



**Tri-Valley**  
Opportunity Council, Inc.

**Annual  
Report  
2017**

## Friends of Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, Inc.



On behalf of Tri-Valley Opportunity Council's Board of Directors, we are happy to present Tri-Valley's 2017 Annual Report. The stories and data contained in this report will give readers insight into the tremendous efforts put forth by our primary stakeholders as we carried out Tri-Valley's mission in 2017. Time and again our Board, staff, and volunteers faced challenges in 2017, both internal and external. Unvaryingly, through resolve and mission focus, the challenges were overcome. This work allowed us to report tremendous progress on Tri-Valley's Strategic Plan to



the Board of Directors in 2017. We hope you find this report useful and the stories enjoyable. As you read, please keep in mind all of the contributions made to generate the activity presented in this report. Thank you for your interest in Tri-Valley Opportunity Council.

Chief Executive Officer



Board Chair

# Tri-Valley

## Opportunity Council, Inc.

## Mission & Beliefs

**Our Mission:** *To provide opportunities to improve the quality of life for people and communities.*

**We Believe . . .**

- ~ All people have value and potential;
- ~ In treating all people with dignity and respect;
- ~ Diversity enriches the quality of life;
- ~ All people have the right to be informed of choices, opportunities, and responsibilities;
- ~ Effective communication and teamwork are essential for success;
- ~ Partnerships are essential in delivering quality services; and,
- ~ There are opportunities in change



# Tri-Valley

Opportunity Council, Inc.

## Tri-Valley Board of Directors



**LeRoy Vonasek**  
Chairperson  
Public Official Sector  
Marshall County



**Mark Kroulik**  
Vice Chairperson  
Private Sector  
Marshall County



**Shawna Peterson**  
Secretary  
Private Sector  
Marshall County



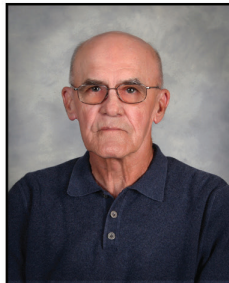
**Don Diedrich**  
Treasurer  
Public Official Sector  
Polk County



**Dr. Jodi  
Boerger-Wilder**  
Private Sector  
Polk County



**Gary Willhite**  
Public Official Sector  
Polk County



**John Gerszewski**  
Low-Income Sector  
Polk County



**Dr. Linda  
Neuerburg**  
Private Sector  
Polk County



**Stephanie  
Vonesh**  
Low-Income Sector  
Polk County



**Dale Svaren**  
Private Sector  
Norman County



**Sarah Kjono**  
Low-Income Sector  
Norman County



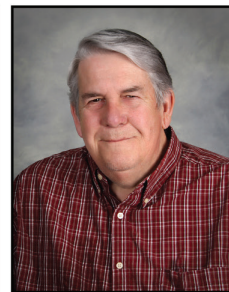
**Marvin Gunderson**  
Public Official Sector  
Norman County



**Lee Ann Hall**  
Public Official Sector  
Norman County



**Domita Mack**  
Public Official Sector  
Marshall County



**Greg Burris**  
Low-Income Sector  
Marshall County



**Nancy Myers**  
Low-Income Sector  
Marshall County

Not Pictured: **Lynn Monk**, Low-Income Sector, Norman County.

*The mission of Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, Inc. is to provide opportunities to improve the quality of life for people and communities.*

# Tri-Valley Programs and Services

## Community Services Programs

- **Community Assistance Programs** - Helps qualified low-to-moderate income families with rent assistance, security deposits, foreclosure prevention, mortgage and budget counseling, home buyer training, housing counseling, and financial assistance for utilities, food, and clothing.
- **Energy Assistance Programs** - This program helps income eligible households with their home energy bills. Assistance may include bill payment assistance, emergency assistance and energy related home repairs.
- **Child Care Aware** - Assists the early childhood community in expanding and improving the quality and availability of child care. Parents looking for child care can receive a list of licensed providers tailored to meet their specific criteria.
- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Outreach** - For more than 40 years, SNAP has served as the foundation of America's national nutrition safety net. It is the nation's first line of defense against hunger and offers a powerful tool to improve nutrition among low-income people.
- **MNsure Navigator Assistance** - A one-stop health insurance marketplace where individuals, families, and small businesses will be able to get quality health coverage at a fair price.
- **Financial Literacy** - Offers information and assistance to help clients achieve financial stability by providing the Family Assets for Independence in Minnesota (FAIM) program and a variety of financial trainings based on the Four Cornerstones of Financial Literacy curriculum. The FAIM program is a matched savings project to help Minnesota low-wage earners build assets through the purchase of a home, pursuit of higher education, or launching of a small business.
- **Multi-Family Housing** - Income-based multi-family housing units are available in Crookston and Fisher, MN.



## Transportation Programs

- **Tri-Valley Heartland Express (T.H.E. Bus)** - Provides public transportation in handicapped accessible buses. Curb-to-curb service is available.
- **Rural Transportation Collaborative (RTC)** - Coordinates volunteer drivers to transport individuals for medical appointments, education or work activities, child visitations, or other personal matters.



## Housing Programs

- **Minnesota Urban and Rural Homesteading Program (MURL)** - Allows low-income, at-risk families to purchase a home with no down payment and no interest. Monthly payments are based on affordability and are adjusted as income increases.



# Tri-Valley Programs and Services

## Head Start, Child and Family Programs

- **Head Start** - Provides comprehensive, family-oriented child development services designed to meet the diverse needs of low-income children and their families. Services provided include early childhood education, medical and dental examinations, immunizations, vision and hearing screenings, speech and developmental screenings, disabilities services, referrals, and parent education.

- **Head Start** - Provides services to children ages 3 to compulsory school age in West Polk, West Marshall, and Norman counties.

- **Early Head Start** - Provides services to pregnant women, infants, and toddlers in West Polk, West Marshall, Norman, and Steel counties.

- **Migrant and Seasonal Head Start/Early Head Start** - Provides services to Migrant and Seasonal pregnant women and children ages 6 weeks to compulsory school age throughout the states of Minnesota and northeastern North Dakota.

- **Migrant Education Program (Health and Nutrition)** - Provided over 370 physicals and dental exams to Title 1 children and provided nutritious meals for breakfast and lunch.

- **Migrant Education Program (Identification and Recruitment)** - 1,400 migrant children were identified in MN (ages birth to 21).

- **Migrant Child Care** - Funds are utilized to enhance the services provided at our Migrant Head Start centers and provide direct child care to children who need services longer than centers offer. Over 935 migrant children were served with Migrant Child Care funds.



## Senior Programs

- **Foster Grandparent Program** - Recruits individuals age 55 and over to volunteer in schools, child care centers, Head Start centers, group homes, and other non-profit facilities to support children with special needs.

- **Caring Companion Program** - Recruits individuals age 50 and over to help others live independently by assisting with grocery shopping and other daily tasks.

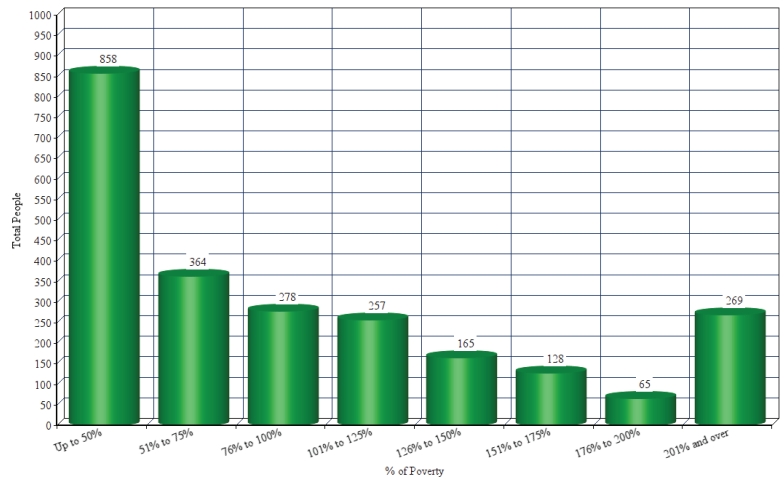


# The People We Serve

In 2017, Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, Inc. served an unduplicated count of 10,196 individuals and 2,421 families.

## People Served by Poverty Level

| <u>% of Poverty</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|---------------------|--------------|
| Up to 50%           | 858 (36%)    |
| 51% to 75%          | 364 (15%)    |
| 76% to 100%         | 278 (12%)    |
| 101% to 125%        | 257 (11%)    |
| 126% to 150%        | 165 (7%)     |
| 151% to 175%        | 128 (5%)     |
| 176% to 200%        | 65 (3%)      |
| 201% and over       | 269 (11%)    |



## Poverty Income Guidelines (2017)

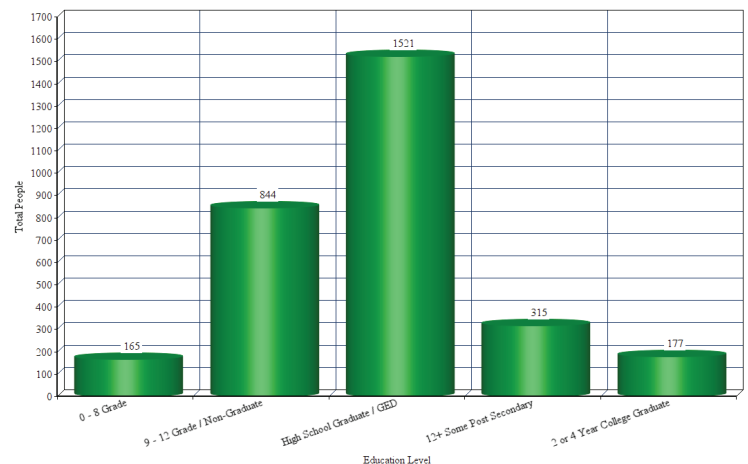
For all states (except Alaska and Hawaii) and the District of Columbia

| Household Size | 100%                               | 115%     | 125%     | 130%     | 135%     | 185%     | 200%     |
|----------------|------------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 1              | \$12,060                           | \$13,869 | \$15,075 | \$15,678 | \$16,281 | \$22,311 | \$24,120 |
| 2              | \$16,240                           | \$18,676 | \$20,300 | \$21,112 | \$21,924 | \$30,044 | \$32,480 |
| 3              | \$20,420                           | \$23,483 | \$25,525 | \$26,546 | \$27,567 | \$37,777 | \$40,840 |
| 4              | \$24,600                           | \$28,290 | \$30,750 | \$31,980 | \$33,210 | \$45,510 | \$49,200 |
| 5              | \$28,780                           | \$33,097 | \$35,975 | \$37,414 | \$38,853 | \$53,243 | \$57,560 |
| 6              | \$32,960                           | \$37,904 | \$41,200 | \$42,848 | \$44,496 | \$60,976 | \$65,920 |
| 7              | \$37,140                           | \$42,711 | \$46,425 | \$48,282 | \$50,139 | \$68,709 | \$74,280 |
| 8              | \$41,320                           | \$47,518 | \$51,650 | \$53,716 | \$55,782 | \$76,442 | \$82,640 |
| More than 8    | \$4,180 for each additional person |          |          |          |          |          |          |

Source: Federal Register (2017, January 31)

## People Served by Education Level

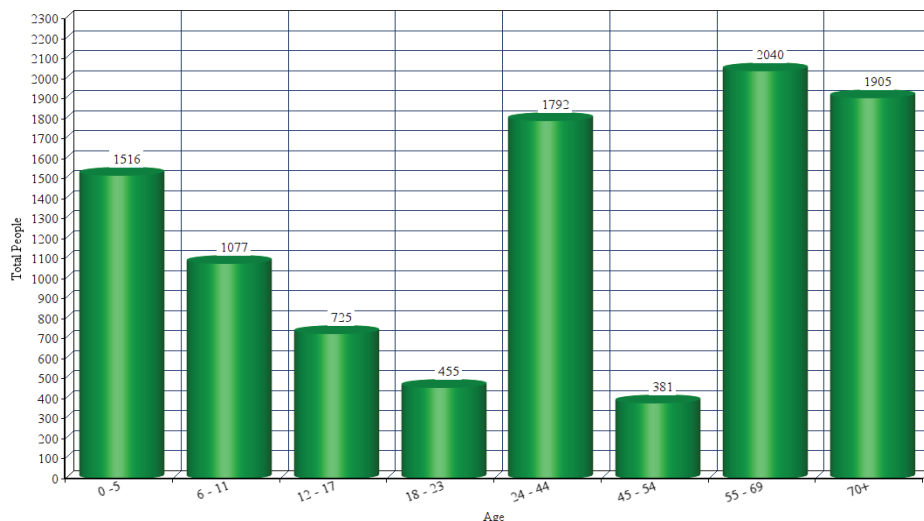
| <u>Level</u>                 | <u>Total</u> |
|------------------------------|--------------|
| 0-8 Grade                    | 165 (6%)     |
| 9-12 Grade/Non-Graduate      | 844 (28%)    |
| High School Graduate/GED     | 1,521 (50%)  |
| 12+ Some Post Secondary      | 315 (10%)    |
| 2 or 4 Year College Graduate | 177 (6%)     |



# The People We Serve

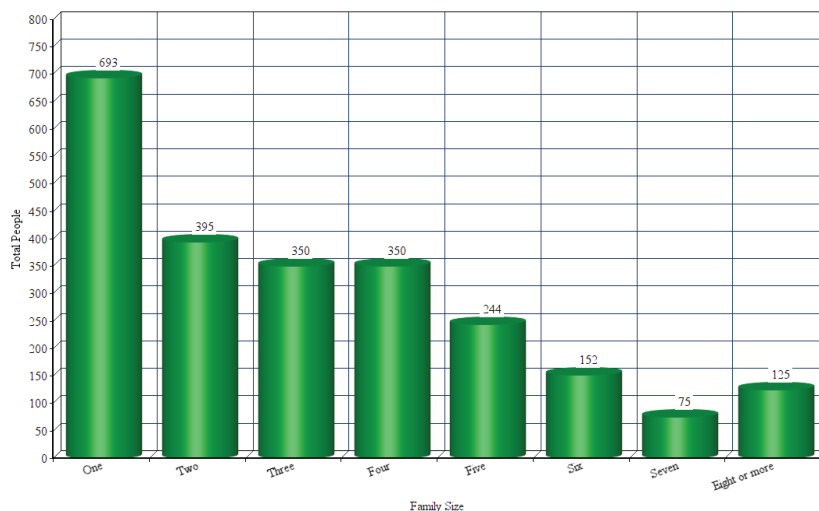
## People Served by Age

| <u>Age</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|------------|--------------|
| 0-5        | 1,516 (15%)  |
| 6-11       | 1,077 (11%)  |
| 12-17      | 725 (7%)     |
| 18-23      | 455 (5%)     |
| 24-44      | 1,792 (18%)  |
| 45-54      | 381 (4%)     |
| 55-69      | 2,040 (21%)  |
| 70+        | 1,905 (19%)  |



## People Served by Family Size

| <u>Family Size</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|--------------------|--------------|
| One                | 693 (29%)    |
| Two                | 395 (17%)    |
| Three              | 350 (15%)    |
| Four               | 350 (15%)    |
| Five               | 244 (10%)    |
| Six                | 152 (6%)     |
| Seven              | 75 (3%)      |
| Eight or more      | 125 (5%)     |



## 2017 - A Year in Review

Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, Inc. strives to meet six national goals. Here's a look at our accomplishments in 2017...

### Goal 1: Low-Income People Become More Self-Sufficient.

- Helped 885 individuals who were unemployed obtain a job.
- Helped 885 individuals obtain an increase in employment income and/or benefits.
- In order to acquire or maintain employment:
  - Assisted 1,270 families obtain care for their children.
  - Assisted 57,139 individuals in obtaining access to reliable transportation.
  - Helped 798 individuals obtain health care services for themselves or a family member.
  - Helped 228 individuals and/or families obtain safe and affordable housing.
  - Assisted 1,782 individuals and/or families obtain food assistance.
- Assisted 94 families to receive individualized services for children with disabilities.
- Helped 1,465 families enroll in MinnesotaCare or other health insurance program.

# 2017 - A Year in Review

## Goal 2: The Conditions in Which Low-Income People Live are Improved.

- Created or maintained 4,626 safe and affordable child care or child development placement opportunities for low-income families.
- Provided opportunities for 1,526 volunteers to serve 843,549 hours in agency and community activities.

## Goal 3: Low-Income People Own a Stake in Their Community.

- Provided opportunities for low-income individuals to volunteer 220,435 hours in agency and community activities.
- Assisted 45 low-income individuals to participate in formal community organizations, government, boards or councils that provide input to decision-making and policy-setting.
- Helped increase the knowledge of 1,018 individuals about Minnesota Voter Registration and participation.

## Goal 4: Partnerships Among Supporters and Providers of Services to Low-Income People are Achieved.

Established or maintained relationships with the following partners:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| - 46 Nonprofits                                | - 16 Faith-Based Groups                       |
| - 34 Local Government Entities                 | - 2 State Governments                         |
| - 6 Federal Government Agencies                | - 1,679 For-Profit Businesses or Corporations |
| - 10 Consortiums or Collaborations             | - 3 Housing Consortiums or Collaborations     |
| - 67 School Districts                          | - 3 Institutions of Post Secondary Education  |
| - 4 Financial/Banking Institutions             | - 57 Health Service Institutions              |
| - 12 State-Wide Associations or Collaborations |   |

## Goal 5: Increase Our Agency Capacity to Achieve Results.

- Provided 23,123 hours of training to 608 staff.
- Provided 25 hours of training to 17 Board members.
- Provided 34 Family Development Certified staff.
- Provided 12 Child Development Certified staff.
- Provided 38 Family Development Certified staff.

# 2017 - A Year in Review

## **Goal 6: Low-Income People, Especially Vulnerable Populations, Achieve Their Potential by Strengthening Family, and Other Support Systems.**

- Provided programs and activities to 3,824 seniors to maintain their independent living.
- Provided programs and activities to 3,970 individuals with disabilities to maintain their independent living.
- Provided referrals for emergency food assistance to 185 individuals.
- Provided emergency payments to vendors for fuel and energy bills for 553 individuals.
- Provided emergency rent or mortgage assistance to 177 individuals.
- Provided emergency car or home repair to 93 households.
- Provided referrals for temporary shelter to 1 individual.
- Provided referrals for emergency medical care to 37 individuals.
- Assisted 1,177 infants and children obtain age appropriate immunizations, medical, and dental care.
- Improved the health and physical development of 1,180 infants and children as a result of providing adequate nutrition.
- Provided preschool activities to develop school readiness to 362 children.
- Ensured that 362 children from low-income families are ready for school having developed pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills as measured by assessment.
- Ensured that 1,323 parents and other adults learned and exhibited improved parenting skills.
- Ensured that 1,306 parents and other adults learned and exhibited improved family functioning skills.
- Helped 81 obtain care for their child or other dependent.
- Helped 23,656 obtain access to reliable transportation.
- Assisted 392 obtain health care services for themselves or family member.
- Assisted 147 obtain safe and affordable housing.
- Helped 1,139 obtain food assistance.
- Helped 10 obtain non-emergency LIHEAP energy assistance.
- Provided 185,433 rides.
- Provided 5,593 information and referral calls.

# Audited Statement of Revenues, Expenses, and Changes in Net Assets

Year ending December 31, 2017

## REVENUES

|                       |                            |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Grant Revenue         | \$20,055,478               |
| Program Contributions | \$2,568,774                |
| Tenant Rents          | \$448,608                  |
| Interest Income       | \$9,478                    |
| In-Kind Contributions | \$938,005                  |
| Other Income          | \$367,608                  |
| <b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>  | <b><u>\$24,387,951</u></b> |

## EXPENSES

|                                      |                             |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Child Education                      | \$15,631,483                |
| Family and Community Services        | \$1,202,580                 |
| Energy Assistance and Weatherization | \$282,729                   |
| Senior Services                      | \$444,742                   |
| Transportation                       | \$2,831,467                 |
| Housing and Housing Rehabilitation   | \$306,816                   |
| Homeless/Shelter Programs            | \$374,413                   |
| Food Programs                        | \$757,021                   |
| Corporate Activities                 | \$355,973                   |
| <b>TOTAL PROGRAM ACTIVITIES</b>      | <b><u>\$22,754,933</u></b>  |
| Management and General Expenses      | \$1,410,751                 |
| Fundraising                          | \$8,698                     |
| <b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>                | <b><u>\$ 24,174,382</u></b> |
| <b>CHANGES IN NET ASSETS</b>         | <b><u>\$213,569</u></b>     |
| Net Assets - End of year             | <u>\$6,763,605</u>          |

# Tri-Valley In The News

## Agassiz Townhomes Project Groundbreaking Ceremony Held in Crookston



(Article courtesy of KROX and photo courtesy of the Crookston Times) The Agassiz Townhomes project officially became a reality on Wednesday, October 25th, as a number of area dignitaries, including Senator Mark Johnson, and County Commissioners Don Diedrich and Gary Willhite, and Amy Larson from Minnesota Housing, joined Executive Director at Tri-Valley, Jason Carlson, and representatives from local businesses, along with City and

Crookston Housing and Economic Development Authority (CHEDA) staff to break ground at the construction site at the corner of Fisher Avenue and Broadway.

Carlson stressed the fact that the project represented both quality partnerships and perseverance. “It’s our job to identify needs in our communities, and Crookston had an identified housing need a few years ago. For three years now, Tri-Valley has been working with CHEDA, the City, private employers, Otto Bremer Trust, Minnesota Housing, and now Wells Fargo Bank, to put together a needed housing project. It’s one of many things we’re doing in the community. I really think that this is a great example of how Tri-Valley’s Board of Directors is committed to the community of Crookston.” he said.

Vice Mayor and Council Member, Dale Stainbrook praised the affordable housing aspect of the project, saying, “I like the fact that this is income-based housing for our workforce. It’s a step for them to move to the community, get employed with one of our businesses, and it’s a stepping stone for a lot of these tenants; it’s housing they can afford, and if they stay here long enough, we hope that they will buy a home and become part of the community. I think this is going to be a tremendous plus. If we get this in, I think other projects will follow. We still need a variety of single family, affordable workforce housing, and I think this is the first step to reach that goal.”

City Administrator, Shannon Stassen, seconded Stainbrook’s words, adding, “Workforce housing is very important, and we’ve been hearing for a number of years that Crookston needs more of it. This project has been three years in the making, so hats off to Jason Carlson and everybody else involved in sticking around and seeing it through. These houses are going to be important for people who ultimately help our businesses to succeed. We need a workforce, and we need affordable housing for those people who come here to Crookston and fill those jobs, so it’s vital, and we just can’t thank Tri-Valley enough for taking this on – not just today, but long-term.”

And CHEDA Executive Director, Craig Hoiseth said that it was really the creative partnerships that made project reality. “The partnerships were everything in this project. The application stood out at Minnesota Housing because the City of Crookston, CHEDA, the 15 businesses, Tri-Valley, Three Rivers ... you name it, it just goes on and on. People who were in support of this project came out full-throttled, with dollars behind them, and enthusiastically embraced this project. The end result is that a good collaboration brings forth a good project, and we look forward to seeing 30 townhomes delivered for Crookston residents in about a year,” he said.

# Tri-Valley In The News

## Making a Difference Together in the Life of a Child



(Article courtesy of The Tribune, Greenbush, MN) – The Badger school currently has two local ladies involved in the Foster Grandparent program. Founded in 1965, it is one of several programs sponsored by the Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, Inc., a non-profit community action agency.

Barb Holum of Badger, Minn., became involved with the Foster Grandparent program at the Badger School in January 2015.

What sparked Barb's interest in becoming involved in the Foster Grandparent Program?

"I wanted to help the school make a difference in the kids' lives," she commented. "The staff is awesome and very concerned for their students but with the curriculum that has to be taught these days they are stressed for time. I hoped to help take a little stress off them and give their students some one on-one-time."

Those who are interested in becoming a Foster Grandparent are required to fill out an application, pass a background check, and be finger printed.

"Foster Grandparent programs are currently in schools at Badger, Roseau, Warroad, Baudette, Fertile, Crookston, Thief River Falls, and others – needing Foster Grandparents in Greenbush and Middle River," Barb said.

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## Tri-Valley Implements Farm to Head Start



Jami Nunn, Food and Nutrition Specialist has been partnering with the Institute of Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) to implement Farm to Head Start in Tri-Valley Opportunity Councils Head Start centers.

Farm to Head Start works to connect early child care and education settings to local food producers with the objectives of serving locally-grown, healthy foods to young children, providing related nutrition education, and improving child nutrition.

Farm to Head Start activities can increase children's willingness to try new foods and help them become familiar with local foods they will see in school.

Implementation started on June 5th where a focused produce item is incorporated into the menu every two weeks. Centers that implement the Farm to Head Start Curriculum will learn about the focused vegetable/fruit the beginning of the week, then it will be presented in the menu in various different cooking methods. The pilot center implementing IATP's curriculum is St. Cloud. All other centers are encouraged to reach out to local farmers and incorporate curriculum revolving around farming and gardening.



# Tri-Valley In The News

## Tri-Valley Head Start, Child & Family Program's Parents Attend Parents as Leaders Training Program in Washington, D.C.



Three members of the Tri-Valley Head Start/Early Head Start and Migrant & Seasonal Head Start/Migrant & Seasonal Early Head Start Policy Councils had the opportunity to travel to Washington D.C. in September to attend the Parents as Leaders Training Program. Sponsored by the National Head Start Association and part of the Families Unite for Head Start initiative, this unique educational training program focused on developing parents into leaders in their programs, families, and communities. While in Washington D.C., the parents met with house members and their staff, to include Senator Heidi Heitkamp, Congressman Collin Peterson, and Congressman Tim Walz to share their stories, educate them about the impor-

tance of Head Start and how Head Start empowers parents as their child's first teacher, and canvass for their continued support of Head Start programs. They also joined hundreds of other Head Start parents from across the country at the Families Unite for Head Start Spirit Rally on Capitol Hill.

(Photo L-R): Juanita Wilkes, Policy Council President for Region V; Bernardo Rangel, Policy Council President for Region RXII; Teresa Luque, Policy Council Vice-President for Region RXII

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## Chisholm-Bennett Receives Years of Service Recognition from MinnCAP



Chisholm Bennett 25 Year Picture (media) Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, Inc. staff attended the Minnesota Community Action Partnership (MinnCAP) Annual Training Conference held on August 1-3 at the Sanford Center in Bemidji, Minn. Staff took part in Legislative General Sessions, listened to speakers on various topics, and took part in several educational breakout sessions.

In conjunction with the annual training conference, 25 Year Honorees were recognized for their dedicated service and commitment to Community Action. Tri-Valley's Jill Chisholm-Bennett (Preschool Teacher, Hendrum Center) was honored for her 25 years of work with Tri-Valley in Crookston.

(A short bio on Jill from the event): Jill began working with Tri-Valley Opportunity Council with the Migrant program in Hendrum, MN in Norman County in the summer of 1991. She has worked with all ages of the Head Start Programs from infant to toddler and preschool levels and has enjoyed all of the different ages. She has spent the majority of her years working at the West Adventure Center Preschool located at the Norman County West Elementary School. She has enjoyed meeting new families over the years and being a part of their children's learning and watching them grow and develop over the years.

(Photo L-R): Arnie Anderson (MinnCAP Executive Director), Jill Chisholm-Bennett, and Francie Mathes (Office of Economic Opportunity)

# Tri-Valley In The News

## Tri-Valley Transportation Program Asks, Are You Ready to “Try It”?



Tri-Valley Transportation Programs in collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Transportation is beginning a commuter challenge called “Try It!” In conjunction with the commuter challenge, Tri-Valley Transportation Programs plans to develop a new commuter route service for the area. The service will connect the cities of Crookston and Grand Forks and will

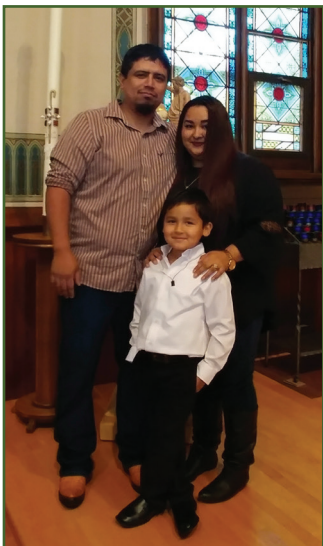
begin May 1, 2017. The “Try It!” Commuter Challenge invites those who can benefit from the new commuter route to call Tri-Valley Transportation with any questions and then get out and “Try It!”

The commuter route will pick up at the East Grand Forks Shopko at 6:15 AM and will drop riders off at Crookston employers at 7:00 AM. In the afternoon, Tri-Valley will pick riders up at their place of work at 4:00 PM and drop them off at the East Grand Forks Shopko at 5:00 PM.

This commuter route has been requested several times by residents of both Crookston wanting a commuter route to Grand Forks and Grand Forks/East Grand Forks residents who travel to Crookston for employment and/or educational purposes. Employers are interested in seeing this route once again offered to increase their hiring pools and options.

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## Head Start Success Story – Oscar & Vanessa



My family and I were having a bad time after my husband lost his job. I was the only one working while he stayed home with the children and looked for another job. He applied at Seneca and he got the job, we then had to look for child care for our five children. Rosa Lopez asked my mother-in-law if she knew of anyone with children that worked in agriculture and my mother-in-law told her about us. So Rosa told her to have us go to the Head Start center and apply. So my husband went the next day we were approved.

I did not want my children to be watched by people that were not family but we had no other choice. I am glad that I agreed to have my children attend the center. They learned a lot and were prepared for kindergarten. The staff were so attentive with my children I am very grateful for this program. They did not only learn to write their names and ABC's but they learned good manners and my youngest even learned some sign language. I would recommend this organization to anyone that I know. My children enjoyed their time at the center and we are very pleased and happy that our children were being cared for very well.

My husband worked at Seneca for four years and four out of five of my children came to the center. My children attended the Glencoe and Hutchinson Centers all those years. I am also an employee of Tri-Valley and have been a health assistant for five years and I have enjoyed my time here. I am grateful to Tri-Valley for not only the job opportunity but for taking such great care of the children.

Sincerely,  
Oscar & Vanessa Rivera



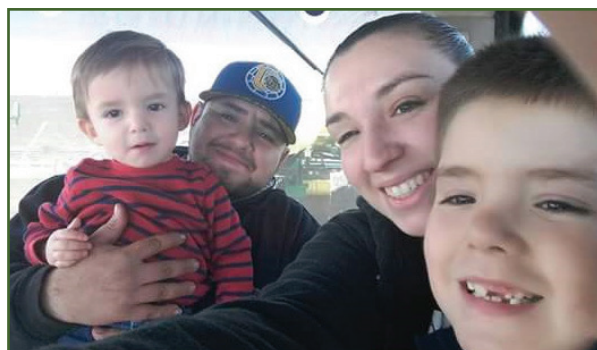
# Tri-Valley In The News

## Head Start Success Story – Maria Nelly Martinez



My name is Maria Nelly Martinez. I have been a migrant all my life. I have traveled to Washington, Oregon, Idaho, North Dakota, New Mexico, Nebraska and Texas. We traveled state to state in search of agriculture work. Being a migrant I had to juggle work and school, in the summer were long days of working in the sun followed by homework packets given to us by summer school teachers. My parents tried their best to give us the best education they could but sometimes they needed our help working in the fields. All of my childhood was spent juggling work with my education. Freshman year my parent and I made the decision that I would drop out of school because I felt I needed to help my parents more. At such a young age, it was so hard to juggle work and my education. Jumping from state to state meant jumping from school to school. It wasn't a problem when I was younger because I was allowed to catchup with homework when I couldn't be present in school, but once I got to my freshman year I needed to be present in school so my grades

would count and being a migrant that was not possible. After dropping out as a freshman I dedicated my extra time to working towards my GED. I am proud to say that after only three and a half short but difficult months I was able to obtain it. This for me was an extremely proud moment because the lack of education presented difficulties in me learning the material I needed to complete my GED. Three years down the road I met the love of my life and we decided to get married. My husband was able to obtain work in a place that would allow for us to put our migrating years behind us and plant roots for our family. His employment took him away from what mattered most his family. This brought forth more struggles and hardships than anticipated so in 2015 as a family we decided that we would yet again pack up our belongings and migrate with the hopes of finding work that would allow us to make a living but keep our family united. We found work harvesting potatoes and sugar beets. In 2016 we came back to North Dakota. When I first arrived I was referred to Tri- Valley by the local Motivation Education & Training, Inc. (MET) program in Grafton. I put in my application for work as a Recruiter & Family Advocate (RFA) because I wanted to be able to help migrant families get much needed help and make a difference in their children, just like someone did when they told my parents about the program that I went to in Cavalier, ND. Summer school as I called it was such a great experience for me, not only did it give my parents the peace of mind knowing that I would be safe when they were working but I was able to make friends and learn from my teachers. This is now my 2nd season working for Tri- Valley and I love it, I am making a difference in the lives of migrant families and their children. I am currently working on completing the family service credential so that I can better serve the families in our program. I plan to further my education in the social service field. This will not only allow me to better myself professionally, it will also make me grow as a person so that I can better provide for my family. Thanks to Tri-Valley for the training and experience, they have given me up until now.



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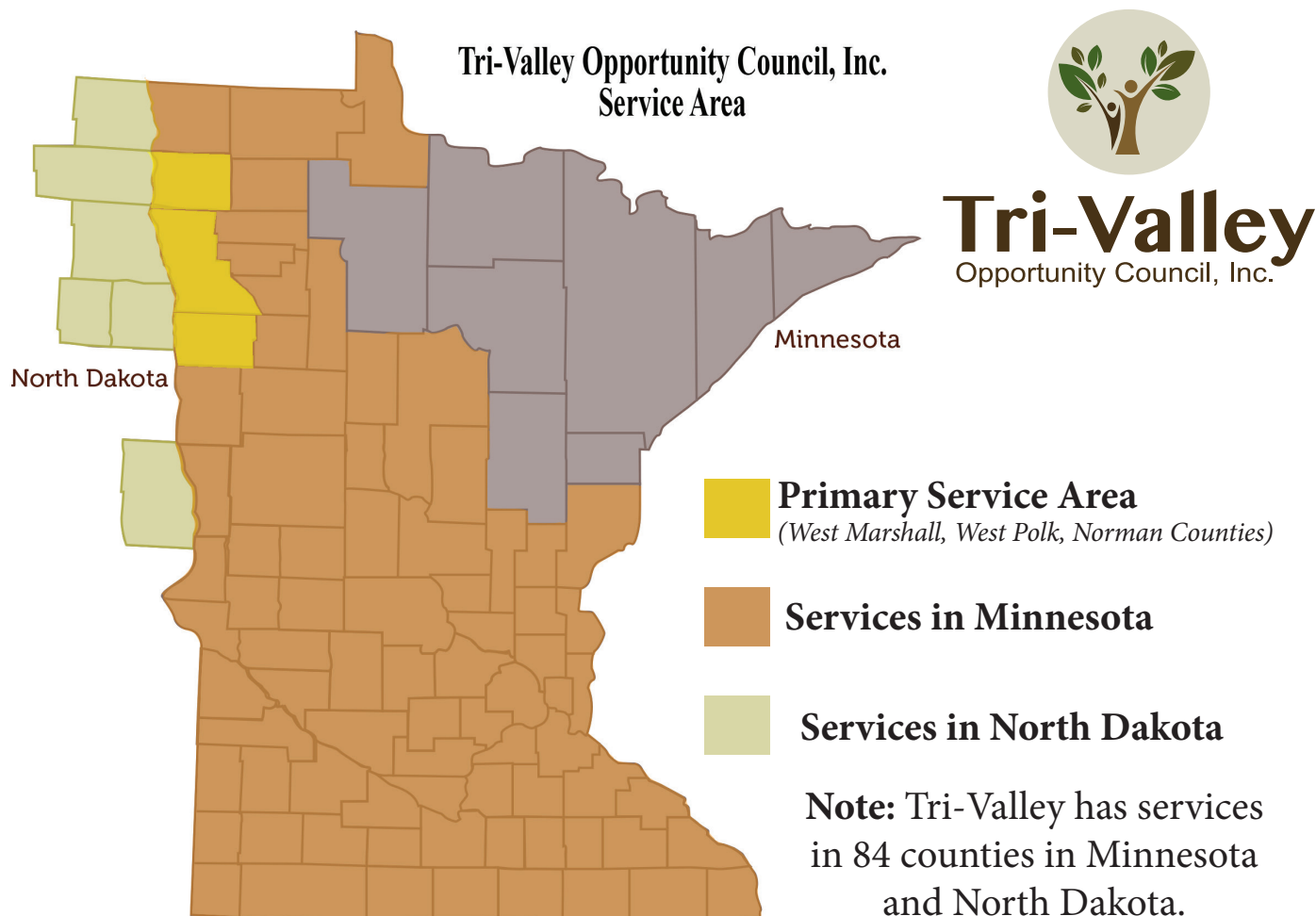
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## Service Area



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