



FY 2021 Projects and Accomplishments

Community Alliance of South County, Inc. (CASC) had planned projects for FY 2021 that aligned with its mission to positively impact our neighbors in South County. In a number of areas, the COVID-19 Pandemic interfered with our project plans. As in 2020, working from home, many people felt highly stressed, frustrated and unable to take on any new ideas, tasks or other demands on their time.

On the other hand, we were able to evolve some projects to suit changing circumstances and to develop large projects on the spur-of-the-moment even though they had not been on our FY 2021 Plan of Activities.

Project FEAST (Food is Equitable, Accessible and Sustainable...For Tomorrow)



For the second year, CASC offered free container garden kits for growing vegetables at home. Kits for new gardeners come with two grow bags, potting soil, two starter plants, a trowel, a watering can and growing instructions. Gardeners returning from the prior year receive two plants, soil, and growing instructions. Six participants from the 2020 project requested plants for this season. They each received tomato plants, and some also received a basil or oregano plant. There were three new gardeners for this year.

Collaboration with Creating Communities

As we asked our South County neighbors about what is most needed, a frequent answer was activities for children. Responding to that concern, CASC's Education Committee contacted Rob Levit of Creating Communities in Annapolis to plan a one-week summer day camp experience for young people. Creating Communities has an award-winning approach to utilizing art, music and creative activities to nurture expression, personal growth and life skills.

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Collaboration with Creating Communities (continued)

The project would offer scholarships to 4th and 5th grade students selected by South County principals and counselors. Capt. Avery Museum in Shady Side agreed to provide space to have the camp. Ultimately, COVID-19 interfered with the idea of gathering children together for this purpose. The plan for an in-person camp evolved into a virtual art experience. Nine students were offered the opportunity to participate. Only four of these had Internet connections.

The chair of CASC's Education Committee discovered that up to seventy children in each of South County's mobile home communities (MHCs) were receiving meals from school distribution trucks. Partnering again with Rob Levit of Creating Communities, sixty bags of arts and crafts supplies were delivered to children in three MHCs. The principal from one of the elementary schools was on-hand during the distribution to lend a familiar face. Both parents and children were thrilled to receive Doodle Pads, Legos, marker sets, crayons, books, packets of masks and other items.

The Polymath Place in Deale offered CASC 10 Summer scholarships for children and young people to experience theater, science, math or coding. We were not able to fill the spots. The fact that parents did not snap up this opportunity is another example of how the 2021 was not a normal year.

Provide Assistance to Other Organizations

Backpacks for Tracey's Elementary School

Another collaboration that CASC's Food Committee has participated in for three years is the Bountiful Backpacks project organized by Annette Nash in support of Tracey's Elementary School. CASC volunteers have assisted with sourcing, packing and delivering food for students in indeed at Tracey's Elementary School.

The backpacks provide an occasion to communicate with families from time to time by adding flyers about specific opportunities, such as the federally-subsidized SCAN food pantry and the new public transportation system in South County.

Gifts of Love

CASC made financial donation to the Gifts of Love program organized by the Community Action Agency. The fund purchases Christmas gifts for children enrolled in the Early Headstart Program. A subset of these children is from South County.

Expungement Clinic

The Maryland Re-entry Resource Center, Inc. worked with CASC to schedule an expungement event. Attorneys would meet with members of the public who have convictions on their records that could be removed through a legal process. The Deale Library Community Room was reserved, and the attorneys scheduled. Efforts to attract participants was not successful.



SCAN Food Pantry

SCAN operates a federally-subsidized food pantry that has been operating for over 40 years in South County. Clients must meet criteria and can receive food once each month. CASC maintains a bin at the Edgewater Library to collect nonperishable food donations that are then delivered to SCAN.

Lothian Ruritan Club

Through the Lothian Ruritan Club's annual citrus sale, neighbors can purchase fruit not only for themselves, but can also designate purchases as donation to the SCAN food pantry. This year, boxes of donated fruit exceeded the capacity of SCAN's refrigeration facilities. The CASC Food Access and Nutrition Committee worked with the Lothian Ruritan Club to distribute excess boxes of donated fresh Florida oranges to churches and other organizations for their pantries and food distribution events.

Wheelchair Ramp Build

Part of the story of this project is shown on this flyer. Joe was wheelchair-bound and had recently moved to his sister's house. She worked full-time. Joe could wheel himself around the house, but he was not able to get himself down steps to reach ground-level. What would he do in an emergency? They had talked about what to do if there were a house fire: Joe would have to leave the wheelchair at the door, roll himself down the steps to the sidewalk and wait for the emergency services.

CASC was contacted for assistance. On a warm day in early fall, Joe sat in his wheelchair on the deck while as many as 19 volunteers from local churches, Scout troops and high schools worked for eight hours to complete the ramp. Within 10 minutes of finishing, Joe very carefully wheeled himself down the ramp, turned around and then wheeled himself back up to the deck. He was clearly delighted, although he admitted it made him quite tired.

Later, his sister related that Joe had made the round trip every couple of days to build his strength. He wanted to be sure he could be safe when needed. Eventually, he wheeled himself down the driveway to the street to watch the cars and the people walking by. It's clear that he was enjoying his new-found freedom.



Community Alliance
of South County

September 2021

Wheelchair Ramp Build

When Joe*, a wheelchair-bound patient, was released from rehab, his family had all the details of his care worked out except for one: how to exit the house safely, especially in an emergency.

Community Alliance of South County got the call from Joe's medical provider and got into action. We assembled a team of skilled and dedicated volunteers from several South County area churches and built him a beautiful ramp.

One problem: the cost of materials to help this neighbor in need was unexpectedly high. Now we need your help! You can donate to this project using the link above and selecting this project from the drop-down list.

Thank you!!

*not his real name



Visit our website for additional details about this and our other projects.





Community Outreach

Throughout the year, we looked for opportunities to get out with our neighbors to hear their concerns and to provide information about services, organizations and people who could be of assistance.

This year, we participated in the July 4th Parade in Shady Side, National Night Out in Shady Side, the Multi-cultural Picnic at Wayson Woods in Wayson’s Corner, and the Captain Avery Museum Oyster Festival in Shady Side. We were ready with our handouts, our questions, our relationship-building and lots of smiles.

Later in the year, as events moved indoors, we set up at vendor holiday bazaars. We met lots of new people, handed out information, listened to stories and neighbors’ concerns, and sold our cookbooks. CASC could be found at the London Towne Vendor Market, the Deale Volunteer Fire Department Holiday Bazaar and the Deale Farmers’ Market Holiday Bazaar. At each of these events we found people to be receptive to what we are doing. Many expressed interest in working with us on our future projects.

July 4th Parade on July 3, 2022



Our “float” was definitely eye-catching. In addition to rolling along in the Jeep, CASC members walked the parade route handing out our literature to adults and goodies to children. Red, white and blue pinwheels were the favorite, but mini-American flags and bags of cheddar cheese snacks were also well received!

National Night Out

Five of our six board members are shown at National Night Out Shady Side in August. We were joined by Tracey Cherry of the Partnership for Children, Youth and Families. She focuses on South County issues also. We were kept very busy by people stopping by to learn about CASC and our projects. We sold cookbooks, collected donations, handed out transportation flyers and signed up people who were interested in container gardening. As always, we asked people to offer their thoughts on ways to enhance the lives of our South County neighbors. And we





Shoes

Teachers at several elementary schools noticed that a few students had come to school with the toes cut out of their shoes, indicating that those shoes no longer fit and that the family was unable to afford to purchase new shoes. In response, CASC's Education Committee collected a large number of new and slightly used donated shoes to offer to schools. Teachers could distribute the shoes when the need arose.

When schools closed down, it wasn't possible to match shoes with children. The shoes are bagged by size and will be held until schools are fully open.



Outdoor Classrooms

CASC learned of the Outdoor Classrooms for children that were being set up at several Annapolis apartment locations. Outdoor, experiential learning is becoming more popular in this country as an added strategy of education. We thought this concept would be a suitable project for one of the mobile home communities in the Lothian area.

According to the model, a "classroom" is set up outdoors, with tree stumps serving as seats and a board or wall serving as a focus area where a speaker or leader would give a demonstration and encourage the children to participate. In current projects of this type, subjects vary widely.

Again complicated by issues associated with the pandemic, plans for this project were not able to be completed this year. However, it's still a possibility for the future.

Conclusions

Flexibility was key for CASC in "moving forward – working together" during 2021. Staying true to our mission and operating within our guiding principles, we were able to connect and collaborate with members of the community, offer and support programs that benefit South County residents, and promote low-cost, sustainable initiatives – all while adapting to a changing environment.

We look ahead to continuing and expanding our on-going projects as well as to developing projects and programs in response to new challenges and opportunities within the community.