

2023-24

ANNUAL REPORT

PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE



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About Schuylkill Community Action

Schuylkill Community Action (SCA) has been a cornerstone of support for low-income residents of Schuylkill County since its founding in 1965. Originally known as "The Economic Opportunity Cabinet of Schuylkill County," the agency emerged from a merger between two community action programs operated by the City of Pottsville and Schuylkill County. On July 1, 2000, the agency officially adopted its current name, reflecting its continued commitment to empowering individuals and families to achieve self-sufficiency.

SCA was established under the Federal Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson as part of the national "War on Poverty." This act laid the foundation for Community Action Agencies across the country, emphasizing active citizen participation in designing and implementing federally funded local programs. Since then, the landscape of federal support has evolved, including the creation of the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) in 1981, ensuring that vital resources continue to be administered at the state level in support of local initiatives.



Our Mission

Our mission is "to focus all available resources on low-income Schuylkill County residents, empowering them to achieve self-sufficiency."

SCA offers a broad range of services to help individuals and families overcome barriers and build sustainable paths forward. Our goal is not only to address immediate needs but to foster long-term solutions that break the cycle of poverty. Whether it is accessing affordable housing, building financial literacy, or improving food and energy security, SCA remains steadfast in its commitment to stability, opportunity, and resilience for all.

Meet Our Team

Board of Directors

SCA is governed by a twenty-one (21) member Board of Directors. One-third of the board represents the private sector, one-third are elected representatives of the low-income community, and one-third are public officials

PRIVATE

David Sickle
John Consugar
John F. Patton
Julia Fisher
Norm Zwolenik
• **Board Vice President**
Sarah Donohue
• **Board President**
Trudy Umholtz

LOW-INCOME

Amy Wahalec
Alternate: Sean Haldeman
Captain Betty Ellen Barrett
Alternate: Mary Metzger
Deanna Mease
Alternate: Jody Dunnigan
Jeanette Triano Sinn
Alternate: Heather Boher
Joanne Negron
Maria Doyle
• **Board Treasurer**
Shirley German
Alternate: Verna Ebling

PUBLIC

Commissioner Barron Hetherington
Rep: Paul Buber
Commissioner Gary Hess
Rep: Paul Straka
Commissioner Larry Padora
Rep: Ron Zimmerman
Dan Lynch
Rep: Karen Yedsena
Mayor Dave Clews
Rep: Mary Ann Dragna
• **Board Secretary**
Senator David Argall
Rep: MaryBeth Dougherty
Sheriff Joseph Groody
Rep: Chief Deputy Shawn Butler

Administrative Staff



David Young
Chief Executive Officer



Jennifer Slifka
Chief Operating Officer



Theresa Yurkonis
Chief Financial Officer



Terry Sadusky
Director of Weatherization



Andrea Slotterback
Director of Housing and
Community Development



Richard Bigg
Director of Case
Management



Kathryn Spofford
Director of Planning



Erin Muldowney
Administrative Assistant

A Message from the Chief Executive Officer



As we reflect on the 2023 to 2024 reporting year, I am proud to share the remarkable progress Schuylkill Community Action has made in supporting our neighbors throughout the county. This year, we served more than 23,000 individuals through programs focused on housing stability, food access, financial literacy, and other essential services. From the return of our Summer BLAST youth program to a record number of pantry visits and new collaborations through the Schuylkill County HIVE, our work remained centered on innovation, responsiveness, and compassion. Each number in this report represents a person, and our mission to help individuals reach self-sufficiency continues to guide all that we do.

Although our community continues to face serious challenges, including a poverty rate nearing fifteen percent and persistent housing insecurity, our staff, volunteers, and partners have remained deeply committed to creating real and lasting change. We expanded outreach through new service locations, strengthened internal systems, and adapted quickly to rising community needs. None of this would be possible without the support of our board, our funders, and the many individuals who believe in our work. As we move forward, we do so with gratitude and a strong commitment to improving lives and building a stronger future for all residents of Schuylkill County.

Poverty in Schuylkill County

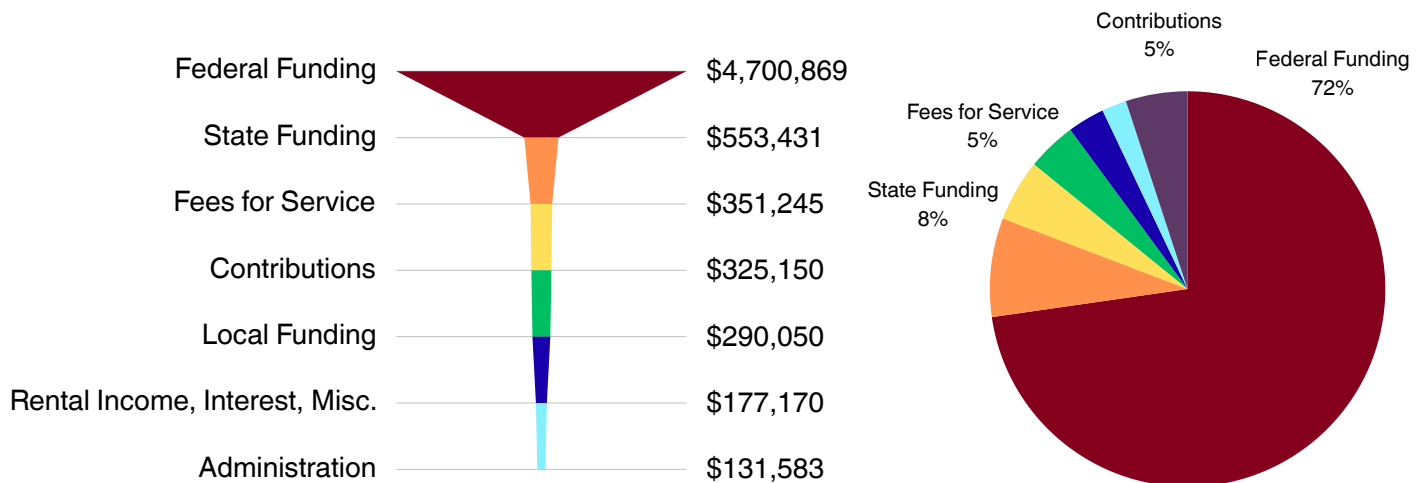
According to the 2023 American Community Survey One-Year Estimates, approximately:

- 20,123 residents (14.8%) live below the poverty level.
- 6,594 individuals under 18 live in poverty (24% of that age group).
- 78.4% of households with children under 18 living in poverty are headed by single parents.
- 39% of renter-occupied households and 3.8% of owner-occupied households are below the poverty line.
- 4,242 employed individuals aged 16+ remain below the poverty threshold.
- County unemployment rate: 5.6% (vs. 4.2% statewide).
 - Among those in poverty, the unemployment rate is 36.6%, compared to 3.1% among those at or above the poverty level.
- 19.4% of households receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.
 - 53% of those include individuals with a disability.
 - 46% of SNAP households had at least one worker in the past year; 26.3% had two or more.

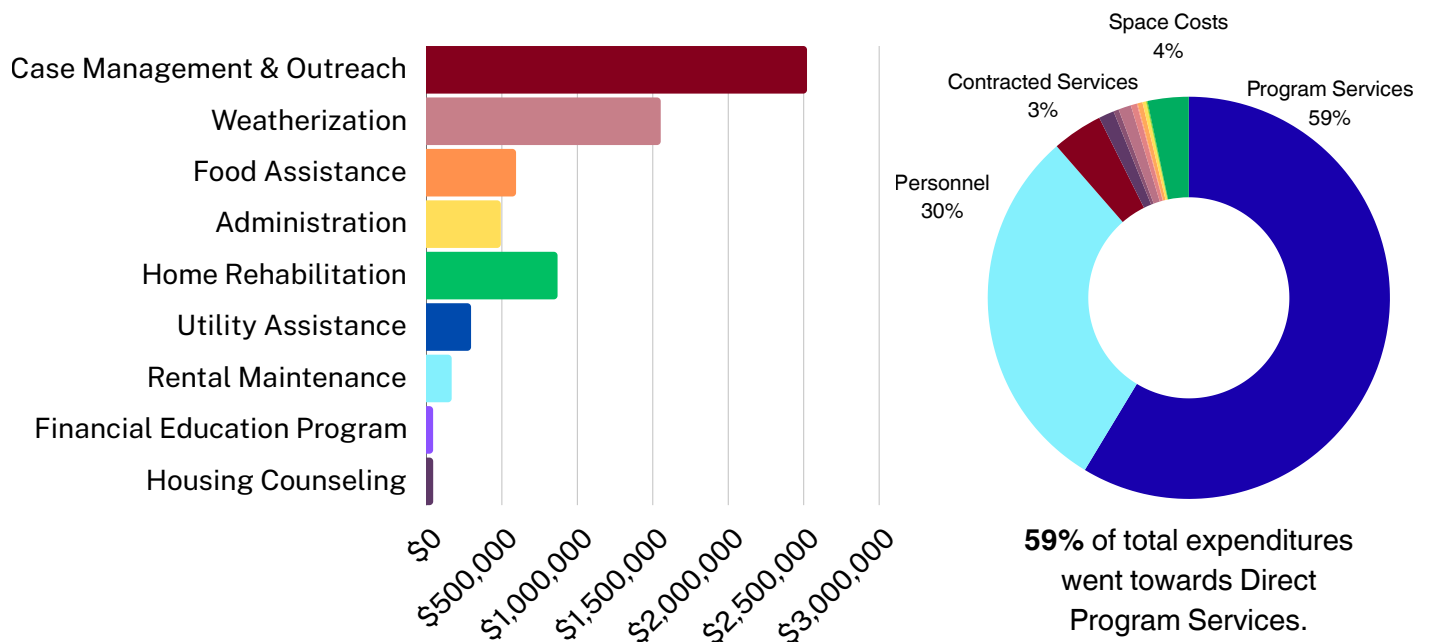
Financial Impact

Statement of Activities for fiscal year ending 6/30/2024

\$6,529,498 Total Revenues



\$6,583,097 Total Expenditures



Services by the Numbers

Service Count: July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024

SCA served an unduplicated total of **9,129 households** and **23,337 individuals**.
SCA responded to **19,164 telephone inquiries** and **1,356 walk-in inquiries** for services.

25 households received total home rehabilitation through Owner-Occupied Home Rehabilitation Programs

27 households were able to avoid losing their homes through mortgage assistance and foreclosure diversion programs

7 homes of seniors and/or individuals with a disability received repairs to major systems and/or increased accessibility

2 households received home repairs that allowed them to receive weatherization services through the Weatherization Deferral Program

168 households received financial education coaching through counseling and workshops

463 low-income pre-school children received financial education lessons across 7 Child Development locations

4,818 nights of transitional shelter were provided to **20 households** containing a total of **27 individuals** through the Bridge House Program

8 individuals graduated from the Bridge House Program and obtained permanent housing with the Pottsville Housing Authority

19 adults and **11 children** benefitted from ongoing support through Bridge House's aftercare program, Project Care

22 households containing **57 individuals** resided in SCA's rent-restricted rental units

16 households received holiday gifts and clothing for their combined **49 children** along with a festive meal for the entire family

1,687 individuals benefitted from SCA related services through our outreach office located in Tamaqua

Services by the Numbers Continued

37 households received weatherization services, reducing their energy burden

438 households received repairs to failing major heating or cooling systems (or AC window units and fans) through LIHEAP Crisis and LIHEAP Cooling

42 households received routine maintenance to their heating systems through the Clean and Tune Program

Pantry participants accessed local food pantries **24,801 times**, receiving an estimated **50,000 boxes of food**

1,618 households containing **3,627 individuals** received food from their local food pantry

777,701 pounds of food at an estimated value of **\$1,435,691** were provided to Schuylkill County residents

214 pantry distributions were held with the help of over **400 volunteers**



7,605 PPL customers received utility assistance benefitting **20,605 household members**

122 households received emergency food through emergency food pantry efforts feeding **305 individuals**

13 households received utility assistance through the Emergency Rental Assistance Program benefitting **40 household members**

146 UGI customers received utility assistance benefitting **392 household members**

221 households were able to purchase a range of essentials such as state ID's and work clothing through the Emergency Fund and Anne's Fund

17 homeless households received a total of **77 nights** of emergency shelter utilizing hotel/motel vouchers

1,383 individuals including **589 children** avoided eviction through the Emergency Rental Assistance Program

Housing Stability & Rehabilitation

SCA's Housing Unit experienced transformative growth this year. We completed essential rehabilitation projects for 35 households, improving conditions for 58 individuals. These repairs addressed code violations and system failures, increasing safety and energy efficiency.

Our team built a stronger contractor network, overcoming regional shortages and expanding capacity. HUD-certified counselors relaunched key programs like Default and Delinquency Counseling, Mortgage Diversion, PAHAF, HEMAP, and pre-purchase counseling. Rental clients also benefited from housing counseling tied to the final stages of ERAP.

Meanwhile, we maintained all 21 SCA-owned rental units with an emphasis on safety, affordability, and responsive management.



Emergency & Utility Assistance

A major update to PPL's Universal Service Plan in August 2023 streamlined enrollment, particularly for LIHEAP recipients, making support easier to access and manage.

Services were delivered at multiple sites, including our new Tamaqua Outreach Office, reinforcing our countywide presence.

Although the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP 2) officially ended shortly after the reporting period (in September 2024), SCA staff prepared in advance to provide 90 days of follow-up support to recipients. This effort aimed to ensure continued housing stability and connect households with additional resources.

Food Access & Nutrition Support

SCA's Food Network logged 24,801 pantry visits this year—a record high. While high demand underscored community need, inconsistent volunteer support in some areas left SCA staff to fill key operational gaps.

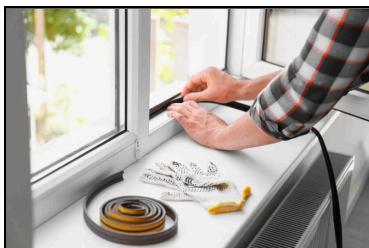
In response, we bolstered internal systems and developed volunteer pipelines through partnerships. At the Billie Payne Community Center, a central packing site was established with help from the Pottsville Housing Authority. School groups, churches, corporate teams, prison staff, and civic organizations packed hundreds to thousands of bags in single sessions.

This model, combined with a pre-packing system and logistics support from our Feeding America food bank, enabled nimble, scalable service—without permanent storage facilities.



Energy Efficiency & Weatherization

Despite staffing shortages, the Weatherization team continued to deliver high-impact services aimed at improving household safety and energy efficiency. Recruitment remains a top priority as we work to expand our capacity.



Community Outreach & Engagement

SCA significantly expanded its visibility this year by attending a wide range of public events: community festivals, career fairs, senior expos, outdoor markets, and more.

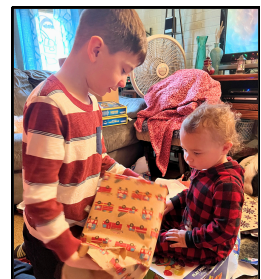
We proudly participated in events like Minersville Aevium's Strides Against Stigma 5K, Schuylkill County LICC's Back-to-School Fair, and Pottsville's Merchant Trick-or-Treat, building awareness and sharing resources. We also launched a quarterly newsletter in January 2024 to enhance internal communication and external outreach.



Holiday Giving & Innovative Partnerships

The Brighter Holiday Project raised \$10,520—its highest amount ever—thanks to 60 donations from individuals and businesses. A unique partnership with Small World Tattoo contributed greatly; donors received tattoo vouchers worth double their donation.

This creative approach brought meaningful support to families and showcased the value of innovation in community partnerships.



Youth Programming

After a decade-long hiatus, the Summer BLAST Program returned in 2024 in partnership with Schuylkill County Drug & Alcohol. Hosted at sites in Pottsville, Mahanoy City, Frackville, and Tamaqua, the program offered art, sports, mindfulness, and guest-led workshops for K–6 students.

It also ensured access to free meals through collaboration with summer lunch sites. Though not completed within the reporting period, early results signal strong potential for lasting success.



Expanding Access to Financial Education

SCA grew its financial literacy outreach by engaging both youth and adults:

- At all seven Child Development, Inc. centers, our coach delivered fun, foundational financial lessons.
- Field trips to Truist and Santander Bank branches enriched lessons with interactive tours and take-home materials.
- At Schuylkill Hope Center and Servants to All, adult clients participated in Budgeting 101, money management, and professional development workshops.

With local banks and nonprofits, we're building financial confidence across all life stages.

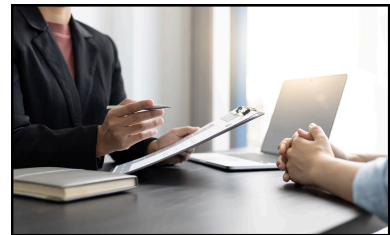


Transitional Housing & Shelter Services

Bridge House provided 4,818 shelter nights to 20 households (27 individuals), achieving a 73% successful transition rate—primarily to Pottsville Housing Authority units.

Residents received individualized support: job placement, legal help, and financial education. Even after exiting, clients remained connected through aftercare.

Bridge House served individuals in recovery, veterans, domestic violence survivors, and others facing housing insecurity. Nine residents secured employment this year. With a 20-household waitlist, demand remains high.



Schuylkill County HIVE

Founded by SCA, Schuylkill United Way, Schuylkill Connects, and Tamaqua Area Community Partnership, the Schuylkill County HIVE brings together 60+ local entities to develop collaborative solutions around issues such as housing instability, homelessness, and rural transportation access. The group meets quarterly and is committed to sustained community innovation.



How You Can Help

There are many ways to support Schuylkill Community Action:

- Volunteer: Join us at food packing events, community outreach efforts, or seasonal programs.
- Donate: Monetary and in-kind contributions help us expand our impact. All gifts—large or small—make a difference.
- Spread the Word: Share our mission with friends, family, and community networks. Awareness is key to our success.

For more information or to get involved, contact us directly or visit our website and/or social media pages.

 schuylkillcommunityaction.com

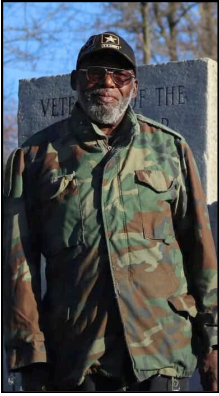
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 instagram.com/schuylkill.community.action.pa



In Memory of...

Reginald Edwards (August 28, 1953 – December 11, 2023)



With deep respect and gratitude, we honor the life of Reginald “Reggie” Edwards, a dedicated Schuylkill Community Action Board Member, devoted community advocate, and cherished friend. Since joining the board in 2018 as a representative of the Pottsville Senior Center, Reggie worked tirelessly to uplift those in need, always leading with compassion and integrity.

A proud U.S. Army veteran, Reggie served as a combat engineer before continuing his career as a truck driver and shipping supervisor at Cardinal Systems. His unwavering commitment to service extended beyond his career—he was a Deacon and Head of the Usher Board at the Church of Broken Pieces and volunteered with Diakon Community Services’ Meals on Wheels program, ensuring seniors remained connected and cared for.

In the 70 years that Reggie lived, he was so many things to so many people—a son, a brother, a hero, a husband, a dad, a papa, an uncle, and a friend. He was also a passionate Philadelphia Eagles fan, a fishing and baseball enthusiast, and a source of warmth and encouragement to all who knew him.

Reggie’s legacy of service, kindness, and unwavering dedication will continue to inspire us all. He will be deeply missed but never forgotten.

Brian Rooney (June 15, 1989 – December 19, 2023)



With honor and remembrance, we celebrate the life of our colleague and friend, Brian Rooney, whose presence at Schuylkill Community Action was truly one of a kind. As a Case Manager, Brian was a dedicated and reliable advocate, working primarily with rental assistance programs. Even while undergoing regular cancer treatments, he never wavered in his commitment to helping others. Known for his sharp wit, honesty, and humor, Brian wasn’t one to speak often, but when he did, you listened—because you knew it would be worth hearing.

Before joining SCA in 2020, Brian served his country with honor as a decorated Army veteran. He was deployed to Mosul, Iraq, where his bravery earned him multiple commendations. Tragically, his exposure to toxic burn pits during his service led to his battle with aggressive brain cancer, a fight he faced with unwavering strength. Despite everything he endured, he never let his illness define him. He showed up—for his family, his friends, and his work—every single day.

Beyond his service and career, Brian was a devoted husband, son, brother, uncle, and friend. He cherished time spent camping, building bonfires, taking golf cart rides, and simply being with loved ones. He found joy in thoughtful gift-giving, always taking the time to find something meaningful. A passionate sports fan, he loved cheering on the Phillies, Dolphins, Sixers, Duke, and Florida State, with his beloved dogs by his side.

Brian’s kindness, humor, and unwavering dedication will never be forgotten.

Richard Scheutrum (September 3, 1965 – February 16, 2024)



With heavy hearts, we honor the life and legacy of Richard “Rich” Scheutrum, a beloved colleague, friend, and dedicated advocate for Schuylkill Community Action. Since joining the agency in 2003, Rich was more than an employee—he was a cornerstone of our Weatherization Program, working tirelessly to reduce energy burdens for Schuylkill County residents. As a Weatherization Auditor/QCI, he was often the first friendly face to enter a client’s home, offering not just technical expertise but also kindness, conversation, and reassurance.

Beyond his professional impact, Rich was a devoted husband, father, and “Pappy” to his three beloved grandchildren. He found joy in camping and fishing, embracing the beauty of the outdoors. His generosity of spirit extended to his role as an ordained minister, uniting loved ones in marriage. He was also a brother, an uncle, and a friend—someone whose warmth and humor made a lasting impression on everyone he met.

Rich’s dedication, compassion, and unwavering commitment to his community will never be forgotten. His presence is deeply missed, but his legacy will continue to inspire us all.



Administrative Office

206 North 2nd Street
Pottsville, PA 17901

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For Services or Information, Contact:

Administrative Office

206 N. 2nd St., Pottsville, PA 17901
Telephone: (570) 622-1995
Hours: Monday - Friday, 8 AM - 4 PM

Main Program Office

225 N. Centre St., Pottsville, PA 17901
Telephone: (570) 622-1995
Hours: Monday - Friday, 8 AM - 4 PM

Bridge House Office

400 N. 7th St., Pottsville, PA 17901
Telephone: (570) 624-7764
Hours: Monday - Friday, 8 AM - 4 PM

Schuylkill Food Network

200 N. 2nd St., Pottsville, PA 17901
Telephone: (570) 391-6728
Hours: Monday - Friday, 8 AM - 4 PM

Weatherization Office

500 N. Centre St., Suite 102, Pottsville, PA 17901
Telephone: (570) 622-1995
Hours: Monday - Thursday, 7 AM - 5 PM

Mahanoy City Outreach Office

1 W. Centre St., 3rd Floor, Mahanoy City, PA 17948
Telephone: (570) 516-6119
Hours: 2nd Wednesday each month, 9 AM - 4 PM

Tamaqua Outreach Office

246 E. Broad St., Tamaqua, PA 18252
Telephone: (570) 516-6119
Hours: Thursday - Friday, 8 AM - 4 PM

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