

# Geauga Community Action Gets Federal Grant

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Bob Voss, Executive Director of Geauga Community Action (seated) and Scott Wayt.

Geauga Community Action, Inc. recently received a two-year, \$280,000 block grant from the federal government to help Geauga County residents overcome short-term problems so they do not become long-term problems. To be eligible, families or individuals must be 125 percent below the Federal poverty level or earn approximately \$1,250 per month as an individual.

“The goal is to provide temporary assistance to eligible Geauga County residents, whether it is to help pay bills, find temporary housing, or possibly get a car repaired so they can get to work,” Bob Voss, executive director of Geauga Community Action, says. ” It is a hand up, not a hand out.”

According to Voss, these federal grant dollars were in danger of leaving the county because of compliance issues with the IRS and State. He says Geauga County Commissioner Skip Claypool was instrumental in making sure this money did not leave the county.

“You never want to see money go away or lose control of it to another county,” Voss says, who was hired part-time a year ago as an independent contractor to get Geauga Community Action into compliance. Previously, Voss worked as a Child Protection Supervisor with Geauga Job & Family Services for six years and Metzenbaum Center for 24 years in various capacities. Scott Wayt, an Air Force veteran and CASA (Court-Appointed Special Advocate) volunteer, was also recently hired part-time by Geauga Community Action. He previously worked in the private sector.

Geauga Community Action administrative expenses are capped at 6 percent, and a tripartite board determines how the grant money is to be used. This board is comprised of at least one-third low-income community representatives, one-third public officials, and one-third private sector leaders, per a federal requirement.

At this time, the agency's only source of funding comes from this block grant – funds first made available through legislative efforts, passed by former President Lyndon B. Johnson, during his “War on Poverty,” under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. The Federal government gives the money to the State, which in turn passes it down to local, private, non-profit Community Action agencies. Geauga Community Action currently contracts with Geauga Job & Family Services and United Way for Emergency and 2-1-1 services. Historically, these two agencies helped the Geauga Community Action Board assess the needs of Geauga County.