
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' OFFICE
NEWS RELEASE



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For additional information contact:

Lisa LaPlante at (616) 632-7567 or Lisa.LaPlante@kentcountymi.gov

Commissioners approve Merger, Announce Kent County Community Action

GRAND RAPIDS – The Board of Commissioners approved the merger of the Area Community Services and Employment Training Council's (ACSET) Community Action Agency (CAA) and the Kent County Community Development/Housing Commission this morning. The newly-formed department will operate as "Kent County Community Action," putting all staff and resources under one roof to better serve the community.

County and CAA staff researched and evaluated the potential of combining and aligning resources of CAA and Kent County's Community Development/Housing Commission over the past 18 months. In March 2017, the Board of Commissioners authorized staff to proceed with necessary steps for the County of Kent to be designated as the CAA for Kent County, and present necessary requests for approval and transfer of CAA programs and assets to the County.

ACSET's CAA provides weatherization services, utility shut-off protections, food distribution, senior services and more to low-income clients in Kent County. The Kent County Community Development and Housing Commission staff often work on similar projects, programs and customers that align. The new department will be led by Susan Cervantes, the Associate Director of the CAA since 2013. She brings nearly two decades of experience and proficiency to the role, having served with Community Action Agency since 1998. "We truly believe that the transition of ACSET CAA to Kent County will be beneficial for our customers and that they will experience services seamlessly," said Cervantes. "I am thrilled to see us pull together two teams with a wealth of knowledge who can serve our clients more effectively and efficiently."

The Grand Rapids City Commission approved the merger on August 22, 2017. "We are pleased to support this partnership," Mayor Rosalynn Bliss said. "Our residents will benefit from the enhanced coordination and more efficient operations that will result from this new alliance."

Employees will all be housed in the Human Services Complex at Franklin and Sheldon in southeast Grand Rapids. "This merger brings together staff from two programs that result in decades of understanding of the resources available to help some of our most vulnerable residents," said Jim Saalfeld, Chair of the Kent County Board of Commissioners. "By bringing these programs together, Kent County is providing better service at lower costs, thereby serving our communities in a more efficient manner."

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