

Economic Opportunity Commission changes name, but its mission stays the same

Renamed Community Action Partnership, it works to fight poverty at the local level

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In a move to lessen confusion as to its mission, the Economic Opportunity Commission has changed its name to the Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo County Inc.

Known as the EOC since the county Board of Supervisors incorporated it in 1965, Community Action Partnership remains a private, nonprofit public benefit agency working to fight poverty at the local level.

"Although our name is changing, our roots in this community go deep," said Chief Executive Officer Elizabeth "Biz" Steinberg, "and our services and commitment to the people of this community are not changing."

"We had a survey of the business community two years ago," said agency representative Leslie McKinley, "and they weren't real sure what we did." Being recast as Community Action Partnership will "help clients and the community know who we are and what we provide."

The San Luis Obispo-based agency is the administrative hub for similar organizations in eight counties; has an annual budget of almost \$60 million (which could rise significantly next year when federal stimulus funds are distributed throughout the country for early care and education programs overseen by Community Action Partnerships) and employs 850 people.

The agency's quantifiable economic impact on the county is \$128 million annually, which doesn't include impacts associated with clients who become employable through Community Action programs. Some 43,000 clients used the agency's services last year.

Those clients may have been the homeless looking for shelter and/or a referral to social services, or families seeking adult day services for a relative with Alzheimer's or maybe low-cost weatherization and senior home repair. Community Action also oversees such diverse programs as senior screening, teen programs, tattoo removal and a toy lending library.

"The staff here are incredibly dedicated," McKinley said. Even though some may have been here for 25 years, their prime focus is, 'How many families will this program help? How will this benefit the community?'"

Open House

Community Action Partnership is hosting an open house for the public on May 15 from 3 to 6 p.m. at its administration offices at 1030 Southwood Drive in San Luis Obispo.