

The Flood Waters Have Subsided but the Long-Term Impact is Still Being Felt



South County Community Action Agency continues to rise to the challenge

The April rain came down for days. The rivers rose. Homes and businesses flooded. Roads were washed out. There to help from the beginning - and long after the waters subsided - was the staff from South County Community Action Agency (SCCAA). During the first two weeks following the flooding, the Agency provided long hours of assistance starting with coordinating case management and direct financial assistance services at the Westerly Senior Center, which was the designated emergency shelter for over 60 families initially displaced by the flood. This effort was coordinated with FEMA and the Red Cross, as well as other vital social service partners throughout Washington County including town officials, The Warm Shelter, The Welcome House, Jonnycake Centers of Westerly and Peace Dale, The RI Food Bank, RI Community Action Association, the Washington County Basic Human Needs Coalition, the Westerly Housing Authority, the Long Term Recovery Group of Washington County and many others.

The South County Community Action Agency provided assistance to all affected by the flood in Washington County with particular emphasis in the Town of Westerly where the impact of the flood was devastating. SCCA provided Emergency Case Management Services, Housing and Basic Human



Needs Assistance, and Social Services expertise and

resources to hundreds of displaced families while staffing the FEMA Disaster Relief Center (DRC) in Westerly from 8 am until 7 pm Monday through Sunday - seven days a week.



When the Town of Westerly closed its Disaster Recovery Center at the Town Hall, the SCCAA extended the free use of its building on Pond Street in Westerly as a temporary DRC headquarters for FEMA, the Small Business Administration, the RI Department of Human Services, the Department of Labor and Training, Department of Elderly Affairs, MHRH and other state and local agencies and organizations.

The South County Community Action Agency provided over \$65,000 in financial support to almost 200 families in the Westerly area, with funding from Citizens Bank through the RI CAP Directors Association. Funds were used to assist flood survivors with gift cards for food, clothing, cleaning supplies, hygiene products, utility assistance, rental assistance, emergency hotel/motel lodging, moving costs and other basic human needs. Each family was assigned an experienced case manager to work with them in finding long term permanent housing. The Agency continues to work with those families and many others, as the long-term efforts continue. The SCCAA is now involved in long-term planning efforts coordinated by the United Way to establish Walk-In Centers at SCCAA's Westerly and Wakefield sites starting this week.



According to Joseph DeSantis, CEO of the SCCA, "The Herculean effort and long hours put in by the SCCAA staff were given enthusiastically, unselfishly, and with the highest level of professionalism. Three shifts, totaling approximately 12 hours per day for over a month at various locations, provided the staffing that made it possible for people in need to get quality services in a timely manner. In addition, the financial support of South County Community Action made it possible for families to get the emergency help they needed without delay or red tape. This is a true testament to how Community Action Agencies and their staff have the level of commitment, dedication and skills needed to immediately respond to a crisis within the communities they serve in the most effective and efficient manner possible."

Hundreds were helped:

191 families served in Westerly and Wakefield including:
382 adults
248 children under age 18
32 elderly
10 disabled

5 mental health adults

Motel lodging for 32 families from April 10 to May 24

South County Community Action has been "Helping people, changing lives" since 1965. This spring was the time to "help people, and give them back their lives." We wish everyone well and invite those who are still in need to contact us.

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