Everyone has a different style of learning new things. For some, hands-on learning works best. If this is true in your case, CAH has several learning/volunteer opportunities available for you! As part of our General Store operations, CAH refurbishes bicycles for resale. If you would like to learn how to repair your own bikes but don’t know a handbrake from a derailleur then CAH can help. Our refurbishing team meets every Tuesday and Wednesday mornings from 9:30am to 1:00pm, and would welcome those who would like to expand their knowledge of this subject! The CAH General Store staff also refurbishes and rebuilds furniture for resale. If you have a furniture project in the basement and are just not sure where to begin, come in and learn from one of the best! Phil heads up the furniture refurbishing team and is a retired woodworker from Haworth who loves to share his knowledge with others.

For more information on either of these independent learning opportunities, please call the General Store at 616.594.5451.
Announcing Our EPIC Initiative
by Mark Tucker

Near the end of the summer of 2012 Huntington Bank invited Glory Johnson-Cusack, the Executive Director of Leadership 18, to West Michigan as part of a morning-long seminar hosted by GVSU’s Johnson’s Center for Philanthropy. Leadership 18 is a Washington D.C. nonprofit think tank consisting of 18 of the most influential nonprofits in the United States. In the past 20 years Johnson-Cusack has worked with the past three U.S. Presidents, Congress, municipal and federal governments, and held multiple leadership positions in the private sector. During a private meeting with local Holland nonprofit executive directors the subject of how best to monetize local nonprofits was discussed.

Community Action House’s Executive Director, Mark Tucker, became highly interested in the subject and Johnson-Cusack recommended Steven Rothschild’s book The Non Nonprofit. Rothschild’s work emphasizes how to use an empowerment strategy based on cognitive restructuring to help chronically poor individuals break the cycle of poverty and become prosperous. Tucker found the seven principles discussed in the book to be intriguing and a possible direction for CAH to follow. CAH staff & board members were highly encouraged to read the book with one question in mind. Can CAH improve its overall effectiveness to end poverty in our community by adopting some or all the seven principles discussed? The response was a resounding “yes”.

A Nonprofit subcommittee was formed consisting of staff and board members to research and address how the seven principles could be applied. The six-month effort resulted in the writing of a one-page summary on how each of the seven principles could be used to make CAH a more effective, transparent and outcome oriented organization, adopt the empowerment philosophy, form an empowerment institute and hire a director to oversee the formation of the newly named EPIC (End Poverty In Our Community) Empowerment Institute. The Board of Directors approved the recommendations and CAH has hired Patricia Reilly as the Institute’s first Director.

Reilly comes highly qualified with a Bachelor of Arts from Covenant College and Master of Divinity from Princeton Theological Seminary. Reilly is moving back to Holland from Santa Clara County, California where she has been employed since 1989. She left her job as a project manager and consultant for Open Window Creations to take her new job as the Institute’s Director. “I was on a five year plan to move back to Holland unless I could find my ideal job in Holland first. I was amazed and excited to find out Community Action House is taking on this exciting and very important challenge.” Reilly went on to say, “I am a Nonprofit groupie and fluent in the concepts of the culture and very much looking forward to helping bring this life transforming strategy to Holland.” Reilly’s first day was September 4th, which coincided with the start of Personal Empowerment Training conducted by Keith Simmons from Twin Cities RISE. Twin Cities RISE is the empowerment Institute started by Steven Rothschild in Minneapolis Minnesota. Amazingly eight out of ten RISE graduates do not return to poverty. Stay tuned for more information on this very cutting edge initiative.

Welcome, Maggi!

Name: Magdalena S. Rivera AKA-Maggi
Start Date: 8/5/13
Position: Case Manager

Holland is my hometown - The place where I lived my childhood and went to school eventually graduating from Holland Public Schools in 1983. After college, I worked in public education for over 20 years. My most recent employer was West Ottawa Public Schools District. My last WOPS position, and by far my absolute favorite, was as the English Language Development Program Assistant at Pine Creek Elementary School. My public education career has been my training ground for serving language learning families as well as diverse populations.

Accepting employment at CAH has been an opportunity of a lifetime for me. First, knowing firsthand the historical imprint of how one small group of concerned community members along with church leaders set out to aid families in need of food and clothing over 40 years ago to now is an amazing story. The story of CAH, is the story of our Holland families. Second, this is an exciting time for CAH and its leadership, and an amazing opportunity to be part of team of leaders who will potentially transform the CAH outreach philosophy. Finally, the CAH family has been wonderful to learn from and I appreciate my skills and talents being utilized and developed.”

Maggi also serves on the Holland Public Schools District Board of Education, HPS Holland Education Foundation, City of Holland Human Relations Commission, ACEH and Holland Area PRIDE Committee.

Brook VanEe
From Intern to Staff

"I have always said that I was extremely lucky to have CAH as my internship. It was probably the first experience that I had in really learning what social work was and I feel like I couldn't have learned it in a better setting. Not only was I able to gain so much knowledge through my internship, I was also able to meet a great group of people that respected me and took it upon themselves to make sure that I was getting the experiences that I needed. That is one of the main reasons why I find it so important to now help other interns get the experience that I truly can be their one and only chance to get hands on learning before they get a job in the field. CAH gave me the foundation as an intern and has now really turned me into the social worker that I am today. I have grown so much because of the experiences that I have been offered and because of the people here that have been willing to do what they can to help me grow and succeed in this field. And beyond all of that, I really have created what I think of as a second family and I could not POSSIBLY be more proud and happy to be a part of this agency."

Teresa Sal
From Intern to Staff

When I found out that GVSU had placed me at Community Action House for my internship, I was very excited. I had lived in the neighborhood of CAH when I was a teenager and had a positive experience with the organization. My internship surpassed my expectations. I learned so much during the year and I really enjoyed the experience. The other staff members, especially my supervisor, made it a safe and comfortable place to learn. I was given the freedom to try different things and was trusted with responsibility.

I value the work that Community Action House does, and I believe in the mission and values of the organization. I believe CAH does make a positive impact in our community, this is why I was eager to accept a full time position as a case manager. What keeps me here are the people I get to work with on a daily basis and the ability to continue to have new experiences and learning opportunities that add to my personal and professional development. I am proud when I tell people that I work for Community Action House.

Are you a CAH volunteer? We want to hear your story! Share it at www.facebook.com/CommunityActionHouse or contact Gwen directly at grobles@communityactionhouse.org.