

ANNUAL REPORT: JULY 1, 2022 – JUNE 30, 2023



Formerly, The Emergency Aid Association, Inc.
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Our Mission:

Suffield Community Aid (SCA) - *your local safety net*. SCA provides supportive health and social services that positively affect the well-being of Suffield residents during periods of need.

Brief Background:

SCA is a private, non-profit 501(c)3 social services agency. Incorporated in 1903, SCA is available for Suffield residents to make tough times more manageable. Since our inception, we have strived to enhance the full potential of all residents, and thereby, improve the overall quality of life in our community. Since 2003, the Town of Suffield has contracted with SCA to administer social services for its citizens. The current contract extends this partnership through June 30, 2027.

Our Focus:

Serving as a safety net for residents experiencing financial and other challenges, residents reach out to SCA when they don't know where else to turn. Whether you've lost a job, suffered a health crisis, required help caring for an aging parent, or experienced some type of financial hardship, *SCA is here to offer the resources and support that community members require to move forward in their lives.*

Through individualized consultations, the SCA team helps residents achieve self-sufficiency, preserve economic well-being, and adjust to difficult circumstances and events in their lives. By combining our ability to offer immediate relief programs with other government and private resources, we are able to maximize eligibilities and alleviate hardships to promote better overall individual and family functioning.

Highlights of FY/2023:

Listed below are some of the supportive health and social service programs provided by SCA for residents during fiscal year 2022 - 2023. SCA continued to provide in-person services by meeting with residents at SCA, in the community, and in residents' homes.

- ◆ **Meals-On-Wheels**- SCA coordinates volunteers who distributed 7,764 government subsidized meals to 73 medically frail, homebound seniors last year.
- ◆ **CHOICES Counseling**- A trained SCA volunteer, Sheri Burger, provided in-person appointments and assistance to 149 individuals looking to explore their Medicare options.
- ◆ **Fuel Assistance**- Forty-seven thousand, eight hundred and seventy-eight dollars (\$47,878) in critical fuel aid was distributed to 97 Suffield households from various SCA-administered funds (\$5,230 was expended from SCA Private Fuel donations.) An additional 244 energy applications were submitted to the State of CT on behalf of our residents, resulting in \$158,410 in fuel aid for approved households.
- ◆ **Meghan Voisine Fund**- The Meghan Voisine Fund was created in memory of Meghan Voisine to support Suffield youth-based programming and initiatives. "Kindness Grants" were distributed to selected applicants and youth groups to fund their community-based projects. A total of \$3,814 was awarded to several applicants and youth groups to complete their projects of spreading kindness and promoting inclusion in Suffield.
- ◆ **Housing Repair Assistance Program**- New to SCA's repertoire of assistance programs, the Housing Repair Assistance Program was established at SCA in 2022 to provide minor home repairs and modifications to low-to-moderate income homeowners. SCA completed the first project, which involved adding stairs and a porch railing to increase the functionality and safety of the homeowner's front porch and walkway. Other projects are well underway at this time. This fiscal year, SCA contributed \$14,199 towards improving the safety, accessibility, and security of several homes in Suffield.
- ◆ **Renter's Rebate**- Between July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023, staff processed 105 applications and submitted a claim to the Office of Policy and Management for \$52,357 to be dispersed to Suffield elderly and disabled qualified renters.
- ◆ **Social Service Consultations**- Staff responded to over 3,200 requests for information and provided comprehensive case assessment, case management, networking, and consultation to 460 Suffield households, comprised of 797 residents. Pat Beeman, MSW, resumed in-person hours at the Kent Memorial Library once per month to provide individualized consultations to residents.
- ◆ **Medical & Health Promotion Subsidies**- SCA subsidized medical services and related programming in the amount of \$3,736 to enrich the lives of 34 residents with health challenges. In partnership with Masonicare, SCA sponsored bi-weekly blood pressure screening clinics, which was accessed 308 times by Suffield residents.
- ◆ **Medical Equipment Loans**- Three hundred and ninety-nine (399) donated durable medical items were loaned to residents and/or their family members.
- ◆ **Preschool Vision Screenings**- In partnership with the Suffield Lions Club, SCA volunteers completed 90 screenings across 3 in-town pre-schools.
- ◆ **SCA Vegetable Garden**- Thanks to the incredible garden makeover in FY/22, the SCA Garden has continued to yield a significant bounty of produce that is shared with SCA clients facing food

insecurity. We are grateful to the dedicated group of volunteers of all ages who help to make our garden plentiful for all who enjoy the fresh produce, flowers, and herbs.

- ◆ **Salvation Army**- The Salvation Army Kettle Drive raised \$2,835 thanks to the time and efforts of community members, the SHS Interact Club, and the Suffield Rotary. These funds provide for basic needs & costs associated with SCA's annual "Return to School Backpack" Program.
- ◆ **Quality of Life Fund**- Social services workers make referrals for items, programs and/or services that would enhance a resident's quality of life but would otherwise be financially prohibitive. 14 residents were served at a cost of \$8,859. Additionally, SCA funded three, 8-week "Low Mobility" Exercise Series that served more than 25 older adults at a cost of \$1,440.
 - *Housing Expenses:* SCA serves as the hub for FEMA distributed "Emergency Food and Shelter" funds as well as Salvation Army funding. In FY23, 16 households were assisted using these funds, totaling \$11,242 in assistance.
- ◆ **Meal Subsidies**- SCA offered lunch subsidies for qualified seniors and adults with disabilities to enjoy lunch at the Senior Center twice per week. A total of 38 residents enjoyed 1607 lunches at a total cost of \$7,935.
- ◆ **Transportation, Mental Health, & Adult Day Care Subsidies**- SCA offered subsidies to help qualified residents get to where they want to go, (when the Suffield Mini-Bus is not available), obtain the clinical help they require, and explore the benefits of adult day care, by instituting programs to offset prohibitive costs. A total of 31 transportation subsidies and 2 Adult Day Care subsidies were provided to low-income residents, totaling \$8,012.
- ◆ **Kathy Ostrowski Memorial Nursing Scholarship**- In honor of SCA's beloved former Board member, Kathy Ostrowski, a scholarship was created in her name and awarded to Suffield High School graduating senior, who's pursuing a nursing degree.
- ◆ **Fiore Food Pantry**- SCA's Food Pantry was accessed 396 times by 122 different Suffield families comprised of 953 persons, of whom 380 were children and 214 were over the age of 65. The value of the food and gift card assistance is estimated at \$44,385.
- ◆ **Veterans' Assistance**- The Suffield Knights of Columbus & Landry Sic VFW Post 9544 provided funding to meet the needs of Suffield Veterans experiencing financial and medical hardships. Seven veterans were served at a cost of \$1,444.
- ◆ **"Grab-and-Go" Mini Food Pantry**- Just outside the SCA door, this self-serve resource is available to any resident needing urgent food assistance at any time of day. It is estimated that there were 416 visits last year.
- ◆ **Forward Focus**- Forward Focus is a partnering program to help launch Suffield teens and young adults. This program addresses financial and other challenges that impede the attainment of life goals for identified Suffield youth and young adults. Eight teenage residents were assisted at a cost of \$4,305.
- ◆ **"Return to School" Backpack Distribution**- SCA distributed 69 filled backpacks to financially qualified school-age children. Gift cards, for the purchase of shoes, were obtained with funds raised through our local Salvation Army Kettle Drive and through the generous support of Sacred Heart Church and individual donors.
- ◆ **After-Hour SPD Support Plan & Town Emergency Responder Assistance**- SCA continues to work closely with SPD, SVAA, and the Suffield Fire Dept. to ensure resident safety and wellbeing should a fuel, food or housing crisis occur during non-SCA work hours. SCA also partners with the Town's Emergency Responders to assist residents experiencing serious health & housing challenges.
- ◆ **Bereavement Support Group**- SCA contracted with Masonicare to host and facilitate one in-person, grief group to support Suffield and surrounding towns' residents.
- ◆ **Camperships/Child Care Subsidies**- Nineteen subsidies were provided to children living in low-income earning homes, to attend camp or help subsidize childcare expenses, at a cost of \$5,243.
- ◆ **COVID-19/Crisis Relief Fund**- This special fund was created in March 2020, thanks to donations received from the larger community. The fund targets assistance to residents who do not qualify for other needs based or COVID relief programs. Funds are also utilized to help residents in crisis who

qualify and to secure short-term, temporary emergency housing in instances where other options are not available. Four households were assisted at a cost of \$4,582.

- ◆ **Digital Mobile Mammography**- SCA organized a mobile mammography event at McAlister Intermediate School that served 10 women.
- ◆ **Holiday Basket Program**- SCA coordinated the distribution of 197 donated holiday and other seasonal baskets to low-income households.
- ◆ **James Coggins, Jr. Community Service Award**- The 2023 recipient of this annual \$1,000 award was Ash Richardson-White.
- ◆ **Jane Purtil Fuller Memorial Scholarship**- Awarded annually to graduating high-school students pursuing a nursing or social services degree, the 2023 recipient was a Suffield High School graduating senior who plans to pursue the field of nursing in her undergraduate studies.
- ◆ **Parkinson's Peer Support**- SCA facilitated an in-person support group for caregivers and individuals with Parkinsons at the Suffield Senior Center. The group met monthly from September through June and welcomed several guest presenters for information-sharing purposes. On average, 10 group members regularly attended each meeting.
- ◆ **Memory Café Support Group**- Due to the increased frequency of concerns related to individuals with cognitive decline, SCA revived the Memory Café program to provide a safe space for support and information sharing for individuals with cognitive loss and their loved ones. The group meets monthly and continues to grow in attendance.
- ◆ **Pet Food Support**- Fundraising efforts and frequent donations help make it possible for SCA's Food Pantry to continue offering pet food.
- ◆ **Resident At-Risk List**- SCA partners with the Town's Emergency Preparedness team to identify vulnerable residents. This list continues to be an instrumental tool across several town emergency response departments.

The conclusion of each fiscal year allows us time to reflect on what we've accomplished throughout the year and ways we hope to expand and grow in the upcoming year. We witnessed firsthand the negative impact inflation had and continues to have on already stretched budgets. We strove to be proactive and prepared for an uncertain heating fuel season, ongoing hikes in grocery prices, and fluctuating housing and rental costs. Our goal is to always be a resource for Suffield residents, and the support of our community affords our team the ability to meet residents where they are and look for individualized solutions to help keep them afloat. In the new fiscal year, we're excited to introduce you to our Masters of Social Work intern who joined our team in early September. We hope to welcome you to our renovated building, which is undergoing a transformation that will offer private meeting spaces, a larger multi-purpose space, increased wheelchair accessibility, and an expanded and organized medical loan closet and prep space. Thank you to our volunteers and Board of Directors who continue to support our mission in action each day. We look forward to the year ahead and welcome you to stop in to visit us and learn more about the ways SCA supports members of our community.

Respectfully Submitted,
Danielle Annibalini, LCSW
Executive Director

