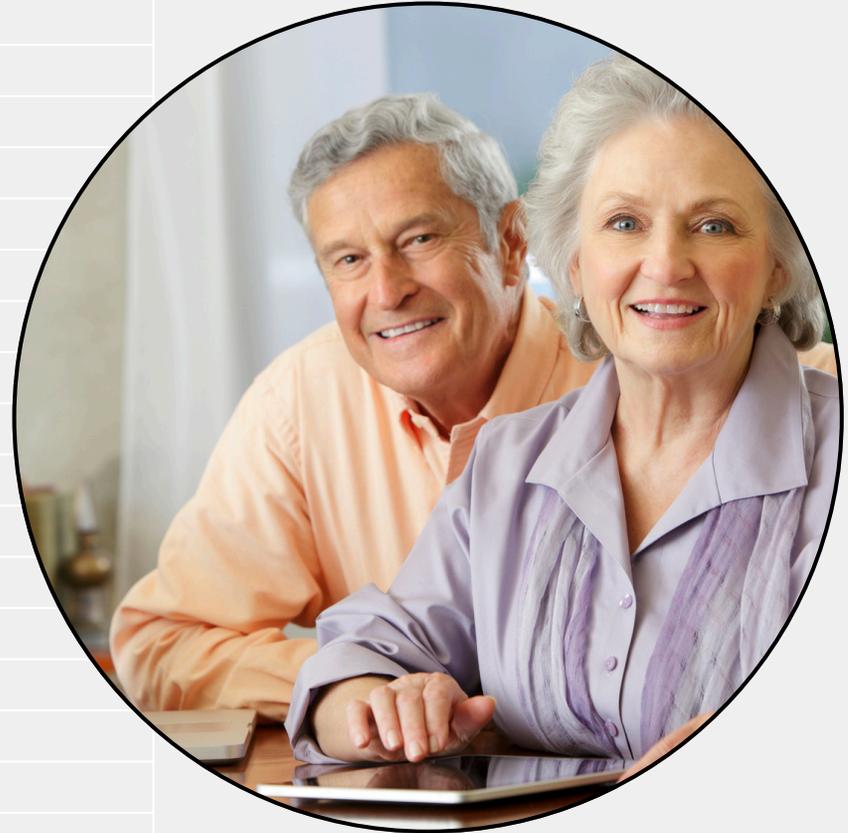


CLIENTS SERVED	PROGRAM
423	Food Bag Distribution
624	Giving Tree
727	Spruce Up Erie County
867	Warming Erie County



AREA AGENCY ON AGING IMPACT

CLIENTS SERVED	PROGRAM
5,864	Assessment
120	Caregiver Support
11	Domiciliary Care
32	Foster Grandparent Program
374	HomePLUS
810	In-Home Care Services
300	Long Term Care Ombudsman
941	Meals on Wheels
1,851	Older Adult Protective Services
472	PA Medicare Education And Decision Insight
467	Retired Senior Volunteer Program
84	Senior Center- Corry
216	Senior Center -Erie West
52	Senior Center- R. Benjamin Wiley Central City
86	Senior Center- Tri-Boro
159	Senior Center- Union City
161	Senior Center-North East
78	Senior Center-Northwestern
2,866	Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program
3,585	Senior Helpline





EDUCATION, WORKFORCE, & SELF-SUFFICIENCY IMPACT

CLIENTS SERVED	PROGRAM
138	Adult Basic Education
4	College Scholarships
65	Digital Literacy
88	English as a Second Language
153	Earn + Learn
178	GED Testing Center
12	New Choices
216	Rent/Mortgage Assistance
16	Senior Community Service Employment
74	Upward Bound
733	Utility Assistance
16	Work Ready





IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

- ✓ **OUTCOMES DRIVEN**
- ✓ **EXCELLENT DATA COLLECTION**

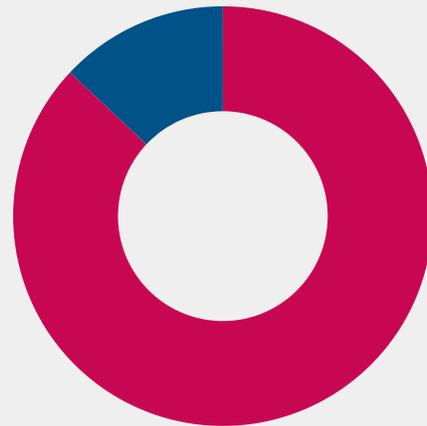
Category	FY 2024–25 Served	FY 2023–24 Served	Change
Aging	18,556	18,735	-179
Community Outreach	2,641	2,134	507
Education	549	547	2
Employment / Income	153	215	-62
Housing	949	267	682
Total	22,848	21,898	+950 (+4.3%)

Consumers may receive services through more than one program; the total number of consumers served reflects program participation rather than unique individuals.



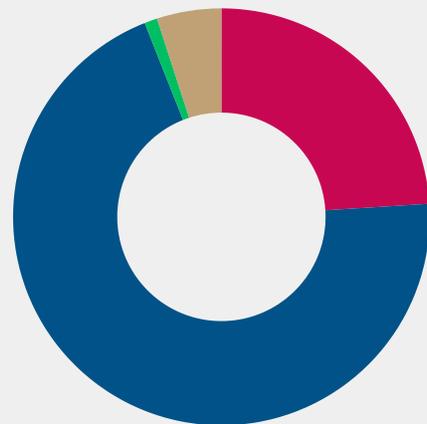
FINANCIALS

87% of our functional expenses support program work; only 13% support administrative costs.



- Programmatic - 87%
- Administrative - 13%

Here are these numbers broken down even more by impact and supporting services.



- Education, Workforce & Self Sufficiency - 24%
- Aging (AAA) - 70%
- Fundraising - 1%
- Community Outreach Support Services - 5%



**18 WEST 9TH STREET
ERIE, PA 16501**

(814) 459-4581

WWW.GECAC.ORG