

Employee Spotlight: Lewis Strom



Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

I'm a Yooper and I was born and raised in Escanaba, MI and I will forever be in love with the U.P. I graduated from Western Michigan University in 2005 and I have worked in social services for approximately 17 years. I have a cat named Turkey and a roommate named Squid. I have a great relationship with my family and I moved to GR in 2020 to be closer to my brother, nieces, and sister-in-law. I am a proud uncle to my 2 nieces Finley Lou and Tegan Strom.

What is your position at Kent County and what individuals do you work with?

Community Service Assistance is my job title and essentially, I work as an intake worker on Kent County Community Action (KCCA)'s emergency services team. We serve the entire community of Kent County and we specifically assist those facing housing, food, and utility emergencies.

What are two or three things that staff should know about your role?

That we are blessed to have an amazing group of clerks who provide invaluable support to our team and our clients. In addition to assisting clients with utility and housing emergencies I also get to assist with food packing and food distributions that are aimed at helping seniors and those in the community with low income.

What is the most rewarding part of your job?

The most rewarding part of my job is assisting single parents in Kent County. I see single parents as the hardest working and most underappreciated people in America. Many of the single parents we assist are one's who have no outside support and for one reason or another are not collecting any child support. Raising a family is a full-time job in itself so when single parents are both raising a family and required to work enough to cover the monthly expenses then it's my honor to be able to assist them when they fall on hard times.

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Do you have any interesting/ fun stories about residents you have worked with?

One story that comes to mind is a client who had her husband deported and was raising three children, along with working full time. Even with all that, she was still struggling to make ends meet and the family was facing shut off notices on water and electricity. With her husband deported she was unable to collect any child support and assisting her family by resolving their utility arrears was one of many examples of a single parent who needed help and KCCA was able to provide it for them.

Also, during the pandemic many people lost their jobs and were in financial ruin and I was able to assist someone to resolve their \$15,000 mortgage arrears, which accrued during the pandemic and was threatening the family with losing their home. That type of assistance is life changing and that type of work gives my life purpose and helps me feel fulfilled in the work I have chosen. I value my ability to lead with empathy, patience, and compassion which is something KCCA in Kent County is built on.

