OUR MISSION

Greater Lawrence Community Action Council, Inc. opens pathways to stability and prosperity for people in need, and prepares them to make decisions that will positively affect their lives.

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OUR SERVICES

Family & Children
Child Care Center, Michael B. Christensen
Community & Family Support Center, Head Start & Early Head Start, Lawrence Early Achievement Partnership, Coordinated Family & Community Engagement

Health & Nutrition
Health Care Navigator, Merrimack Valley
Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, Women, Infants and Children (WIC)

Social Services
Community Services Center, Consumer Protection Program, Immigration Services, Rental Assistance for Families in Transition, Volunteer Income Tax Assistance

Education & Training
Budget Buddies pilot program, English for Speakers of Other Languages

Housing & Energy
Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, Utility Company Conservation Programs, Heating Energy Assistance Retrofit Task Weatherization Assistance Program, Weatherization Assistance Program, Housing Stabilization Program, Project SENIOR
Dear Friends,

It was quite a year! The natural gas disaster basically derailed almost everyone and everything in our area. And we are still feeling the impact. Many people are now just coming to grips with the emotional toll of this event. We still have people who are out of their homes and still in need of financial assistance and other support.

The gas disaster created an unprecedented humanitarian crisis in three of our four core communities. Many affected were our clients and coworkers. This disaster makes one reflect on how easily life can change in a heartbeat. It’s shocking and difficult.

We cannot help but point out that, when something like this happens, it is those most vulnerable in the community who are impacted the most. Immediately after the event, people with resources were able to stay with relatives or in hotels. People with resources packed up the food in their refrigerators and sent it to a neighbor or a cousin and so on. But the people GLCAC serves, for the most part, do not have such resources. They lost their jobs when businesses closed; they lost all the food in their refrigerators when the electricity was shut off; they had no child care because the provider was closed; and on and on. A disaster like this sheds light on those members of our community who are most vulnerable. They may not have been visible to the rest of us but are now in the greatest need.

GLCAC is still working with many impacted families, and we are sure we will be for some time. At the same time, we are so proud of how the community came together, and we want to thank everyone who jumped to help the 12,000 impacted households. The GLCAC staff, who serve neighbors in need every day, rose to the challenge, joined by our nonprofit partners in Greater Lawrence. We especially want to thank the other community action agencies that sent dozens of volunteers to assist. You all are the best!

As the city and the two towns rebuild their infrastructure, GLCAC is working with others to improve the housing stock which is clearly outdated and inadequate for modern living. We are working with our impacted families to be sure they are back on their feet and will be stronger and more resilient.

We are proud to present our 2018 annual report which reflects both the important work GLCAC does every day and provides a glimpse of the extraordinary accomplishments of our staff in serving the disaster victims. Their compassion and commitment – matched by the work and dedication of our partners – are a big reason the displaced families and the region could recover.

Evelyn Friedman  
Executive Director

Tom Hartwell  
Board President
FOCUSING ON
CHILDREN & PARENTS

The smiles speak volumes. GLCAC preschoolers love their teachers and their school. To them, learning is fun. They are too young to understand how affordable and accessible early childhood education and child care benefit both the children and their families.

GLCAC teachers prepare the children for success in kindergarten and beyond. With their children in class, parents and guardians have freedom to work, attend school, or complete job training programs.

80%+ of GLCAC preschoolers demonstrated improved literacy skills.

317 GLCAC preschoolers started kindergarten, prepared and ready to excel.

1,000+ students enrolled in four early childhood education programs.

IMPROVING FAMILY FINANCES

Head Start also teaches parents a variety of life skills to increase their income and manage their money.

• 106 parents received job readiness training.
• 48 enrolled in basic education classes.
• 127 learned personal financial management.
• 41 opened a savings account.
public schools. So much so, that in the fall of 2018, the 17-year-old standout student-athlete earned a full scholarship to Brown University, where he will start in the fall of 2019.

In a single generation, this family has moved from poverty in the Dominican Republic to the halls of an Ivy League university.

“Today, the purchase of my own home, the ability to financially support my family, and my son’s success would be nothing without the help and guidance that GLCAC provided,” says Felicia.
HEALTHY LIVING

Good health and a warm, safe home are essential. That’s why GLCAC’s programs promote healthy living with access to nutritious foods and health care, as well as heated and insulated homes free of common hazards.

PROVIDING FOOD SECURITY

Many clients struggle with putting enough food on the table, so GLCAC opened a weekly food pantry. Typically, 70 families per week visit, and the pantry project has helped GLCAC forge partnerships with the Merrimack Valley Food Bank, Olive Garden, Aldi Supermarkets, and Northern Essex Community College.

6,730 children and expecting mothers accessed healthy food and nutrition info from WIC.

3,000 people were assisted in enrolling or renewing health insurance coverage.

1,070 children received vision, dental and immunization screenings.

441 free lunches were served to children during summer vacation.
**Improving the Housing Stock**

In March, GLCAC bought 370 Essex Street from the City of Lawrence with plans to develop 39 affordable apartments and 10,000 square feet of commercial space. This is GLCAC’s first affordable housing project to address the shortage of safe, quality housing for low-income families.

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**Relief from Back-Breaking Bills**

Out of work six months for back surgery, Eddie suddenly faced a repair bill that might break his back – again. His heat and hot water failed.

“I didn’t know what to do,” says Eddie, who lives in Methuen with his wife and two young daughters.

A friend told him about GLCAC’s Energy Services, so he called. Eddie’s family qualified for fuel assistance and the free replacement of the heating and hot water system.

“It was awesome because I didn’t have the money to do it,” says Eddie, who is back to work baking pizzas.

Many working families qualify for these services, but mistakenly assume they do not. Warm homes are critical for good health, and energy bills and repairs especially burden low-income families. High-efficiency heating systems and weatherization help reduce their energy bills.

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187 homes have new smoke & carbon monoxide detectors.  
8,953 homes were warmed, a 10% hike in fuel aid.  
240 homes inspected for hazards, including lead paint & radon.  
465 home heating systems repaired or replaced.
In a moment, everything changed on September 13, 2018. Over-pressurized natural gas lines cause explosions and fires across south Lawrence, Andover, and North Andover.

“People were living a regular life, and in a moment, everything changed.”
- Luz De La Cruz, GLCAC housing coordinator

8 nonprofits join together in relief efforts. GLCAC and Groundworks Lawrence co-lead the coordination and management. The Essex County Community Foundation raises $12.6M for the Greater Lawrence Disaster Relief Fund.

GLCAC impacted:
- 35 employees displaced and continue to work helping both clients and affected residents.
- 2 facilities lose gas service – Child Care Center and a Head Start facility.
- 1 electric kettle feeds lunch to preschoolers while gas ovens and stove out of service.

1 young man dies.
62 families lose their homes.
131 structures destroyed, damaged.
12,000 households lose natural gas service.

3 relief centers open in Lawrence, Andover, and North Andover to provide financial assistance, temporary housing, clothing, and more.

603 volunteers from across the state are trained to assist families. Community action agencies, from Cape Cod to the Berkshires, send helpers.

“All of us, not me, is what has helped us survive this crisis so far, and in the end, it will be what helps us get back to normal.”
- Lawrence Mayor Daniel Rivera
"We've been working in the trenches with all the other partners to support people in trying to overcome and recover from this terrible disaster."

- Evelyn Friedman
GLCAC Executive Director, in remarks to the business community

New heating and hot water units are installed at GLCAC’s Child Care Center prior to return of gas service in December.

GLCAC’s finance staff manages and processes 17,335 checks totaling $10 million.

$297,450 in gift cards distributed by Nov. 8.

With displaced families living in hotels & 380 RVs, volunteers visit to distribute gift cards.

We are especially grateful to the eight local nonprofits who have worked side by side every day since Sept. 13 to make sure all victims of this crisis get what they need, both financially and through additional support services.”

– Beth Francis, President and CEO, ECCF

Volunteers canvas 1,500 eligible households not already signed up for financial assistance with information on how to apply.

30 of the 62 homeless families referred to GLCAC for help.

171 clients helped with waiver of MA Health Connector premiums.

12 families assisted with replacing lost immigration documents.
EMPOWERING SUCCESS

If knowledge is power, GLCAC empowers people with advocacy, training and education. GLCAC assists clients with complex paperwork, filing taxes, and other similar tasks where language skills and limited schooling are barriers to success. GLCAC staff also advocates for clients on immigration filings and consumer complaints.

$140K+ recovered for 423 ripped-off consumers.

406 low-income taxpayers claimed an average $1,668 refund on tax returns filed via GLCAC.

523 immigration applications filed at no charge for low-income clients, a 41% increase.

FINDING PEACE & FAMILY

Elaine fled domestic violence in the Dominican Republic, but had to leave her 5-year-old son Erik behind with his grandmother. Heartbroken, she promised to send for him later.

In Lawrence, Elaine mapped out a plan. She volunteered at GLCAC and took English language classes. She was later hired as an administrative assistant in the Immigration Program, helping people with stories similar to her own.

With GLCAC’s help, in 2017 Elaine applied to bring her son to the United States. Nearly 16 months later, the family reunited.

“I feel at peace and can move forward now with my life,” she says.
Alyssa was 15 when she started self-medicating with pills and later, heroin. As an abused foster child, she suffered from depression and post-traumatic stress disorder.

At age 30, Alyssa gave birth to her daughter. The baby went to foster care, and Alyssa was referred to GLCAC’s new Parenting Through Recovery Program. Funded by the Tower Foundation, the program graduated 17 of the first 33 parents – a huge success since statistically, every addicted person is expected to relapse before achieving recovery.

GLCAC’s staff found Alyssa a therapist and supported her journey to recovery with counseling in life, parenting and coping skills. She regained custody of her baby and reunited with the father.

“She was the champion. It was her hard work, dedication and commitment to her baby that was the true success,” says program director Sue Mitchell.
WE SERVED

32,648 individuals from 12,963 families living in
Lawrence: 74%
Methuen: 18%
North Andover: 4%
Andover: 2%

49% of the families served were multi-generational -- a parent and child living with a grandparent, aunt/uncle, great grandparent, or great aunt/uncle.

AGE

ETHNICITY

RACE

GENDER

Income Level

Education

Gender

Race

Ethnicity

Age

In a household, the

We served

200%+

151-200%

101-150%

51-100%

Up to 50%

Federal Poverty Level

25%

15%

35%

Federal Poverty Level

Other

Not Hispanic

Hispanic

20%

80%

21% White

2% Multi-race

2% Asian

2% Black/African American

73% Other

39% Male

61% Female
Of the federal revenues received by GLCAC, a large majority passes through our programs to fund direct benefits for clients, including $10 million in home heating aid and $5 million in WIC food vouchers.
GLCAC SUPPORTERS

GLCAC is grateful to the supporters who make it possible for the organization to advance the mission of lifting families and children from poverty.

$25,000 AND OVER
Bank of America
Columbia Gas of Massachusetts
Enterprise Bank
Essex County Community Foundation
Massachusetts Attorney General’s Office
Merrimack Valley Federal Credit Union
Stevens Foundation
The Tower Foundation
United Way of Massachusetts

$10,000 - $24,999
Anstiss and Company, P.C.
Borislow Insurance Agency, Inc.
Comcast
DCU Kids Fund
Digital Federal Credit Union
Evelyn Friedman
Gillette/Procter and Gamble
Thomas Hartwell
Margaret M. Collins Trust

$5,000 - $9,999
Conlon Products
Davis Square Architects
William Parkinson
Starkweather and Shepley
The Savings Bank

$2,500 - $4,999
Artemis Stearns
Eastern Bank
Steven Bryant
Maxine Hart
Josephine Russell Trust
Lawrence Fire Department
Johan Lopez
Jess Mader
SEIU Local 500
Shaheen Brothers
Rosa Talero

$1,000 - $2,499
A and M General Contracting
Alpers Fine Art
American Training Inc.
American Building Technologies
Jennifer Carter
Century 21 North Shore Realty
Children and Family Dentistry
Commonwealth Motors
Deborah Lucci Team
Fish Family Foundation
Daniel Fortier
Home Shop Properties
Kannan and Picone Plumbing
Jason Kauppi
Kyocera of New England
Cindy Mazella
Richard Robichaud
Spruce Law LLC
Patricia Stevens

$500 - $999
Aldi Supermarkets
Andover Country Club
Michael Ansara
Charisse Burrus
John Cerulli
Enriquez Estate Wine
Debra Fox
Jeanne D’Arc Credit Union
The Life Initiative
Massachusetts Capital Resource Co.
NESC Federal Credit Union
North Parish of North Andover
Retrofit Technologies
The Tappan Family
WB Mason
**Up to $499**
Rosa Adams
Laura Ahern
All-Brand New England
American Girl Dolls
Andover High School
Kathleen Baird
James Barnes
Joe Bevilacqua
Richard Blain
Sue Boehmer
Mary Lou Boes
Angeline Bombard
Jennifer Borislow
Boston Harbor Curies
Boston Red Sox
Kenneth Bourussa
Nicole Boynton
Bradford Country Club
Spencer Bucholz
Elizabeth Buckley
William Buckley
Leslie Buresh
Butcher Boy Market
Canobie Lake Park
Comm Tank Inc.
Community Network Corp.
Teresa Consentino
Sean Cottrel
Susie Crowder
Christian Dame
Danetti Insulation Co.
Wayne Davis
Dellbrook JKS
Dental Bright
William Driscoll
Everett Mills Real Estate
Festival of Trees
Marie Finelli
Foxwoods Resort Casino
Freedom Pest Control
Karen Gale
Katherine Gale
Diane George
Nadia Grant
Joseph Gravel
Rebecca Gutman
International Tennis Hall of Fame
Isle of Shoals Steamship Company
Victor Jarvis
Leise Jones
Jim Hurley Plumbing
Albert Kalter
Keurig Brewing
L W Bills Co.
Anne Legen
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Veronica Lei
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Maureen Martinez
Samantha Morton
Chris Navin
Network for Good
Eileen O’Brien
Myra Ortiz
Edward Parker
Cindy Pilla
Polanco Market
Richard Blain and Associates
Johanna Lee Santos
Seacoast Repertory Theater
Fred P. Shaheen
Sheraton Portsmouth Harbor
Strawberry Bank
Universalist Unitarian Church
Wentworth by the Sea
Whole Foods
Going home from work, Kesia saw helicopters and fire trucks swarming her neighborhood. Smoke billowed into the air. It was September 13, 2018. The gas disaster struck 3 of the 4 communities GLCAC serves. Evacuated and living with her family in a hotel for weeks, Kesia found solace in her work at GLCAC helping fellow victims. “The community was coming to us more than before — they needed us. I couldn’t just sit in a hotel all day, I would have been crying and depressed. I preferred to be at work,” Kesia says.

GLCAC helped thousands, including Manuel whose family was homeless after fire consumed his apartment. GLCAC’s new Housing Stabilization Program found and furnished a new place to call home.

To learn more about GLCAC’s response to the gas disaster, turn to the center pages.