

CANI Fighting Poverty. Building Hope.

Chronicles

CANI Early Head Start: Hope, Help For the Underserved

CANI prides itself in catering to the individual needs of families, rather than a cookie-cutter approach. Home-based case management programs like Early Head Start are one way the agency helps the underserved in the community, including Burmese families.

Allen County is home to more than 4,000 Burma-born residents, who benefit from the network of social services in Fort Wayne. CANI's Early Head Start program has one Home Visitor, Khaing Oo, solely dedicated to serving Burmese families. Khaing is currently responsible for a caseload of nine families, with 10 children total.

Khaing is especially knowledgeable about Burmese culture, as she and her family were Burmese refugees in Thailand. In many ways Khaing approaches case management the same as other Home Visitors do with native, English-speaking families. She follows the same model for the home visit as her peers, but tweaks it to meet the needs of the Burmese families by conducting the home visit in their native tongue. Another point of difference is the imminent needs of the Burmese community. According to Khaing, transportation and interpretation services are at the top of the list.

"Language is the biggest barrier," she said. These needs are interrelated and present obstacles for many Burmese families,

according to Khaing. They need to learn English, but without reliable transportation, it is hard to become assimilated in the community. Khaing says the program's home-based nature is what makes it especially appealing to the Burmese. She comes to them, so they don't have to worry about making transportation arrangements.

To help alleviate the transportation issue Khaing may help with bus passes for necessary errands, such as going to the doctor. She also helps them read the bus schedule and learn how the bus system operates. That way, they can go into the community and become more confident in their language abilities. To assist with language barriers, she will call the Medicaid office for transportation and possibly get an interpreter for medical appointments.

"Families need to learn the basics before they can survive," she said. "There is a need for education."

Indeed, that education aspect is the foundation of Early Head Start. Khaing says Early Head Start is especially beneficial to Burmese refugees due to its focus on parenting skills. Often times the Burmese parents lack basic knowledge most American



The goal of Early Head Start is to break the cycle of poverty by providing services to low-income families, including Burmese families. Home visitor Khaing brings toys and other activities to engage and stimulate the children during home visits.

parents take for granted. This is due in large part to the fact they lived in refugee camps in Burma, where survival, not thriving, was the objective.

"Having the child in this program is big for (Burmese) families," she said, because Burmese families learn vital skills and how to apply them in their everyday lives.

Early Head Start arms them with the tools needed to succeed in child rearing. For example, at a recent home visit, Khaing presented a handout with nutrition tips for toddlers. She is available to answer questions

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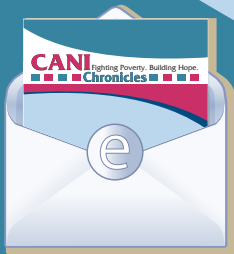
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Suite A
Elkhart, IN 46816
574-293-3460

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1515 Provident Drive
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574-267-2817

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7:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Monday - Thursday

7:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Friday

CANI WILL BE CLOSED APRIL 16 IN OBSERVANCE OF GOOD FRIDAY.



MOVING UP

It seems the expression “when the going gets tough, the tough get going,” was invented for Tristann Robb.

Not long ago Tristann, then 23, was in a vulnerable spot, as a single mother with a two-year old son, Camden. Working as a server at Flat Top Stir Fry Grille she needed to find a way to pay for the cost of childcare. She had been on the WIC program, so she was familiar with the various assistance programs available. Still, finding a way to pay for safe, quality and affordable child care eluded her.

Her father, John Robb as CANI's Family Development Manager, knew about the agency's Child Care Assistance program. Through the program Tristann was able to find a local provider that met her budget. The child care center was a Level 4 provider through the Paths to QUALITY program, so she could rest easy, knowing her son was in good hands. Paths to QUALITY is a voluntary system created to improve the quality of child care and early education for children. Level Four indicates the highest level of quality.

“It helped me form a relationship with the people taking care of my (child),” she said about the Child Care assistance. “Once I was on the program I didn't worry about it.”

Another fortunate result of the child care assistance was that it freed up some of her time. She did not have to work as much as before, therefore was able to become more

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about child development and address any other concerns.

At the end of the day, Khaing says her job is to bridge the gaps in service. That often means connecting the families with other local agencies for resources. According to Khaing, the relocation of Catherine Kasper Place is good news for the Burmese community. Catherine Kasper Place, formerly the Community Resource Center for Refugees, connects foreign-born, new arrivals with existing community

involved in her son's education. Specifically, she volunteered in the classroom and assisted with field trips.

CANI looks at the big picture when helping people meet goals. While gaining access to quality child care is one piece of the puzzle, Tristann needed help in other areas, like saving money for future needs. The solution was to set up an IDA (Individual Development Account) as a savings tool. This is a 3-to-1 match for every dollar the account



Photo Submitted

Tristann is thankful for the blessing CANI has been in her life. She is looking forward to spending some quality time with her son Camden this summer. She attributes her success to always making Camden's well-being her number one priority.

holder deposits. A savings account must be opened at a financial institution. Funds can be used to buy or repair a home, for educational purposes, or to start a small business. The IDA proved to be a learning tool, as she reaped the rewards of her investment.

“CANI helps people learn skills to come out of poverty,” she said.

organizations, resources and individuals.

The non-profit has relocated its programming office to 5919 Salisbury Drive, in the Autumn Woods Apartment complex, joining several other refugee-serving agencies in offering neighborhood-based programs. Services at this site began the first week in January and include enhanced community liaison assistance, job development training and the Fresh Food Initiative.

Over time Tristann watched her quality of life improve as she moved towards self-sufficiency. Case in point: she worked her way up from a server to a management position at Flat Top.

“I'm in such a better place,” she about her journey.” It took me eight years to grow up.”

Today, she holds a good job at AfDent, which allows her to work part-time and spend more time with her family. (She is recently married and expecting a baby girl in May.)

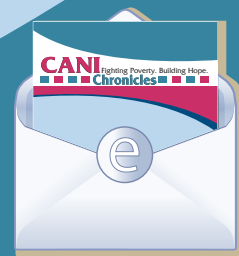
She still remembers the great day when she wrote letters to various local agencies; notifying them she no longer had need of assistance. There is nothing wrong with receiving assistance, she says, but people need to be responsible and organized.

“If you use (assistance programs) for the right reasons your life can only get better,” she said.

Tristann, now 29, attributes her success to the fact that she always kept her son's well-being at the forefront. While she had supportive parents, she admits she had to do everything herself. Her father, John, employed a “tough love” approach and she appreciates that now. It's clear there is a mutual admiration:

“She has never been afraid of working and being a single mother. She handled many difficult situations to the best of her ability but most importantly always putting her son Camden first,” her father said about her progress. “I could not be more proud of her and what she has accomplished in her life. I'm sure many great things are ahead.”

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HOPEWELL POINTE: FROM BLUEPRINT TO REALITY

A CANI housing project has gone from a blueprint to a reality. Hopewell Pointe, a 35-home lease-to-purchase community in Waynedale, is nearly complete.

Seventeen of the 35 homes in the 1900 block of Reservation Drive are move-in ready. Families can choose from a three or four bedroom model, both with two-car garages. Each home is equipped with a dishwasher, garbage disposal, stove, microwave and refrigerator. Additionally, residents can take advantage of a community building, pavilion, gazebo, walking paths and other amenities.

At press time, eight families had moved in. Hopewell Pointe is the first subdivision of its kind in Fort Wayne, which offers a lease-to purchase option providing the incentive to stay long-term. Tenants living in the home at the 15th year will be given the opportunity to purchase the home, regardless of the length of time rented. In addition to other criteria, applicants must income-qualify.

Several northeast Indiana families were attracted to this incentive. The project was met with great enthusiasm from the beginning, said Brandi DeHaven, Hopewell Pointe property manager. Case in point: several families waited overnight to ensure they were among the first to submit applications. Brandi said Keller is still going through applications to determine if families qualify, noting there is a waiting list of



Hopewell Pointe offers residents a chance to work towards an investment in the form of a house. Home ownership can improve the quality of life for low-income families.

more than 90 people long. Families heard about the opportunity through the newspaper, CANI's web site, Keller Development staff, and word-of-mouth.

Brandi said residents feel like Hopewell Pointe is home. The majority came from apartment living, particularly other Keller properties, and this provides a chance for more stability. The affordability is equally as appealing. Rent ranges from \$536 to \$603, depending on the size of the house.

"They are excited about the lease-to-purchase option," she said. "They are excited to be here for the long-run and want to feel a sense of ownership." Residents will receive financial education and home maintenance classes designed to educate residents and contribute to that

sense of ownership.

Belinda Bruner, a single mother of three boys, was No. 1 on the application list, after camping out for three days. She moved from subsidized housing and said there's a "drastic difference" between her current and former living experience.

"I love this house," she said about her three-bedroom unit. "I'm not going anywhere."

For more information about Hopewell Pointe, call Hopewell Pointe Property Manager Brandi DeHaven, (260) 449-9860.

WEATHERIZATION: NOT JUST FOR HOMES

CANI helps individuals keep their homes warm, safe and energy efficient through the Weatherization program. Recently, the agency has extended those same services to transitional homes and local shelters. Shepherd's House and Vincent Villages are among them.

A working relationship was first formed between CANI and Shepherd's House when CANI Weatherization Supervisor Mike Esslinger toured the 14,000 square foot brick building. Shepherd's House, located at 519 Tennessee Avenue, is a 42-bed, long-term, residential

and transitional housing center for male veterans dealing with substance abuse and mental health issues. Mike was interested in helping Shepherd's House save money. He performed some initial tests, an inspection and hired a contractor to do the work that was needed. The scope of the work included installing insulation, and a high-efficiency water heater and furnace.

Barb Cox, co-founder of Shepherd's House said the work saved them "a ton of money" and they are more comfortable as a result. The facility has also seen

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DANCE MEANS LEARNING AT CANI HEAD START

Pre-school children learn through many ways, including creative movement. That's the philosophy behind a dance program offered through the Dance Collective at the CANI Head Start site at St. Henry's.

Fort Wayne Dance Collective, founded in 1979, has a long and rich history of serving the community. Outreach programs have been offered to the community since its inception and are "taught from the heart as well as from the book." Most recently with a grant from the Foellinger Foundation the Dance Collective developed the "D is for Dancing" curriculum, which served as the foundation for the current program.

In addition to CANI, the Dance Collective has served about 20 outreach sites with this program. The CANI Head Start site at St. Henry's currently serves 102 low-income preschool children ages 3 – 5 years of age. St. Henry's also serves a large population of Burmese children. Currently, there are 17 Burmese children enrolled at the site. This outreach benefits low-income children from a variety of backgrounds, exposing them to an art form they may not have had an opportunity to experience otherwise.

The classes will run for 12 weeks, from January to March, one time per week for 30 minutes for each Head Start classroom. There are three morning and three afternoon classes at St. Henry's. Each classroom has approximately 16 – 17 students per session. Students will

participate in a closing performance at the end of the session.

The creative movement class develops the young child's creative abilities. The children will have a great deal of fun, while learning basic elements of dance, including the use of body parts, shape, space and locomotion combined with stories and feelings while having a great deal of fun. Dance Collective Outreach Director Alison Gerardot emphasized the program's focus on pre-literacy skills, i.e., print recognition, sequencing, phonetic association, etc. Over the course of each session the teacher will introduce 3-4 letters to the class.

The teacher works with the letters of the day, then reads a book to help the preschoolers recognize the letters. Then the dance is based on that story for the day. The teacher might call to mind the letters' lines and curves and ask the preschoolers to trace the shape of the letter on the floor. The children learn by making the connection between a movement and its corresponding letter.

This program is one of the many ways CANI Head Start serves the physical, mental and emotional needs of its families. Specifically, in regard to the latter, extensive research has indicated a positive link between stress reduction and child development resulting from creative or physical outlets. Unfortunately, in low-income households, the level of stress tends to be higher and this environment



Outreach programs like this one from the Dance Collective are among the many and varied ways CANI Head Start enriches the lives of pre-school children in Northeast Indiana.

can hinder child development.

Stress management skills are an important part of child development. A July 2010 report from Harvard University, "The Foundations of Lifelong Health Are Built in Early Childhood Center on the Developing Child," reinforces this concept. The report outlines policies and initiatives that have proven to be effective in fostering healthy environments for children. The report cites success in early care and education programs, which would include Head Start. In short, the creative movement workshops complement the Head Start curriculum and can serve as an outlet for managing stress.

This project was made possible through funding from Arts United's Neighborhood Grant Initiative.

financial rewards, with a 30 percent reduction in heating bills. "It's night and day," Barb said. "I can't say enough about this program."

Vincent Village was another beneficiary, although no stranger to the Weatherization program prior to the work. The agency purchased and renovated 32 vacant and abandoned single-family homes in the neighborhood surrounding the existing shelter. CANI performed Weatherization work on these homes as part of the renovation process. CANI later approached them about making improvements to the shelter. The work, which was done in 2010, resulted in a warmer basement,

reduced heating bills, even heat flow and better air quality.

Ann Helmke, Vincent Village's executive director, said this is a fine example of cross-agency collaboration.

"We've always worked with CANI," she said. "CANI helps our families," citing programs like Energy Assistance, Weatherization and Child Care Assistance.

CANI has performed Weatherization work on several other facilities, including Thirteen Step House, Whittington Homes and Services and Serenity House.

JAG MEANS HOPE FOR TOMORROW'S GRADUATES

Local at-risk high school students will get academic and career support through a new, national program at CANI.

The objective of the program, JAG (Jobs For American's Graduates), is to assist high school juniors and seniors at risk of not graduating high school get back on track and successfully graduate, according to JAG Program Manager Rachel Bryant. To that end, JAG provides 37 main competencies to assist students with skills needed to be successful in school and beyond.

Locally, CANI and Stop Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) have won contracts from the Workforce Investment Board to provide youth employment services to students in nine area schools and students in the 11-county region who have dropped out. CANI will run the program in nine high schools — six in Allen County, two in Grant County and one in Huntington County. The national initiative is designed to keep students in school.

Ultimately, the intended outcome is not only to graduate the students, but to assist them with attaining work, entry into a post-secondary institution or join one of the branches of the military. Students are provided the opportunity to participate in summer internships to get hands-on experience in a career field of their interest. This, in turn, connects them with a mentor for a better understanding of not only the career and the necessary steps to

get to that career.

This program fits into the big picture of breaking the cycle of poverty and investing in the economy.

"The program fights poverty by providing students with skills to go beyond a high school diploma, engaging them in the workforce and in post-secondary education," Rachel said.

From an economic standpoint, she said youth working helps break generational cycles of poverty through full-time employment and gaining skills through higher education.

As for CANI's role, Rachel's staff of ten will provide classroom instruction and case management to the students in nine high schools in the service area. Additionally, a JAG community outreach coordinator will provide support in the form of helping identify guest speakers and college related goals for the students.

At this time CANI is seeking program participants in nine high schools: North Side, Northrop, Snider, South Side, Wayne, New Haven, Huntington North, Marion and Mississinewa juniors and seniors who are at risk of not graduating initially qualify. They also must meet income eligibility requirements to participate as set by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). Students and their parents must meet with a JAG Specialist to complete an application and bring



Stock Photo

Local at risk high school students enrolled in the JAG program will receive support from CANI in the form of classroom instruction and case management.

along documentation to verify eligibility for the program.

The last step of the process calls for the JAG Specialist to meet with a team of guidance counselors in their schools to make sure the JAG class will fit the students schedule based on credits currently attained and credits needed to graduate. Once the student is approved, they are registered for the JAG class, similar to any other class on their daily school schedule.

The program is funded through Federal WIA monies, which are handled at the regional level by the Northeast Indiana Regional Workforce Board (NEIRWIB). CANI became the new service provider Feb 1.

For more information about JAG, visit www.jag.org

CANI Thanks Our Donors

We'd like to thank the individuals, businesses, foundations, and organizations that have recently supported CANI. Your financial gifts and in-kind contributions help us fight poverty and build hope - thank you for all you do!

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SOCIALIZATIONS: MORE THAN PLAY

On the surface, a playdate may seem like unstructured playtime. Yet there is much more to it than that.

Socializations, or playdates, are a critical component of the CANI Early Head Start program. Socialization experiences address the needs of both children and parents and build on the experiences and goals that are addressed during the home visit.

In simple terms, the objective is to “get children around others their age to interact and avoid isolation,” according to Early Head Start Manager Tammy Pifer. She also notes the win-win aspect, as parents benefit from interacting with other parents to support each other. Often times they are experiencing the same trials and tribulations, and the socializations allow for time to compare notes. Families also have the opportunity to learn new ideas about parenting from other parents, CANI staff, and community partners.

As part of the federal grant guidelines, the agency is required to offer two socializations a month. Locally, they are normally held at sites like CANI Head Start at the Temple or CANI Head Start at St. Henry's. However, on occasion the families are invited to attend special outings in the community. Past examples include the Embassy Theatre's Festival of Trees, Foellinger-Freimann Botanical Conservatory, and the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo.

What does a socialization look like? Each session is typically 90 minutes long, in order to accommodate short attention spans and busy schedules. Home visitors plan age and developmentally appropriate activities for the children. They also provide a snack, along with tips on nutrition, and health/safety information for the parents.

Primarily, socializations are about building relationships. Relationship building looks different across the various age groups. Infants and toddlers are beginning to build the first and

most important relationship: with their parents. Therefore, socializations at this age are concerned with the relationship between the young children and their primary caregivers, as opposed to the relationships with their peers.

Early Head Start Home Visitors reach out to low-income expectant mothers and parents of infants and children up to age three. Locally, CANI is the service provider, serving Allen, Noble and Whitley counties.

For Early Head Start, the emphasis is on child development, education, family self-sufficiency and parenting skills. Fathers and male role models in the home are encouraged to participate in home visits. For pregnant women, the focus is on maintaining a healthy pregnancy. In addition, Early Head Start is designed to ensure that every family receives comprehensive health care, including medical, dental, mental health, nutrition and safety information and services through either direct services or referrals.

Families who are no longer eligible for Early Head Start are encouraged to apply for the Head Start program. Families must be at or below 100 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines to qualify for both programs.

For information about Early Head Start, visit www.ehsnrc.org.



Interacting with other children and caregivers is an important part of child development. Early Head Start's biweekly socializations cater to each age group, with different activities and approaches.

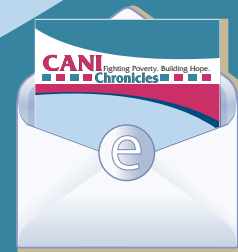
CANI Golf 2012



CANI Golf 2012 is scheduled for June 7 at Noble Hawk Golf Links, 3005 Noble Hawk Drive, in Kendallville. Cost to participate is \$400 per foursome and includes golf, snacks, beverages, and dinner. All proceeds benefit CANI.

Contact Jennifer Renner (260) 399-4103 for more information. Online registration is available at www.canigolf.org.

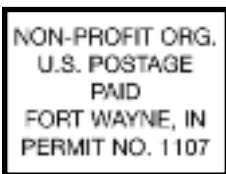
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-Energy Assistance Program client

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