

Community Action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.



Community Action Update

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 2

SPRING 2014

THINGS TO KNOW:

- **DCCSD closed:**
May 26:
Memorial Day

- **2014-2015 CSBG**
Scholarship
applications due June
13.
- **Free Tax Preparation**
assistance April 3 and
10.
- **Health Facility**
Community Gardens
Build April 12, 9am
until Noon.

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Free Tax Preparation Assistance 2013 End of Season Information



The tax season is winding down. The last dates are on April 3 and 10. Appointments are all filled as of pressing but some may become available if someone cancels. There are also other sites throughout the County.

Where:

DeKalb County Community Outreach Building
Blank Slate Room
2500 North Annie Glidden Road, DeKalb, IL

When:

Thursday April 3 and Thursday April 10.

*****By Appointment Only*****

Contact:

Please call **815-217-0192** to schedule an appointment.

*Families in Illinois:

Whether or not you owe income tax, you could get thousands of dollars in tax credits. You could qualify for:

- Up to **\$2,100** from the federal Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit.
- Up to **\$6,044** from the federal Earned Income Tax Credit and up to **\$604** from the Illinois Earned Income Tax Credit.
- Up to **\$1,000** per child from the federal Child Tax Credit.

*Taken from the National Women's Law Center Tax Credits Outreach Campaign, tax year 2013.

Some tax returns may be eligible to take part in a raffle for a \$25 gas or food card.

Here are some season to date numbers through March 27:

- 83 Returns Prepared
- \$105,606 in Federal Refunds
- \$11,505 in State Refunds
- \$33,604 in Federal Earned Income Tax Credits
- \$3,518 in State Earned Income Credits
- \$4,350 in Child Tax Credits
- \$9,180 in Additional Child Tax Credits
- \$600 in Dependent Care Expenses Credits



Director's Message

While it was hard to say goodbye to one of our Family Support Specialists last week, it provided me the opportunity to reconnect some with the work that we do at DeKalb County Community Services Department. As I conducted the first round of interviews with candidates to fill the position it got me talking in a much focused way about Community Action and the impact it can have for families struggling in poverty. I heard myself speaking excitedly about our programs and how we work to make a difference for individuals, families, and the community. I found myself sharing information about the partnerships that we have with other agencies and organizations in the community who help some of the same families that participate in our programs. I sort of amazed myself as I rattled off the new and expanded/ expanding programs that are now a mainstay of our services here at DCCSD. So as we dare to say that spring may have sprung, I also dare to say that we are growing more impactful services here at Community Services; services that will enhance the support and resources provided to vulnerable families in DeKalb County. As part of that process, we would appreciate your feedback about the needs and gaps in our community. Please follow the link below to Survey Monkey and share your opinions:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/W2VQK9G>



Golden Years Plaza Social Living Group

Family Support Specialist Rhonda Brown leads a Social Living Program for residents of Taylor Street Plaza. This group invites all residents of the Plaza to participate in a variety of activities which encourage positive supportive social interactions and relationships. The goal of the group is for the residents to socially interact with each other, build community, and have a good time with different fun activities. Prizes are awarded for specific program activities. Snacks are provided.

The group meets from 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm on the 2nd and 4th Fridays of the month:

April 11 & 25

May 09 & 23

June 13 & 27

Call Rhonda at 815-217-0194 to see what the next program will be.



2014-2015 CSBG Scholarship

The 2014-2015 CSBG Scholarship Application Availability

This scholarship is designed to help low-income and disadvantaged students who enroll in college so that they may further their education. The applicant needs to be a permanent DeKalb County resident who is attending an accredited Illinois post-secondary school. The scholarship is awarded for the fall and spring semesters of a school year. The Scholarship application is currently available on-line. Applications are due Friday, June 13.

To be eligible to apply, you must meet the following criteria.

- Be a permanent resident of DeKalb County.
- Be a member of a family whose gross income does not exceed 125% of the poverty level. The income is based on the last 90 days.
- Be of high academic potential.
- Be accepted at an accredited Illinois 2 or 4 year institution for an undergraduate degree.
- If receiving other Financial Aid, CSBG Scholarship will not be awarded if Financial Aid covers the entire cost of tuition, books, fees, and room and board (if in student housing).

Check www.dekalbcounty.org/communityservices now for the 2014-2015 application.

Family Spotlight

Noemí is a 51 year old woman and mother of 5 who immigrated to the United States in pursuit of a better life for her family. She originally came to the US with a third grade education level, a work visa as part of a Mexican traveling circus, and the hope that she could provide a better life for her children.

After attending to her mother's passing in Mexico, she returned to the US with her sister, her four children and in debt. Her abusive husband followed them, vowing to not let her go that easily. When they arrived they rented a room in a home where there were 18 other individuals. Their living situation was deplorable and unsanitary. She recalls cleaning the bathroom and picking up maggots from the floor. She began to work at night at the local restaurants that were open 24 hours. After a year of sacrifice they were able to move to a one bedroom apartment of their own. During their stay at Lincoln Tower she would become severely depressed when she found out that two of her underage children would make her a grandmother. Her domestic violence situation became worse and culminated with her becoming a resident of both the local domestic violence shelter and the local homeless shelter. While staying at the homeless shelter she gave birth to her fifth child, whom she waited for with such enthusiasm, love and hope because she felt that he would bring her a fresh start and mark a new life for her away from the shelter. In the end, Noemí and her family were homeless for two years.

Noemí first came to the DeKalb County Community Services Department looking for assistance with passing her GED exam. She participated in the GED classes for several years in an effort to pass but was unsuccessful. She felt that her English wasn't strong enough for her to pass and that the changes that were rumored to occur on the exam would make it virtually impossible for her to pass the exam. With hard work, consistent follow through, and the support of local community networks we were able to support Noemí and help her obtain tutoring and at last pass her GED.

It has been 4 years since Noemí was homeless, today she has her driver's license, a work permit, and her own car – all of which have helped her secure and maintain a stable job. She also owns her mobile home and is working to save money to purchase her first home while attending both English as a Second Language and college courses so she can realize her dream to be a teacher.

Impact of Services

DCCSD sees many families and individuals with varying levels of need. Through March of 2014, DCCS served 123 households with a total of 232 persons making up those households:

- 10 individuals enrolled in the Family Economic Development Program. All progressed toward increasing their income due to earnings.
- 222 persons sought Emergency Intervention services to help stabilize a current household crisis.
- 65 household members progressed in the Family Stability and Support Program with the eventual outcome of a higher level of household stability.
- 42 households received free Income Tax Preparation services, obtaining tax credits and refunds without paying a preparer.
- 13 persons enrolled in the Social Living Group, learning new social skills that will benefit family and individual functioning.
- 127 individuals received Information and Referral services allowing them to obtain information and services that will increase household stability.
- 363 calls were logged for those seeking some type of community resource.

The main qualifications to receive DCCS services are to fall below a household income of 125% of the Federal Poverty Income Level for the past 90 calendar days and reside in DeKalb County.

Community Gardens Preparing for 2014 Season

Community Services is very excited to support a large garden space at the Health Facility Campus on Annie Glidden Road. The culmination of this project, led by DeKalb County Community Gardens, will span several growing seasons but here are some of the particulars for the 2014 Season:

Our garden will start as a 12,000 square foot area. This garden will include a variety of raised beds, a winding walking path of wood chips and stone. It will also host a central herb garden. Plantings will include a mixture of vegetables, berries, wild flowers, and prairie grasses. It will also host picnic tables, vine-covered trellises, and other structural centerpieces that will showcase the beauty of the garden and also produce healthy wholesome organic vegetables and fruit. We will have our first garden build at this location on Saturday, April 12. Also, an orchard will be planted at our County site in 2014. Fruit and vegetable beds will also be extended over to the whist garden at the site. With this orchard, DCCG will be able to produce more fruit along with the plethora of vegetables the gardens already produce.

Sponsor a Garden of Hope Program

DCCG is launching a new program, "Sponsor a Garden of Hope." If you or your organization would like to sponsor a garden for those who would like to grow their own food, but do not have the means to start, your donation of \$250 will allow DCCG to set the family or individuals up with a garden, seeds, plants, training, and basic tools, so they can grow hundreds of dollars of healthy vegetables for themselves and for others. Your donation will literally help another family to have healthier food choices; and allow them to have food independence, and empower them to be able to grow their own food, instead of depending on processed foods in food pantries. The Garden of Hope Program will be another way to end food insecurity while at the same time, providing dignity and empowerment to people who are struggling with food insecurity.

Your church group, or organization, can make a lasting and meaningful change in someone's life, please consider sponsoring a "Garden of Hope" and start a family on the path of food freedom!

DCCSD Mission and Vision

DeKalb County Community Services

Department

2550 N. Annie Glidden Rd.

DeKalb, IL 60115

Hours: M-F 8:00am-4:30pm

Phone: 815-758-3910

Fax: 815-758-3407

E-mail: dmoulton@dekalbcounty.org

**Community Action-People Helping People,
Changing Lives**

Mission Statement:

Address the systemic roots of poverty and provide comprehensive support and assistance to households that either live in poverty or experience a temporary crisis situation that causes potential homelessness.

Vision Statement:

To provide leadership in the coordination of diverse services in order to increase the strengths, resources, and stability of DeKalb County individuals, households, and the community.

Visit Our Web Page:

dekalbcounty.org/communityservices

Like Us On Facebook:

facebook.com/DKCoComSvcs

Follow Us On Twitter:

twitter.com/DKCommSvcs



Outreach Sites



DCCS serves DeKalb County, located in north central Illinois.

In order to provide services to all residents of DeKalb County, the DCCSD Family Support Specialists offer outreach in the Northern and Southern areas of the County.

Genoa

Where: Heartland Bank and Trust
327 W. Main St.

When: *By appointment only. Please call 815-758-3910.*

Somonauk

Where: St. John's Lutheran Church
235 S. Green St.

When: *By appointment only. Please call 815-758-3910.*

To inquire about DCCSD programs and eligibility requirements or to make an appointment, please call 815-758-3910.