



# COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY OF NEW HAVEN NEWSLETTER

Volume 8, Issue 1, March 2016

Offering pathways to prosperity to those in poverty in the Greater New Haven area through ♦ Service ♦ Collaboration ♦ Advocacy ♦ Knowledge Generation


Editor: Jill Dotlo

## CAANH Hours of Operation

Regular Hours: Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm  
Summer Hours: Monday – Friday 8am – 4pm

419 Whalley Avenue Phone: 203-387-7700  
New Haven, CT 06511 Web: www.caanh.net

Dedicated Energy Assistance Line 203-285-8018

 Find us on Facebook

## PROGRAMS

### Connecticut Energy Assistance Program

assists eligible households with payment for primary heating bills.

**IDA Program** provides financial-literacy training and matched savings to low-income individuals who are looking to buy a home, start a small business or go to college

**Manage Your Future** aids youth ages 14 – 18 with social-development skills, financial literacy, job readiness and employment by design.

**Mature Adult Activities Program (MAAP)** provides activities and seminars for active adults 55 and older.

**Passport Transitional Services Program** provides resources to homeless clients at shelters for employment, housing and healthcare.

**SMART Women** offers single mothers financial education and case management including managing family issues.

**Surfing With Seniors** offers Seniors 55 and older the opportunity to learn basic computer skills.

**Voluntary Income Tax Assistance (VITA)** offers free tax service to eligible clients.

**Weatherization Program** helps eligible customers receive services that reduce energy consumption and optimize energy efficiency.

**Father's Matter** Encourages low-income and non-custodial fathers to become involved with their children.

**Warren A. Kimbro Re-entry Program** Works to engage ex-offenders to successfully assimilate into society starting 12 months before they're released.

## SERVICES

**Family Services** provides case management for individuals and families.

**Home Visits** are available to eligible individuals who have special needs due to their medically disabling condition.

**Outreach Services** present CAANH programs and services to the community.

**Passport to Prosperity** is a referral process among partners to provide services to clients in a more expedited manner.

# STAFF AT CAANH



SHARON WILLARD

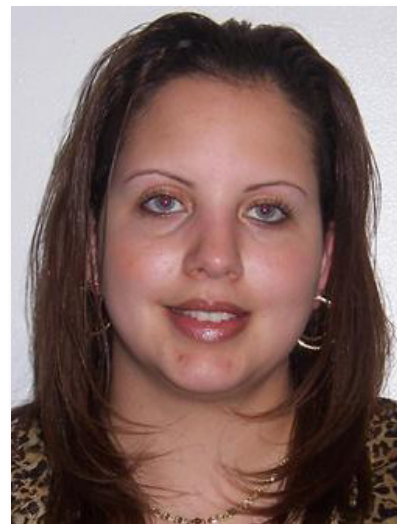
35 years ago, Sharon Willard came to CAANH. It was 1980 and her next door neighbor who worked at CAANH told her there was an opening. Sharon, a lifelong East Haven resident, applied for the Executive Secretary position and was hired that same day, and has worn multiple hats within the Agency ever since.

Sharon held the positions of Coordinator of the Fuel Bank and Food Commodities Program, and Executive Assistant for the CEO. She's been the Assistant Director of Programs, overseeing Senior Service programs including medical and chore programs, energy assistance, elderly nutrition and 'Meals on Wheels' which served 1,000 residents each day in South Central CT. Sharon helped bring the Operation Fuel energy assistance program into the Greater New Haven area. "The extra dollar on your U.I. bill goes towards Operation Fuel. It helps the elderly and others in need to pay their energy bills."

The ChiliFest is probably Sharon's most valued accomplishment. The CAANH ChiliFest started off with a bang! Hughie Lewis and the News performed at the very first ChiliFest. It continues to be the largest fund raiser for CAANH's food pantry, and is in its 24th year! And it's no small event, because winners from CAANH's ChiliFest are eligible to participate in the World

Chili Cook Off, which is sanctioned by the International Chili Society. Winners at that event can earn \$25,000 for the best chili recipe!

When asked why she's been at CAANH so many years Sharon replies – "It really and truly makes me feel good about the amount of people that we help."



APRIL BRANCH

While attending a job training program at CAANH in 2003, April was also going to school completing her Associates degree in Office Administration at Briarwood College. One day, Darnel Goldson CAANH's CEO, sat in on the classes to observe. "I guess he must have noticed I was really serious about finding a job," April said, "because he asked me if I was interested in working at CAANH. I said Yes and he told me to go home, change my clothes and return for an interview later that day. It was my first serious interview, I was excited and nervous." April was hired on the spot as a seasonal Energy Case Worker and her career has been progressing at CAANH ever since! A year later she became Lead Case Worker, and two years later, in 2007, she was promoted to Internal Supervisor responsible for conducting yearly staff evaluations, and supervising half of the energy workers. In 2009 she accepted her current position of Energy Manager. "I

## URGENT SERVICES

**The Greater New Haven Community Fuel Bank** provides eligible customers additional help with energy assistance when Operation Fuel funds are available.

**The Open Choice Food Pantry** fills a temporary gap in lack of food by providing groceries to low-income individuals and families residing in New Haven. **Appointment needed.**

**The Diaper Bank** provides diapers to eligible low-income families. **Appointment needed.**

## Staff at CAANH Continued

oversee staff, interns and volunteers to keep everything running smoothly in the day to day operations of our department.” April plays a major role in ensuring each worker is providing high quality, customer focused, and timely services. This ensures that low income people and working families will receive payment towards their heating bill and keep warm during the winter months.

“I’d always been aware of the good work CAANH did in the community, and I wanted to be a part of that. So when the opportunity came to work here, I was very enthusiastic to be in a position to help others who were less fortunate.” 12 years and three promotions later, April says “it’s been a journey for me because I learned on the job while I grew and matured as a person and in my role as a manager. I started at the age of 20. I’m grateful that CAANH saw the potential, and supported my growth and development. Now, I’m part of a team of people responsible for running the energy departments, and training staff.”

“I’m blessed to have weathered the storms at CAANH. Throughout its 35 year history there have been changes in staff, shifts in management, and it hasn’t always been an easy road, but it has been a most gratifying one.”



**ADRIENNE SANDERS**

Before joining CAANH as Accounting Manager in July 2008, Adrienne was Controller at Sodexo Marriot for 7 years, the food service segment of the Marriott that serves Yale New Haven Hospital, and held the position of District Accounting Manager for Compass Group.

“I grew up in New Haven and although my family didn’t get services from CAANH, I have always volunteered and like to give back. I looked at coming here as the best of both worlds, supporting the city I grew

up in and giving back to the community.” Adrienne has a proven track record with managing the budget and leading CAANH through multiple and frequent audits. “One year we had 5 audits, had no findings and received clean opinions.” After that, Adrienne became Controller, and most recently in September of 2014, she became the VP of Finance.

“What’s different about working at CAANH is you get the full essence of accounting ~ you actually don’t do full accounting until you come to a nonprofit. Here you see accounting from start to finish ~ the entire process.” A couple of years ago, Adrienne enrolled in the Executive MBA program at the University of New Haven. She graduated January 2016. “My goal now is to utilize my degree. My husband had been pushing me for about 10 years to go back to school and get my degree. I went back because of the uncertainty of the job market. I had the experience but not the educational degree to back it up.”

“I like it here. Every day is different and I like the diversity of people. It’s been a great journey for me. I’d like to impart the knowledge from my degree to my colleagues and the organization. I know that going back to school has changed me for the better.”

## CAANH receives \$15,000 from the Connecticut Health Foundation for Pilot Program

The funding will be used to assist the Community Action Agency of New Haven (CAANH) in surveying 1,500 of our clients during the next year.

### The objectives are:

- To determine if individuals are enrolled and utilizing their healthcare coverage.
- To identify any obstacles that may be preventing individuals from using the healthcare coverage. Examples: access, transportation, co-pays, etc.
- To identify if individuals have a medical home, and if they have a primary care physician.



Howard K Hill, Connecticut entrepreneur, humanitarian and CAANH board member created The Prosperity Foundation (TPF), an emerging philanthropic and educational initiative designed to strengthen CT’s Black/African American communities in health, education and economic development. The Prosperity Foundation generously donated \$2,500 to CAANH’s Mature Adult Activities program. Pictured: Board members seated and recipients standing.