

ANNUAL REPORT

Blue Ridge Community Action, Inc.

2019 - 2020



Blue Ridge Community Action's mission statement "Helping People, Changing Lives" is realized by providing services, advocacy, and support for persons so they can become self-sufficient, improve the quality of their lives, and better provide opportunities for their families.

INSIDE...

- Executive Director
- Child Development
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- Pandemic Response





**C. INITA SMITH
BOARD CHAIR**

Blue Ridge Community Action, Inc. is pleased to share with you our 2019-20 annual report that not only shows our impact in our targeted communities but reflects the perseverance, resilience, and dedication to the communities we served during the unknown territory of the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 has not only affected the day-to-day life of our local communities but has affected thousands of people and businesses globally. As many companies had to close down to help decrease the footprint of COVID, we made the decision to stay open as a support system to the essential/frontline workers and our most vulnerable customers. We rapidly put in place the guidelines mandated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Health

Department, and NC Department of Health and Human Services. We also quickly acquired the necessary Personal Protective Equipment including face masks, thermometers, gloves, hand sanitizers, disinfectant, hazmat suits, etc. In addition, we disinfected our HVAC units with electrostatic disinfecting services.

Here are just a few of our highlights for 2019-20:

- **We operated three Pandemic Child Care Centers and served 49 children**
- **We were awarded funds to operate a Head Start Summer Program and served 164 children**
- **We received additional funding to deliver meals because of COVID and served 26,174 meals**
- **We were able to complete our weatherization units**
 - 143 LIHEAP units**
 - 89 DOE units**
 - 140 HARRP units**
- **We participated in the Community Solar Pilot Program benefitting 3 homes**
- **615 customers benefitted from the VITA program receiving \$809,575 in income tax refunds**
- **Our financial audit shows our 2018-19 financial records were found to be sound with no exceptions**
- **A community assessment was completed**
- **A new Executive Director was hired**
- **A Human Resource Director was hired**

Additionally, we were able to convert to various virtual/digital platforms in a short period of time. Through the work of our extraordinary staff, the direction of the board, community partnerships, and funders, we have done exceptionally well in meeting our goals.

The above mentioned highlights are part of our mission in “helping people, changing lives.” The COVID pandemic, as well as other social injustices, brought to the forefront the inequities that are embedded in our culture. As a poverty fighting agency, we will continue to break down the barriers that prevent people from thriving and becoming self-sufficient.



**STEPHANIE ASHLEY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Kind Regards,

Stephanie Ashley, CCAP, Executive Director

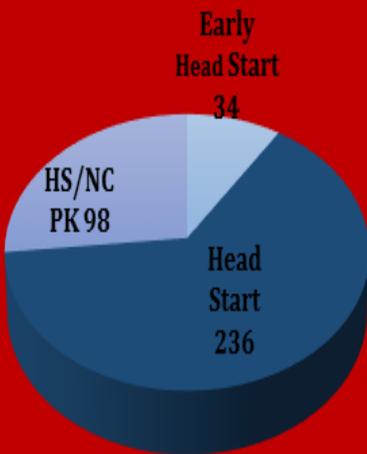
C. Inita Smith, Board Chair

PANDEMIC RESPONSE

FAMILY AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

The goal of the Child Development Program is to provide a safe, loving environment for children and to ensure that all children are healthy and ready to learn when they enter the public school system. All centers are 5-Star centers and have superior sanitation ratings.

Child Development Program



Things changed overnight in the Child & Family Development Services Department with the spread of COVID-19. Across the nation, child care centers closed down and essential workers were left without a safe place for their children. Blue Ridge Community Action, Inc. decided to upgrade the usual health and safety protocols at the centers and volunteer to be **Pandemic Child Care Centers**. Following strict

guidelines mandated by NCDHHS, the centers remained open so health care workers and other essential workers could provide the services needed to respond to COVID-19. Blue Ridge Community Action's child care workers were tireless in their efforts to serve children and families during this critical period. Head Start and Early Head Start staff provided virtual learning to all students, as well as meeting the essential needs of families by providing diapers, food and other resources. Staff made regular calls to families to assess their needs and provide emotional support.

Due to the vulnerability of Adult Day Care clients, the center was closed but daily calls were made to all caregivers to check on the health and welfare of clients. Several food deliveries were made to each client to ensure good nutrition.

Foster Grandparents were unable to work due to age restrictions. Staff made contact with each volunteer several times each week. Volunteers were given gift cards so they could purchase food and other necessities. Additional assistance was provided to individuals requiring help.

CHILD CARE IN ACTION

Head Start & Early Head Start

Head Start and Early Head Start is a federal program for children from low-income families. The Head Start/Early Head Start program is operated by local non-profit organizations in almost every county in the country. Children who attend Head Start and Early Head Start participate in a variety of educational activities. They also receive free medical and dental care, have healthy meals and snacks, and enjoy play — both indoors and out — in a safe setting.

235 Children Served



“We absolutely love Circle of Friends in Valdese, North Carolina. Last year our four-year-old was in the Head Start program — the teachers there are amazing. This year we were able to put our other two children there with her. She is in pre-K and her brother and sister are in the Head Start and the Early Head Start program. We absolutely love it because our children are thriving so much since they have started this program. It makes me happy that they want to go to school every day because they love it so much. I recommend it to everyone. All the teachers are absolutely wonderful; they keep us updated and send us pictures of our children having fun. It’s the little things that they do that makes us very happy. Our children have learned so much just in the few weeks that they have been there. I hope Blue Ridge Community Action continues offering these programs to all the children for years because it is very beneficial. Also, as a stay-at-home mom, it allows me a few hours throughout the day to do stuff that I need to get done around the house and do some crafts to sell to help out the family. Thank you to all the wonderful staff at Circle of Friends for making my children very happy and taking great care of them.”

~ ANGELA BERRY (Parent)

ADULT SERVICES

ADULT DAY PROGRAM

This program is designed specifically for elderly and/or adults needing a safe, nurturing, stimulating and enriching atmosphere. These services are available as a community resource to assist primary caregivers.

31 Adults Served

HOME DELIVERED MEALS

The Home Delivered Meals Program provides a nutritious meal to home bound senior adults in Caldwell County. Meals are delivered by community volunteers.

**17,372 Meals Served
111 Adults Served**



I want to tell you about a sweet lady, “Ms. J”, who attends the Adult Day program and how it has changed her life. Her daughter called me and was inquiring about the program and our service. She had gotten the information from a friend whose mother previously attended here. During our conversation, she told me her mother was showing signs of dementia and that she had to move her in with her. Her mother

seemed depressed and she needed to find something for her to do during the day. We set up a date for her to come visit the center. She brought her mother who just talked up a storm. I knew right away this was what she needed. Ms. J needed socialization and interaction with other ladies her age.

I gave them both an activity calendar to look at and Ms. J was so excited and asked “when can I start.” Needless to say, we got her enrolled and she has been happy ever since. Ms. J is my helper in the mornings wiping off tables, folding laundry and filling up the silverware box. Her daughter told me that her mother is sleeping better at night and that she can tell a huge difference in her attitude. It has even seemed to slow the dementia down. Ms. J looks forward to getting up each day to attend the Adult Day Care program and misses it on the weekends.

~ ADC STAFF

ADULT SERVICES IN ACTION

Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)

SCSEP provides paid job training opportunities to income eligible adults 55 and older to gain job skills and earn money while working in the community.

77 Program Participants

Foster Grandparent Program

The Foster Grandparent program provides one-on-one mentoring, nurturing, and support to children with special or exceptional needs, or who are academically, socially, or financially disadvantaged.

42 Program Participants

Congregate Nutrition

Congregate Nutrition provides opportunities for older adults in Caldwell County to be socially, physically and mentally active. There is no charge for the meal, but a voluntary contribution is invited.

8,802 Meals Served
107 Adults Served



“SCSEP, to me, is truly a blessing. It boosted my self-confidence, something I used to lack, and even gave me a different outlook on life. Being a retired, single mom, working as a SCSEP participant allowed me to earn extra income, which helps me to provide for my two children.

Lisa Lail is one of a kind and a very generous woman! Being very knowledgeable, she seems to know exactly where people need to go, including myself.

SCSEP is devoted to the well-being and care of their workers. To me, it’s all about the friendships you make, the lives you’ve impacted, and dedication put in. I’m extremely grateful for my job and the people who are part of SCSEP.”

~ DIANE YELTON (Participant)

ESSENTIAL WORKERS AND VOLUNTEERS

VOLUNTEER HOURS

Home
Delivered
Meals

1,056 Hours

Congregate
Nutrition

270 Hours

Burke County
Circles
Initiative

290 Hours

Community Service workers were considered essential workers during the peak of the pandemic. Community Service staff reported to work each day to assure the continuation of services and used innovative measures to complete and process application packages. In addition, Community Service staff



delivered hot meals to homebound seniors, sorted and distributed shelf-stable meals to Home Delivered Meals and Congregate Nutrition participants, and identified and accompanied 98 income eligible families to Food Lion for emergency food gift cards. 47 families spent \$200 each and 51 families spent \$100 each for a total of \$14,500. CSBG Funds were used to serve these families.

Home Delivered Meals participants continued to receive a nutritious meal daily. Four community volunteers and Community Service staff assured these meals were delivered using a method that provided protection for the participant and the person delivering the meal. 630 shelf-stable meals were distributed to Home Delivered Meals participants. Additional items distributed included, disposable and cloth masks, hand sanitizer, touch-free thermometers, in-home activities, COVID-19 information, resource and nutrition information.

Congregate Nutrition sites were closed March 15 due to the pandemic. Nutrition site participants received shelf-stable meals, disposable and cloth masks, hand sanitizer, touch-free thermometers, in-home activities, COVID-19 information, resource and nutrition information. 870 shelf stable meals were distributed to Congregate Nutrition participants.

Through coordination with Koinonia Apartments, any resident that was eligible to participate in the nutrition program and who completed a client registration form were eligible to receive an individually packaged meal three days per week. On average, 40 Koinonia residents per day received meals that were delivered to them by the apartment staff.

HOUSING SERVICES IN ACTION

Affordable Rental Units

Blue Ridge Community Action reaches out to the community by offering rental units.

45 Units Owned
86 Persons Served

Weatherization

The services of the Weatherization Assistance Program reduces energy costs by improving the energy efficiency of a home. In fact, these services reduce the average annual energy costs by \$300 per home.

232 Homes Benefitted
460 Persons Assisted

Duke Energy

The DEC WX is designed to assist low-income customers with managing their energy cost by making energy efficient improvements at the customer's residence.

68 Homes Benefitted



“Life changes and so do jobs. I worked a job for 17 years and got laid off. I took another position making a lot less. Life hits you all at once. I was working a very stressful position and caring for my ailing mother and then my air conditioner and heating unit went out. What next! I remember seeing an advertisement on TV regarding Blue Ridge Community Action. The advertisement said if you need assistance in having repairs to your home to call. I called the number and made an appointment.

I filled out an application to qualify for repairs. The application process took about 2 hours. I was told the application would be submitted and that their books closed in July and I would be placed on a waiting list. I received a letter that the books were closed. Two weeks later, I received a phone call stating they were going to install my unit within the month. After they installed the unit, the city came and inspected the unit to ensure everything was done correctly.

The staff at Blue Ridge Community Action were beyond pleasant. The initial call from Tara Vannoy, the installers, and the inspectors were all a blessing. Tara set the tone for what to expect and it was beyond my expectations. I could not imagine taking care of my mother in my home without an air conditioning unit. It was stressful enough watching your loved one decline.

I cannot thank Blue Ridge Community Action enough for what they did for my family.”

~ VICTORIA COMBS (Client)

HOUSING SERVICES

Heating Appliance Repair & Replacement Program (HARRP)

This program provides services for those persons with inadequate or no heating system or air conditioning. This program is associated with the Weatherization Assistance Program.

140 Homes Benefitted
253 Persons Assisted

Solar Pilot Program

Community Solar Pilot Partnership provides clients a ground mount solar array offering Blue Ridge Energy electric customers a shared renewable energy option. Clients received a 15-20 year subscription to community solar panels providing a \$1/day annual benefit in energy credits.

3 Homes Benefitted

Red Cross

In partnership with the Charlotte Metro Area Red Cross, Blue Ridge Community Action's Weatherization Program distributed smoke alarms to clients in Mecklenburg County.

103 Smoke Alarms
29 Clients Served



An introductory meeting was held on Friday, October 25, 2019, at Blue Ridge Energy's corporate office. Representatives from Blue Ridge Energy, BRCA, Caldwell County Commissioners, and Secretary Michael S. Regan and staff were in attendance in order to discuss the benefits of the Community Solar Pilot Program and how it could be leveraged with the Weatherization Assistance Program. After the meeting all parties visited the solar farm located at the Patterson School at 4646 Patterson School Dr., Lenoir, NC 28645.

The pilot program is a partnership with **NC Department of Environmental Quality**, who administers the Weatherization Assistance Program, and participating Utilities:

**Blue Ridge Energy • Roanoke Electric Cooperative •
Fayetteville Public Works Commission**

Community Solar Benefits

- Client will receive a credit of ≈\$30 a month for 15 years
- Typically ground mounted systems
- Larger than rooftop but smaller than solar farms
- Located on the Utility grid, not at the household
- Typically Utility owned and operated, benefitting customers
- Lower costs than rooftop panels
- No future additional costs related to roofing projects
- No roof structural support issues
- No issues with shading, roof pitch, or house orientation
- Clean energy to the grid whenever the grid is able to accept
- No fuel other than the sun

COMMUNITY SERVICE IN ACTION

Information and Referral

Information and Referral program supports BRCA's centralized intake system by identifying low-income families in need of assistance and linking those families with the appropriate agency resource.

217 Families Served

Self-Sufficiency

CSBG Self-Sufficiency Program provides case management and other support services necessary to move families to self-sufficiency and above the poverty guidelines.

49 Families Served
5 Secured Employment

Burke County Circles Initiative

Circles is a national program designed to support families in poverty and achieve long-term financial stability.

18 Active Circle Leaders
14 Participants in Financial Literacy Training

Fraternal Order of Police

The local FOP and Blue Ridge Community Action have an ongoing partnership to distribute food to families for Fall and Spring.

50 Fall Food Boxes
50 Spring Gift Cards



I have been a volunteer at Burke County Circles Initiative for about five or six years. It is a very worthwhile organization. Hearing the Circles Leaders' stories during the class graduations certainly has shown me the difference that Circles can make in people's lives. Building friendships with the Circles Leaders, volunteers, and allies has been a highlight in my life over those years.

In addition to volunteering for Circles, I am also the secretary at Christ UMC where Circles meets. I have seen the Christ UMC, Blue Ridge Community Action, Circles Leaders, volunteers, and allies all work together to keep Burke County Circles Initiative going through the years. We have fewer allies and volunteers now, but the Circles Leaders continue to inspire me as they strive toward better lives for themselves and their children.

This summer we were not able to have our regular classes but we did hand out food to some of the Circles Leaders whose children were involved in preparing for the garden the last time we met. A faithful Circles volunteer and Christ UMC member took the seeds the children were supposed to plant and grew, froze and canned vegetables for them along with other food she provided.

~ CAROL HOWARD

VITA PROGRAM

VITA is a free IRS sponsored program to help low and middle-income workers have their Federal and State personal income taxes prepared and filed electronically at no cost. VITA also ensures that workers receive all the tax credits to which they are entitled.

615 Returns Prepared

\$236,217 Earned Income Credits

\$809,575 Income Tax Refunds



Most VITA sites closed their physical doors in March 2020, and some remained closed. However, many continued to serve taxpayers through alternate means, such as virtual preparation or drop off, until the extended tax filing deadline of July 15, 2020. Blue Ridge

Community Action, Inc. was one of those sites.

We closed physically on March 23, 2020 and offered drop-off service or “Virtual VITA” to prior year tax clients through May 31, 2020. Beginning June 1, 2020 until July 15, 2020, we prepared tax returns on site while the client waited outside in their car. With specially designated parking, clipboards, one-time use pens, personal protective equipment like masks, gloves and sanitizing products, Blue Ridge Community Action, Inc. staff met clients in the parking lot of Quaker Meadows Generations, completed intake information and returned to their desk to prepare the tax return.

Once completed, we happily returned to the client, obtained the appropriate signatures and delivered the completed tax return. We completed **615 tax returns** for families offering free tax help to people who generally make \$56,000 or less, persons with disabilities and limited English-speaking taxpayers who need assistance in preparing their own tax returns. This was a **20% increase** over the previous year.

In addition, Blue Ridge Community Action, Inc. received an influx of clients who needed help, not only with filing their tax returns, but also with submitting key information to the IRS so they can receive their Economic Impact Payments. It was an extremely successful tax year.

Way to go BRCA!

PANDEMIC RESPONSE PPE



In response to the pandemic, we began to immediately secure the necessary PPE products to ensure that our staff remained safe while continuing to supply services to our community and keep Blue Ridge Community Action, Inc. locations open. With our janitorial service provider, Patton Cleaning Company, Inc., we rapidly implemented the Center for Disease Control’s “Guidance for Child Care Programs that Remain Open” protocol which enhanced the cleaning of congregate facilities and provided guidance on handling any COVID-19 related concerns. In addition, we received an electrostatic disinfecting service on our HVAC systems at all three locations. Electrostatic disinfecting is a way of quickly and evenly coating a surface with a disinfecting solution. We kept in continual communication with our janitorial service to not only ensure the sanitation of the facilities, but to also use every avenue available to secure the products needed to continue safe operation of all essential programs. Through an ongoing effort from all involved, we have not only been able to ensure the safety of our participants and staff, but have also been able to keep our services continually running. The following chart is a list of PPE we were able to acquire through various vendors and funding sources.

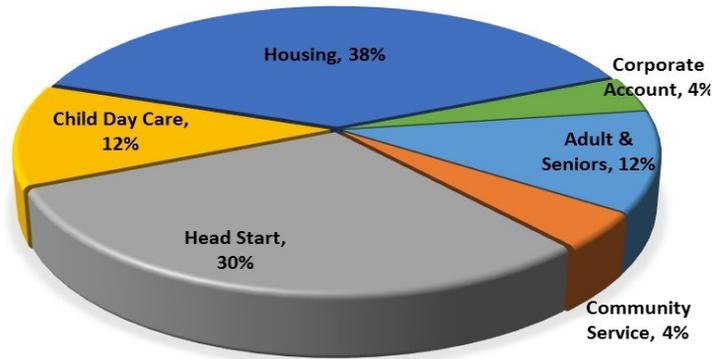


Item	QMG	NS	COF	Community Service	Secured Storage
Dispensers	9	8	3	0	0
Air Freshener	26	29	13	0	10
Alcohol	7	7	2	0	0
Cotton Balls	3	3	1	0	0
Disinfectant	7	13	6	0	0
Wipes	16	14	5	0	0
Face Masks	900	900	300	100	7,050
Thermometer	2	2	1	0	0
Sanitizer	3	3	1	0	1

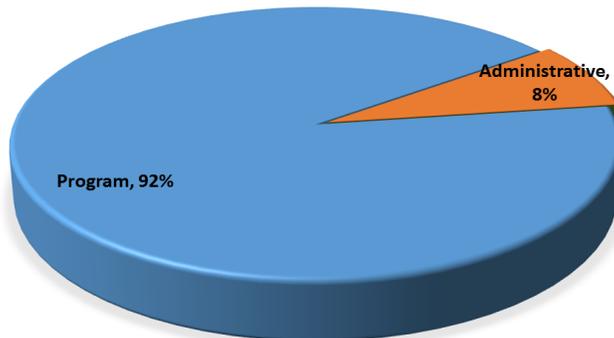
**REVENUE FISCAL
YEAR END
06/30/2020**

SERVICE AREA	REVENUE	%
ADULTS & SENIORS	\$1,225,469	11.50%
COMMUNITY SERVICE	\$441,394	4.15%
HEAD START	\$3,219,649	30.24%
CHILD DAY CARE	\$1,234,086	11.59%
HOUSING	\$4,095,957	38.47%
CORPORATE ACCOUNT	\$431,166	4.05%
TOTAL	\$10,647,721	100.00%

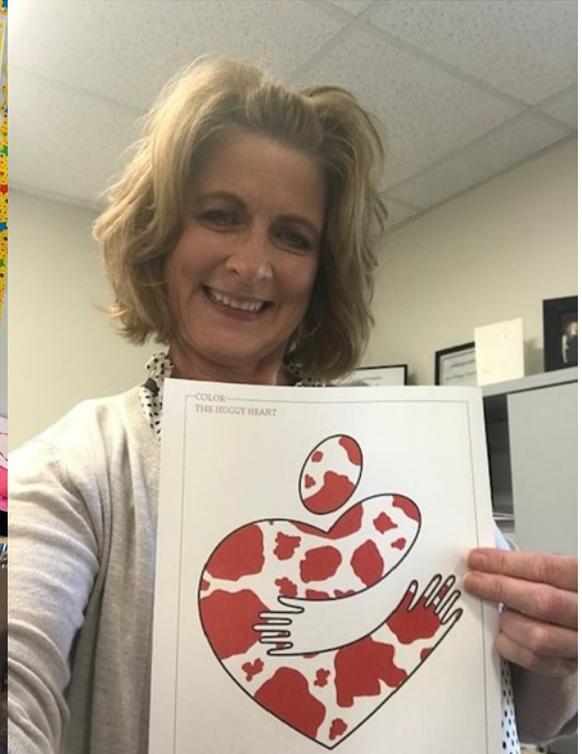
**REVENUE BY
SERVICE AREA**



**ADMINISTRATIVE
VS. PROGRAM
EXPENSE**



STAFF IN ACTION



MEET THE TEAM



"Personally, I was uncertain of working during the pandemic until I saw the concern the senior staff displayed for their fellow employees. Taking the necessary precautions to prevent the spread was highly reassuring to me and my family members. I appreciate the generosity and care that was shown. I could not ask for a better place to work. You can't find people like this anywhere nowadays."

~ Kenya Hemphill

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

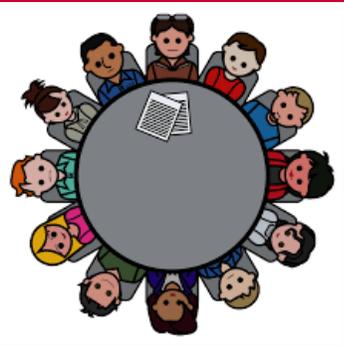


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Shari Brown	CCC&TI
Linda Davis	Foster Grandparent Program
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Kandi Bridges	Rutherford County

HEAD START POLICY COUNCIL



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Heather Visingard – Vice Chair	Northside
James (Al) Smith	Community Representative
Irma Lopez	Generations
Tonise Hooper	Generations
Ashley Kaczynski—Board Representative	Circle of Friends
Monica Nicholas	Northside
Sarah Piper	Generations



BLUE RIDGE COMMUNITY ACTION STAFF



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Stephanie Ashley *

Karen Brown

Thelma Brown

Chris Canella

Ana Cardona

Ryan Cary

Adrion Collins

Pam Cook

Mabel Davis

Susan Ferguson

Christy Galloway

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Tina Kyes *

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Kalia Lor

Jodi Lowman

Bridget Matthews

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Jonna Steward

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Brenda Turner

Tara Vannoy

Kay Welland

Joan Williams

LaWanda Willis

Mary Wright *

* Indicates Management Staff

Providing Services, Advocacy and Support

Serving Western North Carolina

Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Cleveland, Gaston,
Mecklenburg, McDowell, Rutherford, Stanly, and Union Counties

Blue Ridge Community Action, Inc. "Helping People, Changing Lives "

Blue Ridge Community Action, Inc.
800 N. Green St.
Morganton, NC 28655

Contact Us

Give us a call for more information about our services and programs.

Blue Ridge Community Action, Inc.

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Visit us on the web at
www.brcainc.org

PLACE
STAMP
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