

## Are you seeing signs?

Recently there have been some rumblings and undercurrents in the media suggesting there might be signs of a slight upturn in the economy. As excited as we are by the positive outlook, we were keen to know if that outlook was seeping down to individuals and families yet. We asked the people who we think know best—our case managers, who spend every day on the front line dealing with neighbors struggling with job loss, foreclosure and lack of food and clothing.

Here are their observations:

**Based on what I am hearing** from people, especially in the foreclosure arena, people who have been struggling for a while now and have tapped all the available resources (401k) etc., are running out of options. Rental assistance requests are increasing as well, for both back rent and 1st month's deposit. I think we denied over 80 families last month alone, due to their not qualifying for the program, whether it be insufficient income, need greater than we could provide assistance with, etc. We were able to help just 11 families.

*Gwen Robles - Case Manager*

**My personal thought** on this is that I do not feel as if things are getting better, specifically for those individuals who do not have a trade or do not have some schooling beyond high school. Many of the clients that I am working with have been looking for jobs for months and just have not had any luck. Most of these people are those looking for factory work, retail, fast food, etc. because at this time, that is all they are qualified for. I do find that those who have some further schooling or even some sort of certification have had some better luck in finding jobs, but even that is not spectacular right now.

*Brook TerHaar - Case Manager*

**In talking to many clients** over the past few months, it is clear that the job market is very tight and becoming tighter. Any jobs that do become available are few and far between. With so many people needing jobs and so few jobs available, higher education has become a key element in who gets hired and who does not. Many of the clients that I have seen are going back to get their GEDs and pursuing courses that will make them more marketable. I think that things will continue to get worse before they start to get better.

*Leigh Austin - Case Manager*

Beyond the opinions of our staff team, it seems the monthly report from West Michigan Economic Analyst Jason Palmer reinforces the consensus that there is still a hard road ahead for the greater Holland area. Unemployment figures increased from 12.9% in May 2009 to 14% in June 2009. To read Jason's full report and more information log on to [www.michigan.gov](http://www.michigan.gov).



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**Some positive changes** are coming, but it will still be a while before we feel relief. For example, my husband's work has taken on some work from Ford and is in the launching process of the programs. They are starting to need more manpower, but are only hiring permanent part-time employees. The rest of the factory, including the office, has taken three pay cuts this year and will not see any wage reviews or increases until at least October. There are at least two office employees that have their homes in foreclosure at this time. The future looks promising in that no more layoffs are foreseen. Salaries are down, but business is picking up.

*Wendi English - Case Manager*

**“ I think things are getting worse** judging by the way our newcomers are becoming repeat clients. The job market is still not there, and people are going to be coming to the end of their extensions.”

*Kimberly Romero - Case Manager*

**I'm not convinced** that the economy is completely better. I think the time of year is better for many businesses in the area and some people are being called back to work, but I think when the winter rolls around again things will continue to be bad. Many people are on unemployment right now and are barely hanging on. With the extensions that are being granted they are maintaining the unemployment, but at some point those extensions will also run out and then there will be even more people than there are right now out looking for work.

I think that it will be improving maybe a year from now, but again, I think that it may get worse before it gets better.

*Andrea Fantin - Case Manager*

## So what do we do with all this information?

We keep doing what we've been doing, only more.

Please help us spread the word about Community Action House by telling a friend and letting them know about what we're doing. Invite them to get involved with you in making poverty history in our community.

Thanks for all you do. We really appreciate you!

**Southside Location:** 345 West 14th Street, Holland, MI 49423  
Mon, Wed, Fri: 9:00am-Noon, 1-5pm  
Tues & Thurs: 1-5pm

**Northside Location:** 665 136th Avenue, Holland, MI 49424  
Mon-Fri: 1-5pm

