

Executive Update

Tyrone Chase, Ph.D.

As Executive Director of SHORE UP, I am constantly reminded of the critical role that community action agencies play in the lives of our neighbors. Every day, our dedicated team works tirelessly to address the needs of those most vulnerable in our community. Yet, many people who need help are still unaware of the resources we can provide them.



Community action agencies fill in the gaps, provide a safety net, and offer services tailored to the unique needs of our community. Whether it's food assistance, job training, emergency shelter, or help navigating the complexities of social services, we provide a compassionate, hands-on approach that governmental agencies often cannot. We are deeply embedded in the community, which means we can adapt quickly to changing needs and create innovative solutions that work for those we serve.

However, the effectiveness of our work hinges on one crucial factor: awareness. There are countless individuals and families in our community who are struggling but are unaware of the resources available to them. That's where we need your help.

We rely on you — our supporters, neighbors, and friends — to spread the word about the services we provide. You can help bridge the gap between those who need help and those who can provide it. Share our information on social media, talk to your friends, family, and colleagues, and connect with local businesses and organizations. A simple conversation could lead someone in need to the support they deserve.

Promoting our agency and other local organizations is more than just good citizenship; it is a direct way to make a meaningful impact. By helping us reach those who are struggling, you become a vital part of the solution. Together, we can build a stronger, healthier, and more equitable community for all.

Thank you for your continued support and partnership. Let's work together to ensure that everyone knows where to turn when they need a helping hand.

Energy Assistance Changes

Maryland's Department of Human Services (DHS) has changed the Energy Assistance Program for the 2024-2025 heating season.

First, anyone receiving benefits from SNAP, SSI, TANF, Means-Tested Veterans Affairs will automatically be eligible to receive energy assistance (this is known as categorical eligibility).

DHS plans to "strategically target benefits to households with the greatest home heating and cooling needs." Eligibility for all assistance programs will be 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. This has resulted in a pool of applicants that is nearly 200% higher than last year.

As a result, DHS has stated that households "should expect to receive a decreased benefit in energy assistance grants compared to what was previously awarded."



SHORE UP does not determine how much assistance an applicant for the program will receive.

If you know someone who was relying on a significant energy assistance payment to help them get through the winter heating season, please refer them to SHORE UP's Housing Counseling program. They can meet with a certified financial counselor, who can help them establish a household budget, repair their credit score, and look for ways to reduce expenses.

Weatherization Program Changes

Our Weatherization Assistance Program has a new Program Director, **Erika Rittling-Uebel**. Erika is a former program director for Telamon Corporation who also holds a Master's Degree in Human Service Administration. Erika has immersed herself in learning about SHORE UP and our weatherization program and is looking forward to helping Eastern Shore households live in healthier, more energy-efficient homes!

Foster Grandparents

SHORE UP's Foster Grandparent Program offers seniors aged 55 and older the opportunity to provide invaluable support to children and youth in their communities. Through this program, volunteers serve as role models, mentors, and friends to young people with special needs, helping to build confidence, enhance social skills, and improve academic performance.

By fostering these meaningful connections, the program not only enriches the lives of the children, but also brings a sense of purpose and fulfillment to the volunteers. Many participants report feeling more engaged, healthier, and happier, while also giving back in a way that creates a lasting impact.

Whether you are a senior looking for a rewarding way to give back or a community member seeking to support intergenerational connections, the Foster Grandparents Program offers a way to make a real difference. Join us in building bridges across generations!

Urgent Alert: The Future of Head Start Is At Risk!

Project 2025, a new policy proposal, could have devastating effects on our communities, especially in the rural areas like most of SHORE UP's service area. If implemented, this plan would completely eliminate the Head Start program—a lifeline for countless families who rely on it for affordable, high-quality early childhood education and care.



Head Start is more than just a preschool program; it's a critical resource that helps children thrive, supports working parents, and strengthens our community. Without it, many families will face severe hardships in finding and affording child care, putting our youngest and most vulnerable at a disadvantage.

Were you a Head Start student? Do you have a child who is currently enrolled or a former student? Have you seen first hand the difference the program has made in someone's development and success? If so, we want to hear from you. Please contact Julie Peters (jpeters@shoreup.org or 410-749-1142 ext 1079) with your story or to

Head Start/Early Head Start Location Changes

There have been some changes to our Head Start offerings for the 2024-2025 program year.

Early Head Start (0-3):

- Berlin
- Cambridge (St. Claire & DELC)
- Chestertown
- Crisfield
- Easton
- Eden
- Grasonville
- Princess Anne
- Salisbury
- Stockton

Head Start (ages 3-4):

- Cambridge (St. Clair)
- Princess Anne
- Easton
- Eden

Our Snow Hill, Hurlock, and Westover centers are closed this year due to consolidation of our center operations. Enrolled students who previously participated in the program at those centers are able to attend a different center nearby.

Community Needs Assessment Findings

We are pleased to share the results of our 2024 Community Needs Assessment, a comprehensive evaluation that shines a light on the challenges facing residents of Maryland's Lower Eastern Shore. Some of the key findings:

Poverty and Economic Inequality

The assessment reveals that approximately 11.5% of the population in our service area lives below the poverty line. The highest rates of poverty are found in communities like Cambridge, where 25% of residents are affected, and Crisfield, with a poverty rate of 32%. While the unemployment rate in the area has improved to 2.4%, the issue of *underemployment* remains significant, impacting over 11,000 workers who are unable to find full-time employment that matches their skills and qualifications.

Housing Instability and Insecurity

Access to safe, affordable housing continues to be a significant concern throughout the region. According to the report, 31% of homes in our service area have at least one substandard condition, affecting the health and safety of residents. Survey respondents also highlighted the urgent need for affordable housing, homelessness assistance, and rental and utilities support. A substantial 70% of community members identified safe and affordable housing as a top priority.

Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is another pressing issue, with over 40,000 low-income individuals in the service area lacking consistent access to nutritious food. The report also points out significant racial and socioeconomic disparities in food access, with Black and Hispanic residents facing higher levels of food insecurity than their White counterparts.

Educational and Healthcare Disparities

Educational inequities continue to hinder progress, especially for children of color. Schools in low-income areas often lack the necessary resources to provide quality education, impacting the future opportunities for many students. Meanwhile, access to healthcare remains a challenge for many low-income residents, who face difficulties due to transportation barriers, long wait times, and limited availability of providers.

Moving Forward Together

SHORE UP, Inc. will use the findings of the 2024 Community Needs Assessment to shape our strategic direction and prioritize efforts to address these critical issues. We are committed to working alongside our community partners, local governments, and residents to create a more equitable and prosperous future for all.

Together, we can make a difference. Let's continue to advocate for change and support the growth and resilience of our communities.

Are You a Member of the Sandwich Generation?

Have you heard of the term "Sandwich Generation"? It refers to adults who are juggling responsibilities for both their aging parents and their own children/grandchildren. This dual caregiving role can be overwhelming and leave little time for self-care, work, or personal interests. For these caregivers, adult day programs offer a practical and compassionate solution.

SHORE UP's Shady Pines center provides a safe and stimulating environment for adults who need supervision or assistance during the day. These centers offer a range of activities, social engagement, meals, and medical care, all tailored to the needs of the program participants. For those in the sandwich generation, this means a reprieve from the constant pressures of caregiving. With their loved ones well cared for, caregivers can reclaim valuable time to focus on their careers, attend to their children's needs, or simply enjoy a few hours of much-needed rest and relaxation.



Moreover, Shady Pines' adult day program can help alleviate the emotional toll that comes with caregivers being stretched too thin. Many caregivers experience burnout, guilt, and anxiety as they strive to meet everyone's needs. Utilizing Shady Pines' services can reduce stress and improve mental health, enabling caregivers to maintain a positive outlook and provide better care for their loved ones.

For aging parents, these services also offer social opportunities and cognitive stimulation that can significantly enhance their quality of life. Participation in group activities and interaction with peers can reduce feelings of isolation and delay cognitive decline, creating a happier, healthier environment for everyone involved.

Do you know someone who could benefit from this important service? Call Shady Pines at 443-523-0050 for additional information on program benefits and eligibility.