



A Phone Call That Led to Hope and Stability



Ben Berberich is a Community Health Coach for Mills County.

In November, Sarah made a quiet but courageous phone call. Living on a fixed income and recently retired, she was worried she wouldn't be able to keep up with her rent. There wasn't panic in her voice — just exhaustion. The kind that comes from stretching every dollar and still coming up short.

Ben Berberich answered that call. Ben serves as a Community Health Coach for Mills County and the Jennie Edmundson Foundation. Hired in June of 2025, Ben has quickly become a resource to residents in Mills County who are facing difficulties having their needs met.

What began as a simple conversation

about rental assistance quickly became something more. Ben walked alongside Sarah through the intake process, helped her gather documentation, and worked with her over the next few months to update her disability application and apply for financial assistance. He coordinated with Southern Iowa Regional Housing Authority to secure housing support and connected her

to additional local resources to strengthen her overall stability.

There wasn't one dramatic moment — just steady, consistent support.

By February, Sarah was approved for assistance, connected to sustainable housing resources, and was no longer facing an immediate housing crisis. Her case was closed not because the relationship ended, but because she no longer needed that same level of support.

This is what your investment makes possible — not just referrals, but relationships. Not just crisis response, but stability. Quiet wins that change the trajectory of someone's life.

Community in Action

Caring for Our Communities (CFOC) began in 2014 through the Jennie Edmundson Foundation to support neighbors facing difficult moments. Sometimes life becomes overwhelming—housing falls through, food runs short, health problems pile up, or systems become too complicated to navigate alone.

CFOC exists to make sure people do not have to face those moments by themselves. The program works across healthcare, public safety, and community organizations to help residents connect with the support they need. That may include help finding stable housing, accessing food or medication, securing transportation to appointments, or navigating benefits and services.

By working together across systems, CFOC helps remove barriers that often keep people stuck in crisis. The goal is simple: help people regain stability, improve their health, and reconnect with the support that exists in their community.

Strengthening Our Impact with Positive Partnerships



When someone in Mills County is struggling, it rarely shows up as just one problem. It's the mom choosing between gas and groceries. The older adult calling 911 because they don't know who else to call. The neighbor whose health keeps declining because transportation fell through again.

For years, our first responders, healthcare teams, and public agencies showed up every single time. But too often, people were cycling through crisis because the follow-up piece simply didn't exist. There wasn't one steady hand helping connect the dots.

That's what has begun to change.

Lisa Blackburn, Clinic Manager at the Methodist Physicians Clinic - Glenwood, sees the impact in the healthcare setting.



"Many of the patients we see are dealing with more than just a medical issue. Transportation, food, housing, or simply trying to navigate complex systems can make it hard for people to stay healthy," Blackburn stated. "Having someone who can help coordinate resources and walk alongside them makes a meaningful difference for our patients and our community."

Through Caring for Our Communities, the Community Health Coach role was re-established in Mills County — someone who doesn't just respond in the moment, but stays. When Fire/EMS encounters someone repeatedly. When law enforcement sees the same name again. When Public Health identifies a family stretched thin. There is now a real person who follows up, coordinates



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**Glenwood Police Department Chief,
Eric Johansen**

next steps, and helps untangle what feels overwhelming.

Glenwood Police Department Chief Eric Johansen shared, "Programs like this give our officers a place to turn when someone needs help that law enforcement alone can't provide. It opens the door to resources that many individuals wouldn't otherwise be able to access and helps work through the barriers that too often stand in their way."

Behind the scenes, partners now sit at the same table each month — talking honestly about gaps, barriers, and shared solutions. Those conversations are building trust, clearer pathways, and a stronger safety net for the community.

Not long ago, people were navigating these challenges largely on their own. Today, Mills County is walking alongside them — together.

Mills County Caring for Our Community Members

Mills County Sheriff Department
Mills County Public Health
Methodist Physicians Clinic - Glenwood
Methodist Physicians Clinic -
Physical Therapy - Glenwood
Medicap Pharmacy

Glenwood Police Department
Glenwood Fire Department/EMS
Mills County Veterans Affairs
Heartland Family Services- CCBHC
Iowa Primary Care- ASO

Measuring What Matters

In Mills County, impact isn't just a number — it's what changes when a resident receives the right support at the right time.

Thanks to your investment, Caring for Our Communities strengthened a coordinated local system of care that helps residents move forward with dignity and stability. From June through December 2025, CFOC-related efforts in Mills County served 255 cases. Each case represents a moment when a resident needed support — whether transportation assistance, rent or utility help, or a referral for deeper navigation.

Within those cases, 123 referrals were made to the Mills County Community Health Coach, Ben Berberich, for one-on-one case management. Among those referrals, 59% were successfully resolved or stabilized (72 cases), while only 6% remained unresolved (7 cases), most often because the resident could not be reached or declined services.

The most common barriers addressed



Each month, community partners come together to talk through the challenges residents are facing and work together to remove barriers and close gaps in support.

were the everyday needs that often determine whether someone stays stable or falls into crisis: utility assistance (45 cases), transportation support (28 cases), rent or mortgage assistance (18 cases), and emergency food support (14 cases).

Ben's role is embedded within Mills County Public Health and Methodist Physicians Clinic - Glenwood, and he works closely with police, fire/EMS, and the sheriff's office — ensuring residents experience a more connected, coordinated local system of care.

Reflecting on the Impact



From Pilot Stage to now Gaining Momentum: Sustaining Lasting Impact



Linda Goos, SHIIP Counselor and community leader, shares insights from her work with older adults navigating Medicare and community resources.

In 2025, Caring for Our Communities reestablished the Community Health Coach role in Mills County during a time of public health transition and system change. In just six months, the coach became embedded in local systems, built trusted relationships with partners, and helped residents navigate complex barriers — confirming both the level of need and the value of coordinated, relationship-based support.

Often, this work begins with a single moment of crisis.

One neighbor lost her partner to cancer just four months earlier. Suddenly on her own and unable to drive, she struggled to manage daily life. Holes in her backyard fence meant her dogs

could no longer safely go outside, and over time her home became increasingly unsafe. Though finances were not the barrier, her partner had always managed the household responsibilities, leaving her overwhelmed and unsure where to begin.

Her Community Health Coach stepped in — helping her learn how to manage bills, connecting her with home cleanup and repair support, and linking her with local church partners and homemaker services so she could begin rebuilding a support system.

At first, it seemed that might be the end of her journey with us. But part of this work means staying connected as life circumstances change. Recently, she experienced a fall that affected

her ability to move safely around her home. Because the Health Coach relationship remained in place, new needs could be addressed quickly.

Working alongside partners like Mills County Public Health, the Glenwood Police Department, and other community organizations, additional support was coordinated so she could continue moving forward toward stability.

Linda Goos, Senior Health Insurance Information Program Counselor (SHIIP) shares, “It’s not always a financial barrier that people are facing. Often, it’s individuals who simply get lost in the shuffle or don’t know where to turn. The work being done by the Jennie Edmundson Foundation and Ben helps make sure those neighbors get connected to the support they need before things become overwhelming.”

Stories like this unfold every day across Mills County. Community Health Coaches meet neighbors where they are, bridge gaps between systems, and help restore stability, dignity, and hope.

Because of partners like you, more neighbors have someone to call, someone to help navigate the hard moments, and someone willing to stay alongside them until stability is within reach.

What’s Next

Strengthening Mills County’s coordinated support system is the next phase of this work. Community partners will continue meeting regularly to align resources, identify service gaps, and create clearer referral pathways so residents can access help earlier and more consistently.

By improving collaboration and information-sharing across organizations, the community can respond more quickly to emerging needs, reduce duplication of services, and ensure individuals in crisis are connected to compassionate, coordinated support. Continued investment will help accelerate this progress, strengthen stabilization efforts, and support more residents on a path toward long-term stability and well-being.



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