

“The challenge of community action is to help those in need where they are today, and at the same time, help them plan and prepare for a better tomorrow.”

An inspiring tale of self-sufficiency

Christina Nahar looked in her pocket and found a nickel and two pennies. It was all the money she had in the world. Seven cents to feed her two children. Seven cents to pay the bills. Seven cents to take on life's challenges. A single mom, she lived a life full of fears and tears.

“There were so many nights I would cry,” Nahar said of those days in the late 1990s. “I cried a lot. I remember looking at my kids when they were little and feeling like a failure.”

Today, she is anything but a failure. More like an incredible success. A shining example of how Gateway Community Action Partnership can play a part in turning a life around. She is the embodiment of Gateway's mission “to provide services that improve the quality of life and promote self-sufficiency.”

With services that promote self-sufficiency and an employment opportunity, Gateway played a significant role in changing a life that included homelessness and homeless shelters, extreme poverty, domestic abuse, thoughts of suicide, and days of cleaning her children's clothes with a neighbor's borrowed garden hose, tub and washboard.

Today, Nahar owns a home, earned a bachelor's degree from Wilmington University, successfully manages her finances, provides for her children and has a good job working for a cardiologist.

“I would not be where I am today if not for Gateway,” said Nahar, who started with Gateway's services with Women, Infants and Children (WIC) in 1997.

Nahar was selected to tell her compelling story before a Washington, DC audience of about 500 attending *The Shriver Report LIVE*, a full-day event held on Jan. 15, 2014. This coincided with the release of the latest *Shriver Report: A Woman's Nation Pushes Back from the Brink*. The *Shriver Report* sought women who have successfully escaped poverty to speak at its event. Gateway nominated Nahar, and she was chosen as one of four speakers.

The event, held at the Newseum, was attended by accomplished journalists, elected leaders and other very important people such as Maria Shriver, the driving force behind



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The Shriver Report. Shriver is also an internationally renowned journalist and author, and the daughter of Sargent Shriver, President Lyndon B. Johnson's point man on the “War on Poverty” and an architect of Community Action Agencies.

Nahar, who eloquently conveyed her decades-long struggle and path to success, was showered with applause. Grateful for the chance to share her story, Nahar hopes that this will inspire others to climb out of poverty and despair.

“It's been a hard road for me, and when you walk this path, you feel like you are the only one who is going through it at the time,” said Nahar, 38, a Millville resident and 1994 graduate of Vineland High School. “I thought this would give me a chance to put my name out there and show people there are ways of getting out of whatever muck you are in. During that journey, you feel like it is never going to end and you will never get anywhere. A lot of doors are closed on you, and you just want to give up. You really do.”

But Nahar did not give up. She rebuilt the foundation of her life slowly, brick by brick with the help of Gateway.

“We are very proud of Christina,” said Albert B. Kelly, Gateway's President and CEO and founder. “She is proof that Community Action Agencies work and are vital to the community. We are pleased that Christina so eloquently described her experiences and the assistance she received from Gateway Community Action Partnership in such a high profile setting. She is an inspiration for anyone seeking to escape poverty. She is an inspiration for all of us.”

20th annual gleaning trip helps feed area hungry

Stooped over amid emerald green fields of cucumbers that stretched for as far as the eye could see, 12-year-old Payton Anderson and her classmates carried on a two-decade fall tradition here.

Anderson was one of 220 seventh graders from Haddonfield Middle School who traveled to Sheppard Farms on a sunny September morning for a lesson in agriculture and a chance to help feed the area's hungry. It was the school's 20th annual gleaning field trip to the 1,500-acre family farm, which was organized in conjunction with Gateway Community Action Partnership's Gleaning Program.

Students harvested thousands of pounds of cucumbers and peppers from Sheppard Farms that Gateway CAP will distribute across South Jersey to various food recovery and hunger relief programs.

Anderson said she liked the fact that the gleaned produce would go toward helping feed the area's hungry. “That's what's awesome about this—totally awesome,” added Jordyn Simon, 12. “This is fun,” said Rachel Bonnet, 12. “It feels good when you pick a really nice cucumber knowing it's going to a really good cause.”

Gateway CAP Board President, John Washington, greeted the students while thanking them for their service and wishing them well in



their future endeavors.

John Farrell, a seventh grade geography teacher, has led Haddonfield students on the trip for two decades now. “I love this trip for two major reasons,” he said. “First, it's an opportunity for the kids to do community service. This helps their neighbors here in South Jersey by gleaning the fields. Second, this is also a geography lesson on the five themes of geography,” he said. “Many of these kids will buy this food from their local food market. Now, they'll actually see where it comes from. We tie it all together into a big lesson for us.”

Since 1995, the Haddonfield school has brought more than 4,000 students here to help glean Sheppard Farms' vegetable fields. And, in this same time, Gateway's gleaning program has gleaned and distributed millions of pounds of fresh fruit and vegetables from fields that have been commercially reaped. The food gleaned is of near market quality that, if not gleaned, would have gone to waste.

Guzzetti's impact, legacy live on at Gateway

In Gateway Community Action Partnership's 27 years serving Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem counties, many have supported its efforts in various ways.

Kara M. Guzzetti, Esq. was such a person. Though her time with the agency was brief, her impact was significant. Thirty-four-year-old Guzzetti, a former member of Gateway's board of directors (2009-2011), lost her courageous battle with breast cancer on October 24, 2014.

Vibrant and genuine, Guzzetti lived every day to the fullest and contributed greatly to every person and cause she knew. She was vital in her support for Gateway—giving of her time freely and providing insightful input and faithful participation. She worked diligently with the Planning Department, revising the agency's by-laws in a concise and orderly manner—while making sure not to step on anyone's toes.

Her three-year tenure was interrupted by her first bout with cancer. She remained

involved while in treatment. Even after leaving the board, Guzzetti remained a resource and made annual financial contributions.

Kara was a standout athlete and scholar at West Deptford High School. She graduated in 2002 from Loyola University and 2007 from Widener Law School. She also lived abroad in England and Ireland—working to reconcile Catholic and Protestant differences, and reduce the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Guzzetti served on Gateway's board with an honor and distinction that will always be remembered. We are better for having experienced her vibrant life force, her goodness and her sense of commitment.



Please Help Us Help Others

Gateway Community Action Partnership makes a difference in helping our less fortunate neighbors. We provide dozens of programs that advance our mission “to provide services that improve the quality of life and promote self-sufficiency.”

Certain core programs that embody our mission are under- or unfunded, such as Alzheimer's and Adult Day Care, food recovery and literacy. Please make a donation to help us fulfill our mission. Send checks made payable to: Gateway CAP, 110 Cohansey Street, Bridgeton, NJ 08302.

For questions/information: 856-497-6621 or mcudemo@gatewaycap.org



Gateway holds poverty symposiums

Gateway Community Action Partnership conducted three Poverty Symposiums in Cumberland, Salem, and Gloucester counties in September to discuss all aspects of poverty and gather important community feedback.

“In our workshops we want to talk about solutions to poverty, specifically solutions to poverty in the South Jersey area,” said Albert B. Kelly, Gateway's President and CEO, at the Salem session that was the first of the three symposiums.

Work groups developed goals, accountability measures and strategies that can be implemented over the next year that will reduce poverty as it relates to topic areas.

Code Blue takes the chill out of winter

Gateway Community Action Partnership is part of a Bridgeton collaborative – Code Blue – that shelters and feeds the homeless in Bridgeton when warranted by winter weather conditions. A “Code Blue” is initiated by Bridgeton Mayor Albert B. Kelly, Gateway's President and CEO, when temperatures are 32 degrees with precipitation or 25 degrees without precipitation. Churches in the Bridgeton Christian Ministers Association, a Code Blue partner, rotate as warming centers on a weekly basis throughout the winter. During Code Blue, Warming Centers are open from 6 p.m. - 6 a.m. This winter, 150 guests were served by approximately 200 volunteers. Services include shelter, social services and clothing distribution. Kelly and Dr. Robin B. Weinstein, a member of Gateway's Board of Directors and Pastor of Bethany Grace Community Church, provided key leadership roles in the success of the program.

Literacy honors volunteers

Gateway Community Action Partnership's Literacy Volunteers of Salem and Cumberland Counties recognized Judy Hunt, from Vineland, as the 2014 Tutor of the Year and Tammy Bitgood, from Upper Pittsgrove, as the 2014 Volunteer of the Year at a Tutor Appreciation Night.

“Gateway appreciates the dedication and hard work of Judy and Tammy,” said Albert B. Kelly, Gateway's President and CEO. “On behalf of Gateway, I thank them for volunteering their time to help others.”

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