



# The BRIDGE

east bay community action program

THE BRIDGE to SELF-RELIANCE

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## Any Door is the Right Door *By Maggie Laurianno*

East Bay Community Action Program (EBCAP) employs a philosophy of "any door is the right door" in serving its clients. This means that when a client comes to EBCAP with one particular need, they will be made aware of and assisted with other services to help them on their path to self-sufficiency.

The Safety Net Program, funded by the United Way of Rhode Island, works to ensure that a client's needs are being met fully. When a client visits the agency for the first time for emergency food assistance at one of our food pantries (EBCAP has three pantries – located in East Providence, Newport, and Tiverton), a Safety Net Advocate will meet with them and conduct a thorough assessment of their situation. It is through this assessment that the Advocates determine where additional assistance is needed.

Angela Downing, EBCAP's Director of Social Services, explained that people often come to the food pantry and they aren't aware that there may be additional help available. "We give them food, and if they're eligible, we assist them in applying for health insurance, home heating assistance, SNAP benefits (formerly known as food stamps), housing assistance, job training through Newport Skills Alliance, Head Start, and/or WIC, for example. Through a collaboration with two different organizations, we have also been able to provide referrals for pro bono legal services, which has helped people with matters such as child support, job discrimination, and evictions."

EBCAP Safety Net staff also serve as a conduit to other available resources. The Safety Net Advocates can refer clients to



Safety Net Advocate, Brandon Brown, assists in the Newport food pantry.

other organizations/agencies that provide different assistance, depending on the individual's unique needs. Some examples include helping a family obtain counseling for their child at another agency, linking someone to recovery services in the community, and brainstorming with an elder about who in their life could assist with transportation.

While the agency staff works tirelessly to identify and secure funding to provide critical services, the generosity of those in the community is a key piece in helping people in need. Downing is quick to acknowledge the many generous contributions from individuals, businesses, and civic organizations throughout the year, and especially at the holidays, saying "this helped us to be able to provide enhanced food pantry offerings in November and December. We are so grateful to these donors for their support."



**DENNIS ROY**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

For over 20 years, East Bay Community Action Program has helped area residents celebrate the holiday season with its Adopt a Family program, providing holiday baskets and toys. Donors have filled gift suggestion lists for clothing and toys or provided donations to purchase the "wished for" gifts.

Also, in recent years, EBCAP has coordinated the distribution of toys, hats and mittens from the Hasbro Children's Holiday Hope Fund, a project co-sponsored by Hasbro, Inc. and the Providence Journal. Thousands of children's and parents' smiles were created with the distribution of over 2,550 toys this holiday season.

In an organization where service to the community is our primary mission, the response of EBCAP staff during the holiday season is certainly not unexpected. But in these particularly difficult times for so many families, I am very proud of the effort we extended in 2011.

A special thank you should go to RSVP Director Audrey Field who, for 22 years, has directed the Adopt a Family program and to Family Advocate, Margo Pires, who directed the toy distribution for Newport County residents and WIC Director, Beth Nitkin, who directed it for East Providence and Bristol County residents.

Much appreciation also goes to many of the area's Chambers of Commerce and businesses who annually take part in this giving

effort by adopting families and also EBCAP's community partners and staff who helped out in the toy distribution.

This year's special holiday effort at EBCAP was also highlighted by an enhanced food pantry service during November and December, with clients able to access one of our three food pantries for assistance a second time in one month thanks to the generous donation of food by area individuals, businesses and civic organizations. The addition of many items such as supermarket gift cards, which clients could use to purchase perishable items, made the holidays special for many people in the east bay this year. As EBCAP embarks on a new year of service, we extended best wishes to all for a happy and healthy 2012.



Left: Angela Downing, EBCAP's Director of Social Services, greets Joe Wieszbicki (left) and Sergeant James Costa of the Tiverton Police Department as they deliver food purchased by the Tiverton Police for EBCAP's food pantry.



Right: Gifts donated to EBCAP's Adopt-A-Family Program are being sorted and organized by Hannah Pfeiffer, Jillian Harris, and Alexa Henault.

## Meet the New EBCAP Head Start Director *By Sally Conant*



**MICHAEL CARBONE**  
EBCAP HEAD START DIRECTOR

"With the recent changes in education, we have to make sure kids going into kindergarten are prepared for the rigor of public schools."

Michael Carbone joined East Bay Community Action Program (EBCAP) as the Director of the Head Start Program on January 1. He is following in the footsteps of Barbara Schermack, who retired recently after nearly a decade of service to the agency.

He brings a great deal of experience and passion with him to the Head Start Program and EBCAP. Carbone has served as a classroom music teacher for 18 years, an adjustment counselor, a department head, an elementary school principal, and an adjunct faculty member at both the University of Rhode Island and Rhode Island College. He has received numerous awards

for his dedication and service to education, including the Rhode Island Association of School Principals (RIASP) 2007-2008 Rhode Island Principal of the Year, and the 2008 East Bay Chamber of Commerce Citizen of the Year. He also held the position of principal at the Kickemuit Middle School in Warren, RI for more than 20 years. Carbone stated that he was driven to become an administrator to affect some change in the way children are taught.

Carbone has been playing music since he was four years old and quickly realized growing up that he wanted to teach his love of music to others. Throughout his extensive career, Carbone has incorporated his musical talents into educating students. "I loved music and wanted to share it with people," he said.

Although he misses the students and the faculty in the school setting, Carbone noted that he wants to help make sure that children at EBCAP's Head Start have the opportunity for a "smooth transition between Head Start and public school systems." He sees working with the

parents/families of Head Start children to help them support the education of their children as a critical role for the program.

He believes that the Head Start Program has a positive effect on the psychological and social development of its students and can teach them how to cope with all types of situations in elementary school and into later life.

Carbone is looking forward to continuing to take Head Start in a positive direction and he looks forward to working with the children as well. "I enjoy going into classrooms and interacting with kids," he said, "I'd like to go in and play some songs and have the kids play along." He believes that he can help to promote more male interaction and role modeling for many Head Start students.

Whether he is cooking pasta suppers at the Lions Club or dressing up as Santa Claus for group homes and senior centers, Michael Carbone is always attempting to help others in the community to achieve their fullest potential.

# Singing Out Against Hunger Donations Top \$100,000

Singing Out Against Hunger (SOAH), an all-volunteer group from Tiverton, RI that, since 2003, has held an annual fundraising event to benefit food pantries at EBCAP and in Little Compton, has reached a milestone in their fundraising contributions to EBCAP's food pantries – **they've surpassed \$100,000 in donations**, with exactly \$106,316 contributed in total. This photo spread honors all of the volunteers' hard work, care, and longstanding commitment to ridding our area of hunger. **A million thank you's could not begin to express our appreciation for all that they have done and continue to do.** For more information on SOAH, please visit their web site: [www.SingingOutAgainstHunger.org](http://www.SingingOutAgainstHunger.org)



Posing at the end of their set are, from left, Ross Robinson, Johnny Botelho, Gary Fish, and Chuck Williams.



Singing Out Against Hunger Co-Founders, Dom and Jane Bitto, are shown at EBCAP's 2004 winter fundraiser, presenting a ceremonial check which represented \$7,500 in contributions from SOAH's second event.



Ilan Fitzgerald

"Jane refers to the musicians who provide the entertainment for the annual event saying they are 'amazing at just saying YES to participating.'" – from a 2009 interview with Jane Bitto



Mark Cutler



Gary Farias entertains the crowd at Evelyn's Drive In.



Allysen Callery performing at Coastal Roasters



Coastal Roasters and Evelyn's Drive In, both on Main Road in Tiverton, host musical performances for the annual event.



SOAH volunteers, Kim Lamothe, Jane Bitto, and Ceileidh Siegel visited the Tiverton food pantry in November along with volunteers Dom Bitto and Gerry Lamothe (not in photo).



At the wrap up meeting for the 2011 SOAH event, committee members were presented with plaques that would be hung on display at EBCAP's Newport and Tiverton food pantries to recognize SOAH's valuable contributions. From left, front: Lisa Machado, Wendy Helger-Wahl, Sue Sisson, Susan Schenck, Michelle Angel, and Ceileidh Siegel; middle: Chris Moon, Kim Lamothe, and Denise deMedeiros; back: Bob Briggs, Jane Bitto, Gerry Lamothe, Gary Fish, Domenic Bitto, Mike Angel, Peter Guay, and Christian Haler.



*Thank you, also to all in the community who, through the years, have attended the musical performances and contributed with food and cash donations, raffles and auctions.*



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*For further information, please call 401-847-7821, ext. 339.*

[www.ebcap.org](http://www.ebcap.org)

Current Resident or:

## Board Profile – Greg Dias *By David Howard*

Gregory Dias has served on the East Bay Community Action Program (EBCAP) Board of Directors since 2007, bringing his experience as an attorney and familiarity with East Bay communities.

"I served as an assistant city solicitor for East Providence for many years," Dias said recently, "and got to know a lot about EBCAP, meeting staff members like Carolyn Pellegrino (now retired, then Director of Family Development for the organization) and board members Bob Rock and Onna Moniz John, who was also the East Providence Welfare Director and Affirmative Action Director."

When Moniz stepped down from the board, Dias was named in her place.

As a member of the board, Dias said he was surprised to learn how many programs EBCAP provides for residents of the East Bay. "I also learned that it was a real advantage having a Board of Directors that is comprised of members from various walks of life in the communities EBCAP serves." Another plus, he felt, is the requirement that board membership includes consumers of the organization's services, as well as individuals from the public and private sector.

"The board is able, because of its membership, to have much more insight into the populations EBCAP serves, as well as the strengths and possible areas of improvement of its programs," he noted. "Having consumers on the board is a big plus," he added, "they can give us some insight into programs because of their involvement."

Dias also pointed out that recently each member of the board has been assigned to be a liaison with a specific EBCAP program or department. "This allows all of us to learn more about EBCAP as well as provide some support and assistance to a specific area."

EBCAP Chief Executive Officer, Dennis Roy, has called on the Board of Directors to help out in various program projects. Dias said that "in these difficult economic times, we have been asked to help out in talking with local governmental leaders about EBCAP and the need for a share of the federal Community Development Block Grant funds, many communities in our service area receive."



GREGORY DIAS  
EBCAP BOARD MEMBER

Funding, Dias said, is a major concern for organizations like EBCAP.

"As federal, state and local budgets are cut, it becomes much more difficult to fund our programs. But we have done an outstanding job in getting grants from private funding sources which have helped existing services to be maintained."

The new health center in Newport, currently under construction, has taken up much of the board's time, Dias said. "We received much support from the state's Congressional delegation in obtaining a grant for this project, which I think is a tribute to the excellent reputation EBCAP has in helping residents of Rhode Island. This new building is going to be fantastic and a real asset to the people of Newport County."

Dias and his wife, Leeann, who is an executive with the Shaw's food store chain, have both been active in supporting EBCAP activities like the annual Seaside Gala and its auctions. "These events are not only enjoyable, they help the organization in its fund raising efforts," he said.

Dias is an East Providence native, who graduated from East Providence High School, and Providence College. He received his law degree from Suffolk University in Boston and opened his own office, Law Office of Gregory S. Dias, working with William Maaia in East Providence. Dias served as an assistant city solicitor for East Providence for 24 years, with a number of responsibilities, including counsel to the city zoning board and criminal prosecutor for the East Providence Police Department in Rhode Island District Court and in the city's municipal court.

"I have learned, through my board membership, how much EBCAP helps people, not only in my own community of East Providence, but throughout the East Bay. Look at how many more people EBCAP's food pantries have served in just the past two years," he cites. "As a board member I appreciate the hard work and dedication of EBCAP's staff and the valuable job they are doing in our communities."