

June 3, 2010

Dear Friend:

You may ask yourself what makes the Monticello Area Community Action Agency (MACAA) special? Why should I/we give to MACAA? What do I know about MACAA?

Let me tell you why I work here, and the satisfaction that I get from the work that we do.

Our mission at MACAA is to help people out of poverty and improve their quality of life. We do this by creating programs with pathways out of poverty that lead towards self sufficiency. Sometimes this can be done by giving someone a one time emergency assistance payment on utilities or rent (**CARES**); but more often it is a long term goal that involves case management and working closely with individuals and families (**Financial Economic Security**). I would be less than candid if I didn't say that oftentimes the challenges are overwhelming as the needs of some families are so great and our resources limited.

When I think of the enormity of these challenges, I remind myself of why I am here; and the great work that MACAA is able to do with the resources that we have.

I think of the grandmother who lives in public housing that I met two years ago who was raising her twelve year old grandson who was completing the sixth grade. Her daughter is incarcerated. She and I developed a friendship, and we talk regularly about a lot of issues that she is facing. Her grandson is an honor student. Last year MACAA provided her with a donated car to help her take her grandson to a private middle school where he received a scholarship. Recently she called me at home with excitement to inform me that her grandson was accepted on scholarship to one of the premier private high schools in Charlottesville. There are no words to explain the joy in her voice, and the joy that I experienced from that phone call.

I know that education is one of the routes out of poverty. My friend's grandson now has the opportunity to lead his family out of poverty as a result of a caring and conscientious grandmother, and help from MACAA. Two of MACAA's programs are education programs: **Head Start** - a pre-school program for three and four year olds that prepares children for kindergarten and **Project Discovery** a high school drop out prevention and college access preparatory program that serves economically disadvantaged, potential first generation college attendees.

- In 2009 ninety-eight percent of Project Discovery graduates went on to college

Recently, I received a thank you note from a participant in the **Back To Work Program**. The note read:

*My name is KH and I am a recent enrollee in the program. I was introduced to it through MACAA and since, I have found a job and I am financially back on track. In June, I will be starting classes to further my education and to find a better job. Social Services helps but this program really deals with people's issues better. A lot of people don't know about this program and should know how there are people who care and understand your day to day issues. From a single parent of two young kids, this program is better than Social Services. I appreciate your program a lot and hope that this letter will let you know what you all do is helping our community.*

Helping people like KH, makes me feel good about the work that we do.

Last Fall, I had dinner with all of the families in MACAA's Hope House transitional housing program for homeless families. Our Hope House families are thriving. With the intensive case management offered by the Director of Hope House, each family is enrolled in in-home therapy through the Charlottesville League of Therapists. The heads of each household are employed. MACAA was able to provide a donated van to one Hope House family who did not have transportation. Families are engaged in family activities with their children. Given an

opportunity and a clean safe home, these families are learning parenting skills, clearing up past credit problems, and beginning to save for their future away from Hope House. What a thrill it is to see this transformation!

Recently MACAA received eleven applications for one apartment opening at Hope House. The demand and need for transitional housing programs is great. We would like to do more. We continue to work with our families after they graduate from the Hope House program to ensure their success.

I have shared a few of my personal experiences at MACAA. Each MACAA team member can tell you stories of families that they have helped. At MACAA we are helping people and changing lives. Our work is challenging, but so rewarding. I am proud of what we do.

For your information, I have included a brief description of the programs offered at MACAA.

Your donation will help MACAA continue to provide programs and opportunities to individuals and families that will lead them on a pathway to self sufficiency and improve their quality of life.

Thank you for caring.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Karen L. Shepard". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Karen L. Shepard  
Executive Director