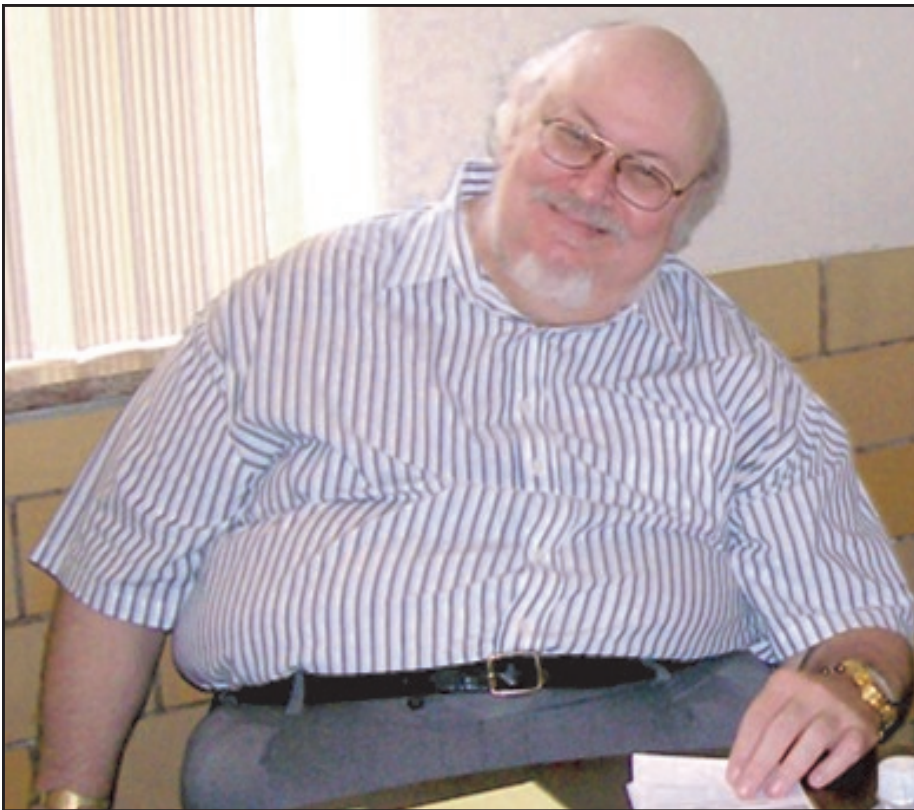


TCAPtivating News

Abicht alters plan to create legacy



By Mike Santillo
Public Relations Officer

Sometimes things don't always go according to plan. This is true in the case of James Abicht – and he's just fine with that.

Abicht took a job as a community specialist in 1976 with the agency shortly after graduating from Akron University in his hometown, with no intentions of staying long. Forty years later, he is happily retiring after a rewarding career at

TCAP that has had a tremendous impact on his life.

“When I first came here (in 1976) I thought I'd be here six months like it was an interim job. I found that I loved doing the kind of work this agency does on a daily basis. I fell in love with the agency,” Abicht said.

With his career progressing nicely, Abicht had no plans to change. But fate stepped in, altering his plan once again.

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Difference maker

During his tenure as President/CEO of TCAP, James Abicht has helped the agency gain and maintain a source of pride and respect in the community, achieving an extraordinary record of service to the residents of Trumbull County.

Below are some of his highlights.

- Began career in public service in 1976 as a community specialist for the then Warren-Trumbull Community Service Agency.
- Organized a viable Neighborhood Organization in rural Eastern Trumbull County where no organization for low-income residents had existed for seven years.
- Planned and directed all aspects of the 1978 Summer Recreation program – a program that served more of Trumbull County's low-income youth (6,000) and offered more activities (9), than any other program the agency had prior.
- Recognized by state evaluators for his development of a plan of operations for the Energy Crisis Assistance Program, rated as one of the best operated in the state of Ohio.
- Co-authored a successful proposal for Project Facelift, which resulted in a \$151,000 grant and the creation of 15 new jobs.

Maker continued page 5

Head Start Program earns top honor



Trumbull Community Action Program (TCAP) announced that 4 of its 6 Head Start Centers earned the 5-Star Step Up to Quality Award from the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services. A 5-Star rating is the highest that can be achieved.

TCAP operates Head Start Centers in Warren, Niles, Newton Falls, Kinsman, Hubbard and Hartford. The TCAP Head Start is a comprehensive preschool program designed to help children from ages 3 to 5 to prepare them with the skills that will help them in kindergarten. Services offered include education, nutrition, health, disabilities, mental health, social services family development and parent involvement. A math and science lab is also available for Head Start students. The lab expands learning in math and science with two 35-minute sessions per week for four and five-year-old students attending TCAP.

Classes focus on different math and science subjects taken from Ohio State Standards, the Creative Curriculum and the Head Start Outcomes Framework. Subjects such as magnets, light and reflection, patterns, and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math)



are taught by using modern technology and developmentally appropriate materials. The lab opened in 2012 and is continually growing.

Enrollment is open all year around. Contact 330-393-2507 to learn more about the Head Start program.

TCTC puts on STEM Day at West



TCAP Head Start classes were treated to a STEM Day put on by the Trumbull Career and Technical Center engineering program on Thursday, Dec. 1 in the gymnasium at Warren West.

Over 100 children spent part of their day learning about technology through six different stations. This marked the fourth consecutive year TCTC made the trip to TCAP.

Terri Fleming, engineering technology instructor at TCTC, was accompanied by 24 juniors and seniors in the program. The stations featured straws, rockets, crayons, necklaces, blocks and robots.

There were several holiday themed activities including coloring trees with different shapes and making necklaces with bells. Constructing with blocks, launching rockets and seeing and controlling robots were also part of the day.

“All studies show the need to get kids interested at an early age in STEM,” said Fleming, who is an advocate of encouraging young kids to get involved with STEM. “Many of my students will tell me how they were involved as a kid, doing different activities with their families, and now, to see them on the teaching end is a great thing.”

TCTC continued page 5

Serving up a recipe of success



By Mike Santillo
Public Relations Officer

Two years ago, Mary Beth Fee was looking forward to retirement. Today, she looks forward to work every day as supervisor of the kitchen staff at TCAP.

After 20 years as head cook, she was prepared to leave the agency in 2014. One conversation with her friend and mentor, Sherri Smith changed all that.

"I was happily surprised when offered the supervisor position," Fee said. "I have to admit I did not see it

coming. The offer truly changed my view of potentially retiring. Once I received the offer, retirement was not a thought of mine."

Fee oversees a staff of four and is enjoying following in her friend's footsteps.

"She (Smith) taught me well over the years. It's amazing to see how many aspects of this job I learned through her during my time as head cook. She and I had a great working relationship and are still close friends today," Fee said.

So, what's the biggest change from head cook to supervisor? Stress. But not that way you may think.

"For me, this position is less stressful. After so many years of cooking, I'm enjoying this new chapter in my life. I get to meet more people now, I'm interacting daily with teachers, it's a big difference. I love the job."

Fee is in charge of coordinating and creating all the menus, ordering product and overseeing a staff responsible for feeding over 600 kids daily.

"Sure, it's a fast-paced environment and balancing everything can be tough. I have to make sure we don't have too much waste; we want our kids having good meals and a lot of thought goes into the menu. But again, I feel as if I was greatly pre-

pared for this. After 20 years as a head cook, ordering comes very easy to me."

Fee typically plans the menu a couple weeks in advance. As of this publication, she already had the first menu of 2017 completed.

"It's important to me to make sure that everything we do is done in smooth transition. The kitchen staff is phenomenal, we have an awesome working relationship, which is a big reason why we have been successful. I've received some really positive comments from teachers and that makes me feel incredibly good to know the kitchen staff is appreciated and our hard work is being recognized."

Just like in the kitchen, Fee has a fast-paced, active life outside TCAP. Five grandchildren will do that to a person.

"They (grandkids) keep me young that's for sure," said Fee who also enjoys going out to dinner and heading out to the casino occasionally. But her true passion can be found on the links.

"I grew up right across the street from a golf course, so I've been playing for 40 years," said Fee who once shot a 39. No matter at work or at home, Fee is usually busy—and she wouldn't have it any other way.

Agency delivers Christmas gift bags

The Trumbull Community Action Program (TCAP) Senior Services Department played Santa to their clients once again this year. Along with donations, the Senior Services staff purchased, prepared and delivered 32 Christmas gift bags to clients. Gift bags were filled with assorted goodies and essentials. Pictured here is Brenda Clark of the TCAP Senior Services staff.



TCAP Health staff putting community plan into action

The TCAP Health Department hosted a Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) meeting on November 30, 2016 at Warren West.

Eight different agencies/organizations were represented in what was the first committee meeting of the year.

TCAP Nurse/Mental Health Manager Brooke Vondrasek opened the meeting by reviewing new performance standards, highlighting how the objective is not so much about numbers as it is focusing on how the committee can accomplish needs by assisting families to make sure these needs are met.

“The goal of these meetings is to not only present our progress, but challenges as well in an effort to utilize our community partners to make more efficient servicing for each child,” Vondrasek said. “This also allows the opportunity to educate us with other agencies. We are able to get the most what our community can do to meet the needs of families.”



The TCAP Health Department hosted a Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) meeting on November 30, 2016 at Warren West. Pictured from left are Bill Masters, Valerie Wilkins, Michelle Charnas and Brooke Vondrasek.

At TCAP the HSAC is comprised of staff including nurses, dietitians, food service workers, parents, and local health care providers to talk about the planning, operation, and evaluation of the health services in each Head Start program.

TCAP Dietitian Bill Masters put to-

gether a PowerPoint presentation covering growth assessments, nutrition screenings, nutrition questionnaires and special diets.

“A growth assessment measures a child's height, weight, and head circumference (for infants).

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Family Fun Night to promote personal finance

The TCAP Head Start Program will host a Family Fun Night event from 4:30-6:30 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 12, 2017 in the gymnasium at the Warren West Community Center. The event, titled “From Pennies to Dollars” will promote personal finance and math development opportunities with an emphasis on micro savings for both children and adults.

“The objective of this event is to help families get a better understanding of money management, budgeting and saving,” said TCAP Parent Family Community Engagement Manager Kathy Hutton.

Dinner, prizes, and entertainment will all be part of the evening. Daniel Jay, The Family Ventriloquist, will provide the entertainment.

Two 20-minute sessions from experts on budgeting and

saving will be provided in addition to over 32 raffle prizes between \$10-\$15 each.

Donors for the event include Farmers National Bank (a co-sponsor the event) PNC Bank (Grow Up Great) and Primerica.

Participating vendors include: Junior Achievement USA, Apprisen, ABLE, Catholic Charities Diocese of Youngstown, Trumbull Metropolitan Housing Authority, Valley Counseling Services, Ohio Department of Health, WIC, Warren-Trumbull County Public Library, The Ohio State University Extension and Homes For Kids, Inc.

The first 10 families to attend will receive a free piggy bank.

This event is open to Head Start families only.

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“I never wanted to be the head of the agency. I was happy just doing social work. However, some problems started to arise in the agency and I thought what a shame it would be if we got shut down, all the good work would be gone. I didn’t want that to happen and thought to myself, I can run this place,” said Abicht who has served as President/CEO of TCAP since 1985. He did much more than just run the place.

One of his signature moments came in 1991, when he played a vital role in the agency regaining direct operation of the Trumbull County Head Start Program.

“I view that as perhaps my most significant accomplishment. We lost the Head Start Program to Warren City Schools for over 20 years before we got it back. In 1991, our Head Start Program had fewer than 200 students. We were able to grow it to over 1100 at one point, making us bigger than five or six school systems at the time. I’m very proud of that.”

Today, TCAP operates Head Start Centers in six locations throughout Trumbull County with over 600 students enrolled annually.

Two years later, Abicht was responsible for two more major developments that would ultimately shape the future of the agency.

In 1993, the agency name changed from Warren-Trumbull Community Service Agency (WTCSA) to Trumbull Community Action Program (TCAP). That same year, under the direction of Abicht, TCAP purchased, refurbished, and relocated to 1230 Palmyra Road S.W. (Warren West Community Center) and still resides there today.

“The purchase of Warren West is another achievement that I am extremely proud of,” Abicht said.

“The renovation of our current headquarters was not an easy process. But by the end of it all, the agency came through as usual and we have enjoyed great success at



West.”

When Abicht took over as President/CEO, TCAP employed 42 people. Today, the agency has a staff of 150 and is governed by a 15-member Board of Directors.

His last official day is Dec. 31, 2016.

Interim President/CEO Van Nelson will take over full-time.

Abicht is satisfied with how he is leaving the agency and expects it to thrive under Nelson.

“I left the agency in good shape and in very capable hands. I know how much he (Nelson) loves TCAP and how loyal he is to the mission of the agency. I fully expect TCAP to be innovative and a major force in Trumbull County,” said Abicht who plans on spending retirement doing something he has always loved and done a lot of – traveling. “It’s difficult to leave something after 40 years, however, I feel more relaxed and better rested than I have in many years. I’m looking forward to traveling more extensively, particularly to Europe, where I’ve never been,” said Abicht who has been to China, the Western Caribbean and Mexico throughout his travels, in addition to the western and southern states of America.

No matter where he travels, Abicht will have a permanent residence at TCAP, the agency he helped build. His plans may have changed more than once in his lifetime, but those changes led to something that can never change and will last forever – his legacy.

Maker continued from page 1

- Responsible for the revamping of the Food Buying Club, resulting in one of the agency’s most successful programs – one that still exists today.
- Took over as President/CEO in January of 1985.
- Played a prominent role in Trumbull County, serving on 21 Civic Associations.
- In 1988, Abicht played a vital role in launching the Community Action Transportation Program (C.A.T.S.) This is still a central program today at TCAP.
- Spearheaded the effort which helped the agency regain direct operation of the Trumbull County Head Start Program in 1991. Today, TCAP operates six Head Start Centers in Trumbull County.
- In 1993, under the direction of Abicht, TCAP purchased, refurbished, and relocated to 1230 Palmyra Road S.W. in Warren, where agency HQ still reside.

TCTC continued from page 2

Todd Schnulo, center supervisor and STEM coordinator at TCAP, talked about the benefits of TCTC educating Head Start kids.

“The collaboration with TCTC is great. When we started this process four years ago, there were 2-3 stations; now that number is up to six, where our kids can get more of an individual basis of learning.

“The kids really enjoy the interaction with the older students. It’s also an opportunity to get some ideas and take to our STEM classes,” Schnulo said.

Schnulo and Fleming are hoping to hold another STEM Day at TCAP in the Spring of 2017.

A date has not been announced.

Appointments available for Winter Crisis Program



Utility bill assistance under the Winter Crisis Program is now available 2016 through Friday, March 31, 2017 at TCAP.

The program helps eligible households avoid utility disconnection; restore disconnected service; establish new service; and purchase fuel oil, propane, coal and wood.

Walk-ins are available all day on Mondays. Tuesday through Friday, walk-in customers that arrive between 7:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. can be seen each day before noon.

Appointments for weekday after-

noons can be scheduled by calling 1-866-747-1041. Callers must wait to receive a confirmation number to secure the appointment. Applicants that cannot apply at the TCAP

Warren office can apply at one of four satellite sites by appointments only from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Contact the following:

Mondays:

City of Hubbard Municipal Building
(330) 393-2507 ext. 229
West Liberty St, Hubbard, Ohio
44425

Tuesdays:

Niles Community Center
(330) 393-2507 ext. 227
401 Vienna Avenue, Suite 2, Tiffany Square Niles, Ohio 44446

Wednesdays:

Newton Falls Methodist Church
(330) 393-2507 ext. 232
334 Ridge Road, Newton Falls, Ohio 44444

Thursdays:

Tod's Crossing Senior Living
(330) 393-2507 ext. 230
1330 Blakely Circle SW

Health continued from page 4

Growth is a sign of a child's overall physical and emotional health," Masters said.

Head Start requires that all children, with parental consent, receive an annual growth assessment.

"Measurements help us to identify children who are too thin or too heavy for their height which could be an indicator of short-or long-term, under or over nutrition. Results are then compared with national, and local community data to identify risks, needs, and trends," Masters said.

He continued, "together with our collaborative partners, TCAP is working to engage and educate families about the benefits of balanced nutrition and physical activity as part of their everyday routine in helping to maintain overall physical and emotional health."

Once the PowerPoint presentation was completed, TCAP Disabilities Manager Valerie Wilkins presented a disabilities numbers report, where with new performance standards it will still be about the numbers. The New Performance Standards will be effective September 1, 2017.

By 2020 the TCAP Head Start Program will have all full day full year classrooms.

This will consist of seven-hour days, five days a week, 8:30 a.m.—3:30p.m. Four full day classrooms will begin in February 2017 with four more opening in August 2017.

Once TCAP staff finished presenting, a roundtable discussion was held. Here, each representative introduced themselves and gave descriptions of their job responsibilities in addition to any relevant updates. Michelle Charnas, TCAP nurse, is an advocate of the committee and the positive impact these meetings have.



TCAP Nurse/Mental Health Manager Brooke Vondrasek and TCAP Dietitian Bill Masters each gave presentations at the Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) meeting on November 30, 2016.

"This forum allows the opportunity to put an issue right on the table. Everyone can give his/her input and ultimately we can work together to achieve what needs to be done," Charnas said.

Agencies represented at the meeting included: Trumbull County Health Department, Homes for Kids, Trumbull County Family and Children First Council, Akron Children's Youth Fitness Programs, TCESC Pre-school (2), Akron Children's Asthma/Diabetes Program, and Akron Children's Injury Prevention.