

HACAP UPDATES

From the month of **January 2026**



From Matt's Desk



Hello, HACAP Team!

Well, this is my first newsletter comments as CEO. People have asked me many times over the last month things are going in the new role. I'm quite honest- I say that at times it is overwhelming, it is exciting to take on the new opportunities and challenges, and that the people I work with every day make the work of HACAP possible. I've been to many of the sites we have, but certainly not all. I'll continue to come out, talk to you about your experiences, and answer any questions that I can. I look forward to meeting more of you!

A few announcements from the past month- First, let me welcome Kim Guardado to her new role as the Chief Operating Officer! Kim previously was the Food Reservoir Director and has been with HACAP for over 23 years. I'm excited to have her knowledge and experiences in this new leadership role! This last month we also had an Open House for the Northwest Neighborhood Resource Center celebrating its one-year anniversary provided support and services in Cedar Rapids. I'm impressed by the accomplishments in the old Olivet Mission sites and how our team has partnered internally and with other organizations to create a culture of safety and support in that space. It was gratifying to hear from neighbors the impact that NWNRC has had with them.

We Are HACAP!



MISSION

Helping people develop skills to become successful and build strong communities.

VISION

A thriving community where all people have the same opportunities

THE PROMISE OF COMMUNITY ACTION

Community Action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live.

We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.



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Grateful for the Generosity of IowaWORKS Cedar Rapids

Friday, January 15

A huge shoutout to the incredible team at IowaWORKS Cedar Rapids!

Thank you for inviting HACAP to share more about our services and for completely surprising us with your generosity. Your staff came together to raise \$1,275 and donate four boxes of food for the Northwest Neighborhood Resource Center Food Pantry. Your support will make a real difference for neighbors in our community, and we're so grateful for your partnership and heart for service.

HACAP Promotes Kim Guardado to Chief Operating Officer

Friday, January 9

HACAP is announcing the promotion of Kim Guardado, current Food Reservoir Director, to the role of Chief Operating Officer (COO) starting this month. Guardado brings 24 years of dedicated service to HACAP and a lifelong commitment to improving the health and well-being of individuals and families experiencing poverty. Since becoming Food Reservoir Director in 2018, Guardado has focused her efforts on fighting hunger in the community.



Got a great story or photo from your program? We want to hear it!
Send your submissions to communications@hacap.org

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Frozen Fun: Head Start Kids Put Their Theories to the Test

Friday, January 23

Even in this frigid weather, one of our Head Start classrooms found a fun way to explore, predict, and learn! The kids placed little penguins inside water balloons and set them outside to see what would happen in the cold. They made all kinds of thoughtful guesses and predictions, and today, they got to put their theories to the test. They were thrilled to discover how the ice formed around their tiny penguin friends, creating all kinds of shapes and textures to explore.

A Snowy Forecast Inspires a Sweet, Healthy Treat

Friday, January 16

A little snow in the forecast was all the inspiration our Head Start kids needed to end the week with a Snowman Winter Snack! They carefully stacked banana slices to build their snowman bodies, practicing those fine motor skills with every layer. Tiny chocolate chips became eyes, buttons, and big silly smiles that made everyone giggle. A slice of strawberry made the perfect bright-red scarf, adding a pop of color and a boost of healthy fruit. The kids loved choosing their own toppings and arranging them just right.



UKG

Keep your timesheet accurate and up to date through the UKG app.
For any assistance or questions, contact timesheet@hacap.org

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Embrace Iowa Completes More Than 120 Eastern Iowa Applications, Delivering Critical Support to Iowans in Need

Tuesday, January 27

The Embrace Iowa program closed out another impactful year, continuing its long tradition of helping Iowans overcome the everyday barriers that stand between them and stability. As a collaborative effort between the Iowa Community Action Association (ICAA) and the Des Moines Register, Embrace Iowa shines a light on the real-life challenges families face through powerful storytelling. These stories not only raise awareness about the complexities of poverty but also inspire generosity across the state. **Last year alone, the campaign raised \$343,000 to support 645 families, and the 2023–2024 campaign**, launched in December, will continue providing essential assistance to households working hard to move forward.

At HACAP, this year's program was coordinated by **Michele Lerch**, whose dedication ensured that families across our service area received timely, compassionate support. Michele guided applicants through the process with care, helping them **access up to \$750 for critical needs** such as car repairs, appliances, medical and dental services, eyeglasses, beds, and other essentials that directly improve quality of life. Her leadership helped ensure that eligible households, those residing in Iowa and living at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level, could receive the help they needed without added stress or confusion.

The heart of Embrace Iowa lies in its ability to remove barriers that often seem small on paper but are life-changing in practice. A repaired vehicle can mean keeping a job. **A new bed can mean a child finally getting restful sleep. A working appliance can restore dignity and stability to a household.** These are the kinds of everyday victories that Michele and the HACAP team helped make possible throughout the program, one application at a time.

Embrace Iowa



Community Engagement Requirements

What Are Community Engagement Requirements?

By January 1, 2027, certain IHAWP individuals must meet monthly requirements to enroll and maintain coverage. These are designed to encourage work and community involvement.

Community Engagement Requirements:



Work

Paid employment for 80+ hours per month or earn at least \$580/month (based on federal minimum wage)*



Job Training

Enroll in a qualifying job training or work program for 80+ hours a month



Education

Attend a college or career / technical education program at least half-time



Community Service

Volunteer work for 80+ hours per month

Combination: A mix of the activities listed above totaling 80+ hours per month

*Seasonal Workers: Average income over 6 months meets the minimum wage threshold.

Does not apply to:

- ▶ Women who are pregnant or receiving postpartum Medicaid
- ▶ Veterans with a disability rated as total
- ▶ American Indians and Alaska Natives
- ▶ Caregivers of young children under 13 or disabled individuals
- ▶ Inmates of public institutions
- ▶ Individuals in addiction treatment programs
- ▶ People with disabilities or serious medical conditions
- ▶ Those meeting work requirements for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

For questions about who qualifies for IHAWP, contact Member Services

Email: IMEmember@hhs.iowa.gov | **Call:** 1-800-338-8366 | **Website:** hhs.iowa.gov/IHAWP

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HACAP Announces Retirement of Delaware County Coordinator Deb Hamblin After 21 Years of Service

Wednesday, January 28

Hawkeye Area Community Action Program (HACAP) announces the retirement of **Deb Hamblin**, Delaware County Coordinator, after 21 years of dedicated service to Community Action. Her final day with the organization will be February 6, 2026.

Hamblin's journey with HACAP began when she was encouraged by a close friend who believed she would be a perfect fit for the work. Hamblin applied, and today, in a full-circle moment sits at that very friend's former desk. What started as a nudge from someone who saw her potential grew into more than two decades of service, compassion, and community connection.

Throughout her career, Hamblin has supported a wide range of community programs, including LIHEAP, hygiene and food orders, resource and referral services, and numerous smaller initiatives that have powerfully shaped the lives of Delaware County residents. Her work has been especially meaningful to older adults, many of whom found in Deb a trusted listener, a steady advocate, and sometimes the only person they felt they could talk to.

"The relationship I had with people is what I'll miss most," Hamblin shared. "Especially with our elderly clients. Being someone they could call and someone who cared, that has meant so much to me."

Her impact has been deeply felt across the Manchester community, where she has lived her entire life. Many clients have expressed their sadness at her departure, a testament to the trust and comfort she brought to those facing hardship.

"Deb embodies what Community Action is all about compassion, dignity, and meeting people where they are," said HACAP CEO Matt Majeski. "Her dedication to Delaware County has made a lasting difference, and her absence will be felt by staff, partners, and the many community members she has supported."

HACAP extends its deepest gratitude to Deb Hamblin for her 21 years of service and her unwavering commitment to helping neighbors in need. The organization wishes her a joyful and fulfilling retirement.

Congrats!

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Jones County Dairy Producers Help Keep Our Pantry Fridges Full

Saturday, January 17

A big thank you to the Jones County Dairy Producers for filling the fridge and donating these fine dairy products to our Jones County Food Pantry! Your support ensures families in our community have access to nutritious options, and we're grateful for your partnership in fighting hunger. Your generosity continues to make a meaningful difference for our neighbors who rely on the pantry each week

Spread the Love: Donate Peanut Butter This February

Tuesday, January 27

Spread the Love this February! To celebrate, would you consider supporting the HACAP Food Reservoir by donating much needed peanut butter to our Spread the Love Campaign now through the end of February! You can help us meet the need in our community by donation protein-packed peanut butter. Donations can be dropped off now through February 28th at our corporate office located at 1515 Hawkeye Dr. Hiawatha, IA 52233.



Find local food pantries nearest you!

Find our interactive pantry map on the homepage of hacap.org