

VICTORIES EVERYDAY

SUMMER 2018

Well done Ms. Robinson. Well done.

No one can deny that Ms. Robinson has paved the way as a true leader would. Even before stepping foot into that old warehouse 23 years ago, service to humanity was already imbedded in her. She knew that it took a village to build character. Knowing this, she accepted the challenge of rebuilding the Cincinnati-Hamilton County Community Action Agency and she began to build a village, right here in Cincinnati.



"My favorite leadership quote that truly describes Ms. Robinson's leadership is a quote by John Maxwell that says, 'A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way,'" said Ebony Griggs-Griffin, education content manager.

Joan Proffitt, finance director for the Agency, took this journey with Ms. Robinson 23 years ago. "It has truly been a pleasure to work under Ms. Robinson's leadership," said Joan. "When I think of where the Agency was and what the Agency has become, it is a testament to the great leadership that the Agency has had with Ms. Robinson."

When asked about her next venture, Ms. Robinson said "The decision to transition to my next endeavor is one that I made with careful thought and consideration. As many of you know, CAA is my heart. I came here 23 years ago excited about the opportunity to lead a large organization. I can leave knowing that I have accomplished and gained more than I expected."

Ms. Robinson has left a legacy that will last for generations to come. Through the Agency, she has planted a seed that will continue to provide opportunity for those that need it most in our community. For that, we are all forever grateful to her.

Lyndon B. Johnson once said "Poverty must not be a bar to learning and learning must offer an escape from poverty." For so many, the Cincinnati-Hamilton County Community Action Agency is that escape.

Thank you Ms. Gwen L. Robinson. Well done thy good and faithful servant. Well done.



In This Issue

- [Su Casa's Summer Program](#)
- [A New Start for Youth](#)
- [Thank You Ms. Robinson!](#)

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Development
Services Agency

Su Casa's Summer Program Increases Early Childhood Development

by Jacob Mantle

Since its inception in 2008, Su Casa's Vacaciones Útiles (Productive Vacations) has helped further enrich economically disadvantaged Hispanic/Latino students entering kindergarten through second grade, in their Spanish and English speaking. This program helps bridge the early educational gap the children may have with their classmates at school.

Supervisor of Su Casa Hispanic Center, Karri O'Hara, explained the reason for the early educational gap is "due to linguistic barriers." She said, "A large percentage of Hispanic/Latino students drop out of high school. They have the highest dropout rate of any ethnic group."

The program has been using the Community Action Agency's (CAA) building as classrooms for students. Teachers use Little Sponges—a bilingual literacy program—to help reinforce students' first language while helping them learn a new language. Eighty-seven percent of the students last year improved their English and Spanish skills by seven percent or more.

Students and parents see tangible results because of this program hosted at CAA. O'Hara said, "They are getting a sense of pride. It's empowering them to want to improve their Spanish and speak it."

Students of Vacaciones Útiles are given real-life experiences. Field trips to local museums, events, and tennis lessons all help enrich the students' learning experience. Parents play an important role and given the opportunity to attend educational workshop that focus on enrolling their children into public schools and creating a healthy home environment.

"Our goal is to ensure that everyone in the community has access and the ability to succeed," said O'Hara. The hope is that this program will reduce the language and cultural barrier children and parents face.



Kids outside playing at Su Casa program

Thank You Ms. Robinson,

"The best way for me to describe my colleague and friend Gwen Robinson-Benning on this the occasion of her retirement is that of a Foot Soldier who became a Field General of "The Great Society" and "The War on Poverty.

"She is a living testament to the Legacy of both President Lyndon B. Johnson and The Honorable Theodore M. Berry who served as the Founding Director of the Federal Office of Economic Opportunity.

"As CEO of the second oldest Community Action Agency in the Nation that was created with the passage of "Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 Gwen has not only provided outstanding leadership for the Cincinnati Hamilton County Community Action Agency but is also recognized nationally as a dedicated, compassionate advocate for empowering poor people throughout the land. Congratulations on a job well done, a True and Faithful Servant!"

— **John E. Harris Jr., CFP,**
Secretary/Treasurer,
CAA Foundation

"In life you'll realize there is a purpose for everyone you meet. Some will test you, some will use you, and some will teach you. But most importantly, some will bring out the best in you."

— **Gwen Larkin, Executive Assistant/Board Administrator**

CAA is Hiring

Are you or someone you know looking for a new job or a change in your career? The Community Action Agency is a great place to start! We are looking for

for 23 Years of Service!

"It has been an absolute honor to support one of the most outstanding leaders in our community! Gwen has blazed a trail and transformed the way we deliver services to those desiring to alleviate poverty on a local, regional and national level. Her imprint will last a lifetime and beyond. Thanks Gwen L. Robinson!"

— **Chandra Matthews-Smith,**
Board Chair

"Gwen's creativity, leadership and innovation skills have moved CAA in a direction that would have seemed impossible when she first arrived. It has been a great pleasure serving on the Board of Directors during her tenure."

— **Diana Paternoster,**
CAA Board Member

"Even now you have retired, our Lord has plans for you to continue using your wisdom and commitment helping those in need. May you be blessed with excellent health and happiness. Thank you for being the best CEO ever! Love,"

— **Yvette Hanley,**
Senior Administrative Assistant, Community Services

"Tough times never last, but tough people do. She believed she could so she did. We all have a story, when one chapter ends another one begins. Journey on. Your present situation is not your final destination. The best is yet to come."

— **Janice Bradley,**
Head Start Teacher

educators, supervisors and other professionals to join our team. If you are interested, please visit our website: cincy-caa.org for more information and to apply. We look forward to hearing from you.

A New Start for Youth Trying to Find Their Way

by Jacob Mantle

Youthbuild, a Department of Labor program, at the Cincinnati Hamilton County Community Action Agency (CAA) provides mentoring, professional certification, and an opportunity for young adults to earn their high school diploma. Students between the ages of 16–24 and are not attending school are eligible for this unique program.

Youthbuild has two field concentrations for students: construction or healthcare. The program has allowed students like NiQuadrick to get on the right track.



From left to right: Jermey, Phabian, Dawuan, Uriyah, NiQuadrick

"They have helped me a lot," said NiQuadrick who dropped out of high school before starting the program. "I found this program through my Mom. I come here and work toward my high school diploma and they will help find a job."

The program is important because it gives students a second chance to earn their high school diploma and other life skills. "Youthbuild is important because I did not think I was going to get my high school diploma," said Uriyah, who attends the program also. "They work with you and guide you. They're better than school to me."

Field trips and mentors are a part of the curriculum at Youthbuild as it gives the students hands on and real world experience. Students spend half of their day in the classroom and the other half of the day is spent getting hands-on training.

"We went to get certified to drive Bobcats a few weeks ago—that was so cool! We got to talk to professionals too," said Dawuan, another student in the construction program, who was impressed with Youthbuild.

Getting the real training experience is not the only thing students gain from Youthbuild. The Department of Labor program also provides mentorship. According to other students of the program, Youthbuild has allowed them to work on their teamwork, listening skills and their attention to detail.

The program continues to set students up for a "better future" with 73% job retentions six months after completion of the program nationally.

"I think anybody who would join the program here would love it here," said Uriyah. "They wouldn't want to leave."



**Community
Action Agency**

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**VICTORIES
EVERYDAY**

SAVE THE DATE
November 2, 2018



**Community
Action Agency**

CINCINNATI | HAMILTON COUNTY

54th Annual Luncheon

Committed to the Future