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**COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP OF HENNEPIN COUNTY COMMEMORATES 40 YEARS
OF SERVICE, LOOKS AHEAD TO THE NEXT 40 YEARS**

*As local nonprofit marks four decades of responding to community needs, a new mission and strategic plan
provide a foundation for the future*

BROOKLYN PARK, MINNESOTA (October 1, 2026)—Hennepin County looks very different than it did in 1986. So does Community Action Partnership of Hennepin County (CAP-HC). Founded 40 years ago to work alongside people with low incomes in suburban Hennepin County, CAP-HC has expanded its geographic reach, added programs in response to emerging needs and evolved alongside the community it serves.

Through four decades, one thing has remained constant: CAP-HC listens to people with low incomes to shape its work. As CAP-HC celebrates its 40th anniversary, that commitment is guiding the organization into its next chapter, supported by a new mission and strategic plan.

Community listening at the heart of Community Action

Like all member organizations of the National Community Action Partnership, CAP-HC conducts a Community Needs Assessment (CNA) every three years. By gathering information from residents, community leaders, frontline staff and community partners, CAP-HC learns about the changing experiences of people with low incomes and can identify gaps in services. CNA findings then inform CAP-HC's strategic planning and help shape its programs and services.

CAP-HC's Executive Director, Dr. Clarence Hightower, said, "We know that effective service starts with listening to people, treating them with dignity and adapting as needs evolve. CAP-HC has been committed to addressing community needs through this approach for 40 years."

CAP-HC's history reflects that evolution. The organization added a Vehicle Repair Program in 2014 after transportation emerged as a significant barrier in an earlier CNA. When 96 percent of respondents to the 2020 CNA said their incomes did not meet Hennepin County's cost of living, CAP-HC added Employment Readiness programming to support people in finding and keeping living-wage jobs.

The Energy Assistance Program (EAP) remains the longstanding cornerstone of CAP-HC's work. Each year, EAP provides utility grants to roughly 20,000 families so they can keep their heat on during Minnesota's coldest months. These grants, often less than \$400 per household, free up limited resources for other essentials such as food and health care. With the new program year beginning today, CAP-HC is preparing for another winter of high demand for EAP as utility costs continue to rise.

What CAP-HC heard from the 2025 CNA

CAP-HC's 2025 CNA found that rising costs are the primary driver of instability for many families. Food costs were the most frequently cited concern, identified by 54 percent of survey respondents, followed by housing costs at 39 percent and transportation costs at 32 percent.

The assessment also found that having a job does not necessarily protect households from financial hardship. More than 40 percent of respondents reported being employed, yet many still struggled to cover basic expenses. Among single-person households surveyed, 78 percent fell below the ALICE Threshold, which estimates the income needed to afford a basic household budget in a local community. ALICE—Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed—captures households whose income may be above the federal poverty level but still falls short of the cost of basic living expenses.

A renewed foundation for the next chapter

The CNA findings, along with a broader organizational planning process that included a SWOT analysis and interviews with board members, staff and community stakeholders, informed CAP-HC's 2026–2029 Strategic Plan.

The plan focuses on three priorities:

- Increasing organizational flexibility and resilience by diversifying funding and strengthening philanthropic partnerships.
- Building internal capacity and culture to support staff, strengthen systems and respond effectively to community needs.
- Strengthening crisis services while building pathways toward greater stability, including improving access to services and strengthening connections with community partners.

CAP-HC has also updated the mission that guides its work. The new mission centers Hennepin county residents: CAP-HC equips Hennepin County residents with tools to address poverty and promote economic stability.

The organization's vision remains unchanged: Hennepin County without poverty.

"Our new mission recognizes that CAP-HC's role goes beyond responding to immediate needs. We want to be there when people experience a crisis. We also want to provide tools and opportunities that support greater long-term stability," said Hightower. "Too many families find it challenging to make ends meet. But our community is resilient. As we look ahead, we know that almost anything is possible when people, organizations and resources come together."

Together, the mission, vision, values and strategic plan provide a renewed foundation as the organization enters its fifth decade. Learn more about CAP-HC's 40th anniversary at caphennepin.org/40th-anniversary.

ADDITIONAL ASSETS FOR THIS STORY

- [Hennepin County Asset Map](#)
- Logos, 2025 Community Needs Assessment Report and more available in [CAP-HC's 40th Anniversary Media Kit](#).



ABOUT CAP-HC

Community Action Partnership of Hennepin County is a nonprofit organization headquartered in Brooklyn Park. Its mission is to equip Hennepin County residents with tools to address poverty and promote economic stability. Established in 1986, CAP-HC is commemorating 40 years of serving the community in 2026. Each year, the organization serves more than 40,000 children and adults through programs including Energy Assistance, Rental Assistance, Financial Wellness, Employment Readiness and more. Learn more at caphennepin.org.

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