The Promise of Community Action

Community Action changes people’s lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live.

We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.
The Promise of Community Action

Community Action changes people’s lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live.

We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.
Dear Friends of Community Action,

This year, the 50th anniversary of the signing of the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act, represents an opportunity to reflect on what we have accomplished, the vibrant and innovative programs communities run to fight poverty, and the significant efforts, leadership, and impact of Community Action in Minnesota.

This book holds the stories and impact of Minnesota’s Community Action Agencies. Each agency’s history, programming, and impact are impressive representations of the shared work we do to fight poverty.

In Minnesota, Community Action is a strong network of 11 Tribal Nations, 26 Community Action Agencies, and individual community members. The promise of Community Action is to change people’s lives, embody the spirit of hope, improve communities, and make America a better place to live. We care about the entire community and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.

As we commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Economic Opportunity Act, we also are taking note of the opportunities and challenges still facing people in need. Over the years CAA’s formed new programs to promote and enroll clients in MNSure to increase access to affordable healthcare, developed food hub partnerships to increase access to nutritious and affordable food, and implemented new technologies to improve agencies’ ability and capacity to track clients, evaluate programs and achieve results. These are only a few examples of the ways our agencies continue to strengthen communities and help families out of poverty.

Today, with the recession behind us, our communities still struggle with job creation, wages not keeping pace with the cost of living, and a range of local challenges. Fifty years after President Johnson’s declaration on “an unconditional war on poverty in America” we continue our work strengthening families and increasing opportunities for all affirming the dignity and value of all people.

Thank you to the staff, boards of directors, volunteers, and program participants who do the work of Community Action every day — and to all those who helped make our state’s Community Action network a resource to low-income families over the years. Thanks also to all those who contributed to this report — the book is a testament to the work we do and our commitment to continuing this work going forward.

Yours in Action,

Robert Benes, Board Chair
Minnesota Community Action Partnership

Connie Greer, Director
Office of Economic Opportunity,
Minnesota Department of Human Services

Minnesota Community Action Network

Tribal Government Offices
1. Bois Forte
2. Fond du Lac
3. Grand Portage
4. Leech Lake
5. Lower Sioux
6. Mille Lacs
7. Prairie Island
8. Red Lake
9. Shakopee-Minnehaha
10. Upper Sioux
11. White Earth

Community Action Partnership of Scott, Carver and Dakota Counties

Community Action Partnership of Hennepin

Community Action Partnership of Ramsey and Washington Counties

Community Action Partnership

Community Action Partnership of Hennepin

Community Action Partnership of Scott, Carver and Dakota Counties

Community Action Partnership of Hennepin

Community Action Partnership of Scott, Carver and Dakota Counties

Community Action Partnership of Hennepin
Minnesota Indian Affairs Council

For many years now, the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC) has worked closely with the Minnesota Department of Human Services, Office of Economic Opportunity in providing crucial services to the American Indian community. The MIAC has and will continue to support strongly the Community Action movement supported by the Community Services Block Grant on both the federal and state levels.

The resources provided by the Community Action Partnership statewide have greatly benefited and impacted each Tribal Nation throughout the state for many years as have crucial resources provided by the Office of Economic Opportunity. Each Tribal Nation benefits in their own unique way by providing culturally-appropriate ways to address each of their community-specific needs. Few resources and long-standing relationships have proven so greatly beneficial to the Native Nations in Minnesota as the services provided here.

The fight against poverty of American Indians citizens of the state of Minnesota continues today. American Indians remain among some of the poorest populations in the state and nation and have some of the worst disparities in education, health, housing, and employment. The Minnesota Indian Affairs Council recognizes that real and lasting impacts have been made by the Department of Human Services/Office of Economic Opportunity and supports the ongoing efforts to adequately fund all programs that alleviate poverty and address the disparities continually plaguing our communities.

Miigwech (Ojibwe Thanks),

Annamarie Hill
Executive Director
Minnesota Indian Affairs Council
HISTORY OF COMMUNITY ACTION IN MINNESOTA
INTRODUCTION

This book was compiled to honor the history of Community Action Agencies and Tribal Governments to fight poverty. It has been 50 years since Community Action funding sprang forth into our country’s collective narrative, with the ambitious goal to eradicate poverty in the United States. In March 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson proclaimed that “Because it is right, because it is wise, and because, for the first time in our history, it is possible to conquer poverty, I submit, for the consideration of Congress and the country, the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964.”

With those words, the President and Congress declared the War on Poverty. Our leaders proclaimed that poverty had no place in this prosperous country and moved in unity to develop new structures to release our country’s citizens from the grip of poverty. A central piece of this War on Poverty included Community Action, a unifying service delivery structure for locally-based program design.

As you read this book, two things will become apparent: There is unity of vision among Community Action Agencies and Tribal Governments in Minnesota; there is also variation in voices, reflective of individual community strengths, needs, resources, hopes, and dreams.

Community Action Agencies and Tribal Governments proudly recall their historical roots in the War on Poverty; many agencies reference this history in individual narratives, with words echoing one another, in a show of united identity. They remember our national leaders’ creation of Community Action, as well as local leaders heeding the national charge to galvanize communities to fight poverty for all citizens.

Within this united voice you also hear tremendous diversity. A central tenet of Community Action is that poverty can only be beat if people in poverty are meaningfully involved in designing and organizing programs, or “maximum feasible participation” is fully present in solutions. While people living with low incomes, regardless of their community, need access to opportunities such as employment, transportation, child care and health care, the unique options and resources of individual communities vary significantly from one another.

To be sure, there are hallmark Community Action programs such as Head Start, Energy Assistance and Weatherization. Yet, there are also many more programs individually focused to communities. With a one-size-fits-all agency design, people would not be served well or effectively. Community Action has always known this to be true. In this book, you’ll learn about creative program design that is of the people, by the people and for the people….particular to the individual communities served by Minnesota Community Action, providing people with opportunities to rise out of poverty once and for all.
**Historical Highlights**

### 1960s

**May 1963**
The Minnesota Legislature creates the Minnesota Indian Affairs Commission (now the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council).

**January 8, 1964**
President Lyndon Johnson declares The War on Poverty during his State of the Union address.

**March 1964**
President Johnson introduces the Economic Opportunity Act to Congress.

**August 20, 1964**
Congress passes the Economic Opportunity Act and President Johnson signs it into law, creating the federal Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) and programs such as Community Action, Head Start, VISTA and Job Corps.

**1965**
The Minnesota Office of Economic Opportunity is created and by the end of the year nearly all counties are served by newly formed Community Action Agencies (CAAs).

**March 1966**
Rep. Al Quie (R-MN) urges CAA governing boards be composed of at least 1/3 representing the poor (“maximum feasible participation”). This amendment is adopted into law and implemented in January 1967.

**September 1969**
The Minnesota CAA Executive Directors form the Minnesota CAP Directors Association.

### 1970s

**September 1971**
The Minnesota CAP Directors Association is reorganized into the Minnesota CAP Association.

**May 1973**
The Minnesota Legislature provides the first state funding for Community Action Agencies. This was done in part to help meet the match requirements of the OEO funding program.

**January 5, 1975**
President Gerald Ford signs legislation that closes the federal OEO and establishes the Community Services Administration. The Department of Health Education and Welfare (HEW) now administers Community Action funding.

**1976**
The Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) is created to assist low-income families who lacked resources to invest in energy efficiency.

**January 1977**
The Congressional Budget Office concludes that federal social services programs reduced poverty by 60% during the decade of 1965-1975.

### 1980s

**August 13, 1981**
President Ronald Reagan signs the Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1981 creating the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) and closing the Community Services Administration.

**1981**
Minnesota responds by passing the Minnesota Community Action Program Act, the first state Community Action legislation in the country.

### 1990s

**May 5, 1994**
In response to the 1993 Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), the CSBG Law is amended to require CAAs to create outcome measures in promoting self-sufficiency, family stability and community revitalization. Following this amendment, Community Action's Monitoring and Assessment Task Force introduced Results-Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) as a framework to measure outcomes.

**October 27, 1998**
Public Law 105-285 is signed into law, reauthorizing the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) and requiring the use of ROMA by all agencies by October 1, 2001.

### 2000s

**2005**
National Performance Indicators (NPIs) are developed and required by the Office of Community Services as part of the fulfillment of ROMA reporting for CSBG grantees.

**February 17, 2009**
President Barack Obama signs the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), providing the Community Action network with an additional $1 billion in CSBG and a dramatic increase in weatherization funding to help stimulate the economy and create and maintain jobs.

**2010**
Nationally, CSBG ranks 8th and the WAP ranks 9th out of approximately 200 federal programs in the number of direct jobs created or retained for the quarter beginning July 1, 2010 and ending September 30, 2010 under ARRA.

**2014**
The Community Action Network commemorates the 50th Anniversary of the signing of the Economic Opportunity Act and rededicates itself to the work of ending poverty.
Title VII—Treatment of Income for Certain Public Assistance Purposes

Sec. 701. (a) Notwithstanding the provisions of titles I, IV, X, XIV, and XVI of the Social Security Act, a State plan approved under any such title shall provide that—

(1) the first $85 plus one-half of the excess over $85 of payments made to or on behalf of any person for or with respect to any month under title I or II of this Act or any program financed under such title shall not be regarded (A) as income or resources of such person in determining his need under such approved State plan, or (B) as income or resources of any other individual in determining the need of such other individual under such approved State plan;

(2) no payments made to or on behalf of any person for or with respect to any month under such title or any such program shall be regarded as income or resources of any other individual in determining the need of such other individual under such approved State plan except to the extent made available to or for the benefit of such other individual; and

(3) no grant made to any family under title III of this Act shall be regarded as income or resources of such family in determining the need of any member thereof under such approved State plan.

(b) No funds in which a State is otherwise entitled under title I, IV, X, XIV, or XVI of the Social Security Act for any period before July 1, 1964, shall be withdrawn or held in reserve of any action taken pursuant to a State plan which prevents such State from complying with the requirements of subsection (a).

[Signature]
[Signature]
[Signature]
Service providers and neighbors to develop plans to correct conditions leading to juvenile delinquency. Since the program required community members to take action for a cause, it was dubbed Community Action.

The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 describes Community Action as a program that “... mobilizes and utilizes resources, public or private, of any urban or rural, or combined urban or rural, geographical area (referred to ... as a “Community”), including but not limited to a state, metropolitan area, county, city, town, multi-city unit or multi-county unit in an attack on poverty.” The act stipulates that a Community Action Program must:

- Provide services, assistance and other activities of sufficient scope and size to give promise of progress toward elimination of poverty through developing employment opportunities, improving human performance, motivation and productivity, or bettering the conditions under which people live, learn and work.
- Be developed, conducted and administered with the maximum feasible participation of residents of the areas and members of the groups served.
- Be conducted, administered or coordinated by a public or private nonprofit agency (other than a political party) or a combination thereof.
- Include provision for reasonable access of the public to information, including but not limited to, reasonable ... in the development, conduct and administration of the program, in accordance with procedures approved by the Director.

The State of Minnesota defines a Community Action Program as one that is community based and operated and “… includes or is designed to include a sufficient number of projects or components to provide, in sum, a range of services and activities having a measurable and potentially major impact on causes of poverty in the community or those areas of the community where poverty is a particularly acute problem…. ”

Community Action addresses more than the obvious lack of material goods and money. Its ideology hinges on the belief that a lack of power is what keeps people in poverty. Combatting the problem is best accomplished by those who are experiencing it first hand, giving them the power to take the actions necessary to help themselves. Therefore, a Community Action Program may be described as a means of eliminating poverty by enlisting the aid of those who are themselves in a poverty situation, thus empowering them to attain and sustain self-sufficiency. Community Action Agencies assist in this process by providing services and opportunities to low-income individuals and encouraging them to participate in the journey toward independence for themselves and others.
Communication media also contributed to the birth of Community Action. By the 1950s, radio and television broadcasts provided nationwide coverage of issues affecting American society. As the public became more aware of these issues, people began to feel a responsibility for helping others overcome the barriers that prevented them from achieving “the good life.” The time was right for communities to take responsibility for helping their citizens.

Two projects are considered to be the models for modern Community Action: Mobilization for Youth and the New Haven project. In 1961, U.S. Attorney General Robert Kennedy chaired the President’s Council on Juvenile Delinquency as part of President Kennedy’s New Frontier. The Council, in conjunction with the Ford Foundation and the City of New York, provided funding for a program called Mobilization for Youth (MFY).

MFY organized and coordinated neighborhood councils composed of local officials, service providers and neighbors to develop plans to correct conditions leading to juvenile delinquency. School board and city council members were recruited to implement those plans. The Ford Foundation also provided funding for a project in New Haven, Connecticut, which recruited people from all sectors of the community to come together to plan and implement programs for low-income people. The term Community Action was coined to describe these efforts and was seen as an effective and inexpensive way to solve societal problems.

---

The Way It Was

- General History
- What Prompted the Community Action Movement

“Public concern for the poor is not new. Measures to prevent, and particularly to relieve, poverty have an ancient origin in every civilization. Each generation in America has forged new weapons in the public and private fight against this perennial enemy. Until recent decades, the focus was primarily on the alleviation of distress, rather than on prevention or rehabilitation. Yet all the while, the sources of poverty have been eroded as a by-product of a general advance in economic well-being and of measures designed to achieve other social goals.”

- Economic Report to the President, Transmitted to Congress, January 1964

The spirit of helping others has been a key element of American culture. As they moved westward, settlers established churches to help those less fortunate. Settlement houses joined churches in serving the needs of the poor during the Industrial Revolution in the mid-1800s. By the early 20th century, schools began to offer formal training in the principles and methods of social work, leading to the birth of a profession dedicated to helping others. In one way or another, Americans had somewhere to turn in times of need, but no one was prepared for the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Despite best efforts, churches and social welfare programs were overwhelmed by the magnitude of social problems created by the Great Depression. It was then that the federal government stepped in to help. This included creation of the Social Security Program to guarantee retirement income, the Unemployment Insurance System to assist those between jobs, banking and labor laws to guard against further economic disaster, and a temporary public assistance program to aid widows and children of men killed in industrial accidents. Social workers were hired to assist those in need by determining program eligibility and helping people obtain needed services to get back on their feet.

Initially, state and local governments bore the responsibility for administering social welfare programs. Things began to change, however, when the U.S. Supreme Court heard the landmark Brown v. Board of Education case in 1954 and declared that separate schools for blacks and whites did not provide equal education. This decision resulted in the expansion of federal policymaking into what had previously been a local arena and served as the catalyst for publicly financed activities, such as transportation and licensing of lunch counters, restaurants and hotels. Due to the encroachment of federal policies on state and local programs, citizens’ rights groups began to spring up everywhere, adding momentum to the Civil Rights Movement.

---

The War on Poverty

- Significant Events
- The Economic Opportunity Act signed into being in 1964

“It is therefore the policy of the United States to eliminate the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty in this nation by opening, to everyone, the opportunity for education and training, the opportunity to work, and the opportunity to live in decency and dignity.”

- Economic Opportunity Act, 1964

Social legislation of the New Deal in the 1930s marked a turning point by recognizing a national interest in the economic well-being and security of American families and individuals. New Deal programs were designed to alleviate poverty in old age and to shield families from loss of income during unemployment.

President Lyndon B. Johnson expanded on the policy ideas initiated in the Kennedy administration. In his message to Congress in January 1964, President Johnson officially declared war on poverty:
“Let us carry forward the plans and programs of John F. Kennedy, not because of our sorrow or sympathy, but because they are right…. This Administration today, here and now, declares an unconditional War on Poverty in America…. Our joint Federal-local effort must pursue poverty, pursue it wherever it exists.... ”

In February 1964, R. Sargent “Sarge” Shriver was asked to head a task force to draft legislation, which became the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 (EOA). The act was passed in August of that year, creating a federal Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) in the President’s executive office with Shriver as its first director. The Economic Opportunity Act was designed to implement a guarantee of equality in the economic sector. It included new education, employment, training and work-experience programs such as Job Corps, Neighborhood Youth Corps and Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA, the “domestic Peace Corps”). Congress by-passed the state and local governments by providing direct funding of community groups to promote Community Action.

President Johnson appointed a 14-member National OEO Advisory Council in January 1965, naming Shriver as its chairman and Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey as its honorary chairman. The federal OEO’s charge was to lead the War on Poverty and coordinate related programs of all other federal agencies. It also provided for the creation of economic opportunity offices at the state level to involve governors in the War on Poverty. Governors were not authorized to give prior approval on OEO grants, but they retained the right to veto any grants they deemed inappropriate. As Director of OEO, Shriver could override state-level vetoes, which frequently occurred in the South, and exercised this power in virtually all cases.

Community Action Agencies (CAAs) were authorized under Title II of the EOA to fight the War on Poverty “at home.” Their role was to develop locally and implement Community Action Programs (CAPs), such as food shelves, community health centers and senior citizen services. CAAs varied from grassroots, community-controlled groups to those with experienced board members and a highly visible professional staff. Most were incorporated as private, nonprofit organizations, while some were city agencies. OEO provided “local initiative funds” which the local CAAs could designate to meet the needs of the poor as they felt appropriate. The first CAP grants went to existing programs in Alabama, Colorado, Georgia, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina and Wisconsin. The bulk of the initial $13 million appropriation went to well-developed plans in Detroit, Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., Pittsburgh and Atlanta.

CAAs opened neighborhood centers to meet the EOA’s provision for the poor to have “maximum feasible participation.” In this way, people who needed help could be identified and enrolled in programs that fit their needs. A new group of community leaders evolved from these neighborhood organizations, voicing the concerns of the poor and insisting on change. This formed the basis of the philosophy, strength and personal commitments of Community Action.

OEO hired 3,000 federal employees to manage and monitor all the new programs, drawing people from the CAAs, civil rights groups, churches, labor unions and other activist organizations. The Community Action Programs grew rapidly and large amounts of federal funds were poured into local communities. Unhappy with the fast rise of new power blocks outside their political organizations, a few big-city mayors communicated their concerns to Congress and President Johnson. This resulted in new funds earmarked for congressionally-defined National Emphasis Programs that reduced the CAAs’ ability to use the funds outside program boundaries.

**Community Action Comes to Minnesota**

- **Progression of Community Action to State Level**
- **Minnesota’s Early Efforts Leading Up to MCAA Formation**
- **Map of Original CAA Areas**

““The future does not belong to those who are content with today... Rather it will belong to those who can blend vision, reason and courage in a personal commitment.”

- Robert Kennedy

Community Action was introduced to Minnesota in 1965. Jim Turgen, a federal OEO official from the regional office in Kansas City, met with county officials across the state to organize Community Action Agencies. Although he met with strong opposition from many county commissioners, local citizens strongly supported the idea. Proposed service area boundaries were drawn up based on population, projected need and available personnel. By the end of the year, nearly all Minnesota counties were represented through individual CAAs.

**Structure**

Initially the CAAs operated primarily as advocacy organizations concerned with promoting social change at the community level. Their role was to determine community needs for low-income citizens and to plan new programs and services to meet those needs, particularly for the urban poor. Actual program operations were delegated to outside sources.

Each CAA had an executive director, a board of directors and a handful of employees representing all walks of life. They were school teachers, businessmen, social workers, farmers or members of low-income households.
Anyone with an interest in Community Action was welcomed with no experience necessary. Offices were established wherever space could be found, often in a spare room at a school or government office.

Federal funding was readily available as seed money to plan and start new programs. The pace was hectic as everyone scrambled to get organized and apply for funding to get their programs off the ground. Mary Lou Clowes of Ramsey Action Programs (RAP) remembers:

“Professor William Hoffman, a social work instructor at the University of Minnesota, volunteered to help write the funding proposal for the city of St. Paul. He hand wrote it on the plane while flying to the regional office, had it typed upon his arrival and presented it directly from the typewriter. The funding was approved on the spot. Things moved pretty fast in those days.”

**Growing Pains**

Although funding was fairly easy to obtain, clients were not. CAA representatives were operating at a disadvantage. On one hand, they were enthusiastic about the opportunity to help people through the new programs. They spent countless hours submitting grant proposals, determining community needs and developing new programs with virtually no budget and a skeleton staff. On the other hand, they had to seek out potential clients, convince them that the programs were worthwhile and train them in how to use the programs to achieve self-sufficiency. Progress was slow due to public perception that the CAAs were an example of wasteful government spending. Despite this opposition, CAAs persevered and became a strong presence in most Minnesota communities.

The first legislative revisions came in 1966. Initially, local agencies were required to provide a 10 percent match to ensure that the federal government was not the sole support for Community Action Programs. It was intended that the CAAs would eventually be primarily self-supporting. The new legislation increased the matching requirement to 50 percent. A wage ceiling of $15,000 per year in federal funding for CAA employees was imposed, and local funds used to pay salaries higher than $15,000 could not be counted as part of the matching requirement. In addition, CAAs could no longer use federal funding for political activity such as lobbying. These changes were very controversial for the fledgling CAAs as they struggled to survive.

In late 1967, Congress passed the Green Amendment, which required that each CAA must obtain official designation for its area by local elected officials in order to operate in that community. OEO could then recognize the CAA and provide funds. OEO also required many small, single-county CAAs to join together in multi-county units to better utilize funds. After months of negotiations, over 95 percent of the existing CAAs were designated nationwide. In several large cities, the CAA was taken over by the mayor and turned into a public agency. All Minnesota CAAs received their official designations and most retained private nonprofit status.

In conjunction with the Green Amendment, Congress also passed the Quie Amendment, authored by Representative Albert H. Quie (R-MN). This amendment required that CAA boards of directors be composed of one-third elected officials appointed by the board, at least one-third low-income representatives selected by a democratic process and one-third representatives from the private sector.

These amendments had a positive effect on most CAA boards, though the issue of increasing the influence of local elected officials on the board of directors was a significant issue to many leaders. The formal connection of the political, economic and community power structures proved to be a tremendous strength. In many places, the CAA boards became the arena for local officials, the business sector and the poor to reach agreement on the policies, self-help activities and programs to help the poor.

**Uniting the CAAs**

- **Defining roles**
- **Working together**
- **Articles of Incorporation Certificate**

The first few years of Community Action activity provided serious challenges for the CAAs. Several new programs had been established, including Head Start, Family Planning, Community Health Centers, Legal Services, VISTA, Foster Grandparents, Economic Development, Neighborhood Centers, Summer Youth Programs, Adult Basic Education, Senior Centers and Congregate Meal Preparation. However, CAAs were stretched to their limits as they continued to plan and implement new programs, raise money, recruit volunteers and establish operating procedures. Competition between agencies was fierce. More aggressive agencies pursued federal dollars early and enjoyed relatively large budgets, while newer agencies struggled for the remainder of available funds.

Before long, CAA directors realized that their ability to function effectively was limited. They needed a way to share resources and ideas in order to succeed. As a result, the Minnesota CAP Directors Association was born. Each CAA was represented by its executive director. The Articles of Incorporation, signed on September 26, 1969, stated:

“The purpose of this corporation shall be: (a) To serve in an exclusively charitable and educational capacity as provided under Section 503(c)(3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code of 1954, as amended. (b) In
When Nixon began his second term in office in 1973, he did not request any funds for OEO’s Community Action Program division, despite the fact that Congress had already appropriated funds for Community Action. He named Howard Phillips acting director of OEO to oversee dismantling and closing the agency altogether. Several Minnesota CAA directors traveled to Washington, D.C., to join a nationwide protest and participated in a lawsuit to stop dismantlement. Their efforts were successful. U.S. District Court judge William B. Jones ruled that the President could not refuse to spend funds appropriated by Congress. He ordered Phillips to immediately halt termination of OEO programs as such action is “unauthorized by law, illegal and in excess of statutory authority.” Funding was restored to the CAAs, and Community Action Programs continued to operate.

Quality vs. Quantity

- Mission Statement

- CA issues in the 1970s

The mission of the Minnesota Community Action Association is:

1. To provide administrative, informational, legislative and technical services to and on behalf of the Minnesota Community Action Agencies.

2. To ensure that community action fulfills its advocacy commitment to the poor by maintaining broadly based representation of the disadvantaged by documenting program effectiveness and by gaining recognition of CAA efforts through effective public relations policies.

3. To guarantee a proper use of federal and state dollars allotted for low-income activities and programs by following appropriate federal and state legislation.

4. To assist in the professional career development of the community action agencies’ staff by providing training and technical assistance to these staff members.

- Minnesota CAP Association Bylaws, July 20, 1978

By the 1970s, the initial flurry of program development cooled, and the CAAs began to take a closer look at how programs were managed. Although many programs were flourishing, others were not meeting expectations. The practice of outsourcing program management had resulted in varying levels of compliance with CAP rules and regulations, which created concerns for CAAs about program quality and adequate funding. To address these issues, CAAs began to focus on providing services directly to low-income citizens.

Changes were also occurring at the federal level. In 1974, President Gerald Ford succeeded in eliminating the federal OEO department but replaced it with the Community Services Administration (CSA), which continued to fund CAAs until 1981. President Jimmy Carter further strengthened the role

Working together as a united entity did not come easily. Many of Minnesota’s Community Action pioneers were visionaries, but not everyone shared the same vision. Agency operations and programs were also functioning at varying levels, which created conflicting needs among the CAAs. Although tensions ran high, the group continued to work together and address common issues.

On September 2, 1971 the Minnesota CAP Directors Association, with support and funding from the state OEO, reorganized as the Minnesota CAP Association. The Association’s membership expanded to include CAA directors and representatives from other organizations involved in Community Action to ensure full representation by all interested parties. It was subdivided into six sectors – CAP Directors, OEO, Head Start, Outreach, Energy/Housing and Manpower – to represent the major program areas. It was further divided into seven committees – Career Development, Finance, Legislative, Operations, Personnel, Planning and Public Relations – to oversee Association operations.

The Minnesota CAP Association’s mission statement now read:

- To stimulate the individual professional growth and skill development of association members by a process of mutual assistance and deliberative discussion.

- To effect high standards which become manifest programmatically on an agency level, via recommending improvements, establishing and maintaining tangible performance criteria, and coordinating the mobilization of all available resources to address the needs of the low-income.

- To ensure that community action fulfills its advocacy commitment to the poor by maintaining broadly based representation of the disadvantaged, documenting program effectiveness, gaining recognition of CAA efforts through effective public relations policies, and serving in a spokesman role for the low-income before all legislative, regulatory and administrative bodies and the general public.

The Minnesota CAP Association faced its first major crisis with the election of President Richard Nixon. In January 1969, President Nixon appointed a high-level commission that proposed the gradual dismemberment of OEO. Several large programs were transferred from OEO to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and the Department of Labor. Along with the transfer went administrative oversight responsibility for a substantial portion of CAA funding.
and management systems of CSA and the CAAs after prodding from Congress in the late 1970s.

In Minnesota, CAP Association members felt it was time for CAAs to strengthen their Association and concentrate statewide power and resources to reduce poverty through public education and advocacy. After considerable deliberation, the Minnesota Community Action Association (MCAA) name was adopted in 1975 to establish an identity that would better represent Association members into the future.

The Association made great strides toward its goals under the MCAA umbrella. It helped initiate state funding for Head Start and Weatherization programs, developed policy language to strengthen Cold Weather Rule protection and targeted the use of oil over-charge funds toward low-income energy conservation efforts. An allocation of $5,000 in special state funds was received to implement a Special Crisis Intervention Program prompted by the energy crisis. The Minnesota Migrant Council officially joined and became an active participant in the Association. Attendance at Association meetings grew, with nearly 100 percent regular attendance by 1977. A Data System Task Force was formed to implement a data collection system for all Minnesota CAAs. Legislative financial support was strong with $1.2 million in 1975 and $2.4 million in 1977.

Political support for Community Action was strong in Minnesota. In 1978, Governor Rudy Perpich created a task force to review existing state policies on the poor, recommend ways to correct policies that had an adverse effect on the poor, and propose directions the Governor might take in state policy development. The task force developed goals that placed an emphasis on stimulating the private and public sector to eradicate poverty. On the federal level, the matching fund requirement for federal assistance was reduced to 20 percent for CAAs, relieving them of the then high matching burden of 50 percent.

The Block Grant Years

- **Consolidation of Federal Programs**
- **Community Services Block Grant**

The Reagan Administration launched efforts to reduce the federal government’s financial support for domestic social programs in the early 1980s. The CSA was replaced by the Office of Community Services in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Congress refused to honor President Reagan’s proposal to eliminate federal funding for CAAs but created eight new block grants that consolidated over 200 federal programs, reduced core funding and turned administrative authority over to the states.

Passage of the Omnibus Budget and Reconciliation Act of 1981 rescinded the EOA and the Green Amendment, eliminating the procedures and regulations for designation and recognition of CAAs and establishing the Community Services Block Grants (CSBG). In September 1981, Congress provided that all CAAs formerly designated and recognized by CSA were eligible to be funded under the 90 percent pass-through requirement on the Community Services Block Grant. This required that at least 90 percent of funding be allocated to local “eligible entities” with state administrative costs limited to five percent. Another five percent could be used to support state discretionary programs.

Minnesota responded to these changes by passing the Minnesota Community Action Program Act, the first state CAP legislation in the country. It became a model for state legislation in New Jersey, Florida, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, New York, Virginia, Iowa and Missouri. The CAP Act was the state’s equivalent of the Economic Opportunity Act and provided financial assistance through the Minnesota Department of Jobs and Training (later renamed the Department of Economic Security) to accomplish the following purpose:

“It is the policy of this state to help develop the full potential of each citizen so that they can live in decency and dignity and so that they can contribute to the strength of the state as a whole. The resources of the private sector of the economy in particular should be employed to increase the opportunities for people to develop their capabilities. It is the purpose of this act to strengthen, supplement and coordinate efforts that further these policies.”

Although the CAAs had made progress through the 1970s, poverty was still a serious issue for Minnesota in the 1980s. The Minnesota Governor’s Commission on Poverty released in December 1986 concluded that, “A poverty of opportunity exists in Minnesota, particularly employment opportunities. Even after four years of modest recovery, the state’s economy is unable to produce a job for everyone who needs one. An additional barrier that confronts the aging, those with disabilities, minorities and women is a persistent discrimination that further diminishes equality of opportunity.” The study found that 475,000 Minnesotans were living in poverty in 1986 compared to 100,000 from 1979. Two-parent families accounted for 45 percent of the increase, families headed by single women accounted for 32 percent of the increase and poverty among working families had increased to 56 percent.
Focus widened from only providing services for low-income citizens to measuring outcomes and results in an effort to better serve clients. Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) was created in 1994 based upon principles contained in the federal Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1993. ROMA provides a framework and cycle for continuous growth and improvement among Community Action Agencies. In addition to six broad anti-poverty goals, the ROMA cycle guides agencies through the process of assessment, planning, implementation, achieving results, and evaluating results.

Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) provided an accountability framework for Community Action Agencies as mandated by CSBG, giving agencies information essential to growth and improvement, such as staff training needs, and access to data that is important for funders. Minnesota was awarded a contract from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (U.S. DHHS) to manage a national ROMA website. As a result, a wealth of tools and expertise developed nationwide were brought to bear in Minnesota.

Minnesota piloted a new process for comprehensively assessing an individual’s steps towards self-reliance. This process was developed and implemented by the ROMA collaborative in 1999 and is referred to as a scaling tool or ladder. Starting in the fall of 2000, Minnesota implemented the pilot in a handful of CAAs for 12 months, then statewide in late 2001.

In 2003, the Office of Economic Opportunity moved to the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS). One significant aspect of OEO’s move to DHS was that Head Start program administration was retained by the Children, Families and Learning (CFL), which had now been renamed the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE). At this time the Energy Assistance and Weatherization programs moved to the Minnesota Department of Commerce. In 2003, the Minnesota legislature cut Community Action Grant funding as part of its overall efforts to address a state budget shortfall.

In 2005, the National Performance Indicators (NPIs) were developed and required by the federal Office of Community Services as part of the fulfillment of ROMA reporting for CSBG grantees. Having a national framework to capture information about activities and outcomes allowed the Community Action Network to tell a common story that used the same language.

During these years, many Community Action Agencies increased their involvement in real estate development around the state, in order to create affordable housing. This activity occurred in various ways, such as buying homes for remodel and resale; new home construction; apartment development, to name a few ways that Community Action in Minnesota began more concertedly to address the need for people with lower incomes.
of the Great Recession, many agencies also increased their work in mortgage foreclosure prevention programs, as families around the state were losing their homes with significantly increased numbers.

### A Crucial Partner

- **The Minnesota Indian Affairs Council**

Minnesota, the twelfth largest state in Indian population, established the first Indian Affairs agency in the United States in 1963, which provided a model for other states to follow. As the official liaison between state and tribal governments, the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (IAC) protects the sovereignty of Minnesota’s tribes and the well-being of American Indian people throughout the state. Its vision is to strive for social, economic and political justice for all American Indian people living in Minnesota, while embracing traditional cultural and spiritual values. Tribal efforts to improve conditions for American Indian communities resulted in passage of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1972, which helped enhance the scope and abilities of tribal governing bodies to control their own destinies.

The Minnesota IAC has enjoyed a long-standing, unique partnership with the Minnesota Office of Economic Opportunity. Minnesota's 11 Indian Reservation governments–seven Anishinaabe and four Sioux–have chosen to be part of the Community Action Network and operate local community action programs as grantees of the State of Minnesota.

### Community Action Today

- **Current CA Issues**

- **Outlook for the Future**

Today Minnesota’s Community Action Network includes 37 CAAs and Indian Reservation governments delivering nearly 60 different programs, including Head Start, Legal Services, Community Food and Nutrition Program, RSVP, Weatherization, Fuel Fund and Child Care Resource & Referral. Minnesota CAAs are private, nonprofit corporations or Tribal Governments and maintain collaborative partnerships with local business and programs to help strengthen and stabilize families as they strive for self-sufficiency.

Minnesota’s grantees receive funding from a wide range of private and public sources, including all levels of government. Core funding is provided by the Minnesota Community Action Grant and Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), which allow flexibility to design and implement programs to meet local needs. In 2012, $7.36 million in federal Community Services Block Grant funding and $3.93 million in Minnesota Community Action Grant funding leveraged almost $500 million in other funding and over 1.34 million
hours of volunteer service. If valued at the federal minimum wage ($7.25), the contribution of volunteer time would be worth more than $9.74 million.

Minnesota Community Action Agencies are exploring administrative redesign options, due to funding decreases over the last decade. Some examples include: shared administrative functions across agencies, such as human resources or finance; complete merger of agencies; and, coordination of some programming. Agencies all around the state are creatively looking at ways that they can cut administrative costs yet still maintain or even increase programming available to people with low incomes.

Across the state, CAAs and Tribes continue to address the ever-changing face of poverty, including the dramatic concentrations of poverty and persistent income inequality for communities of color. While poverty levels for White Minnesotans is one of the lowest in the nation, Black, American Indian and Latino communities have significantly higher rates of poverty. In 2009, 35% of Blacks and American Indians lived below the poverty line. Latinos (26%) and Asians (17%) also had significantly higher poverty rates than non-Hispanic Whites (8%). CAAs address these ever-changing demographics and needs through programs that continue to be community-based, ensuring that they effectively and efficiently eliminate obstacles to people becoming self-sufficient.

Community Action places great hope and value in developing leaders from low-income and other communities, who can effectively address this changing face of poverty in Minnesota. Complex revenue and accountability systems, the serious nature of the social problems and the critical importance of local community contexts create unique management and leadership challenges. In order to give Community Action representatives the opportunity to increase leadership skills and access knowledge of the most up-to-date organization administration and program development tools, the Network created the Community Action Emerging Leaders Institute (ELI) in 2010.

Since then, two ELI cohorts have participated in sessions led by the University of Minnesota’s Humphrey Institute of Public and Nonprofit Leadership Center. Providing practical knowledge, ELI introduces innovative ideas, relevant research, and hands-on solutions to program and organizational challenges. Now, ELI graduates have formed working groups to implement the skills and knowledge gained on behalf of Minnesota’s statewide Community Action Network.

Community Action has historically and is currently listening to the pulse of the low-income community, ever striving for even more effective ways to address issues of poverty in the state. The countless dedicated and devoted CAA leaders from around Minnesota will carry Community Action with a bright torch into its future, just as President Johnson challenged our country to do 50 years ago, when he waged the War on Poverty.
Laying the Foundation

States across the nation formed State Economic Opportunity Offices (SEOOs) after passage of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. The Minnesota OEO opened as part of the Governor’s Office in December 1965. Federal OEO provided funding to state OEO offices which in turn helped local communities form Community Action Agencies and then apply for federal Head Start and other grants. In the early years the Minnesota OEO provided technical assistance on the basics of Community Action including: board training, nonprofit corporation issues, and foundational information on program areas such as Head Start and low-income housing.

Office Locations

In the beginning, Minnesota OEO was located in Room 76 in the State Office Building. In 1967, the OEO moved to 459 Rice Street. One year later, April 1967, the OEO moved to the old Capitol Square Building at 550 Cedar Street, where the Department of Human Services (DHS), Anderson Building now stands. DHS provided initial administrative functions for OEO. Later, OEO became part of the Governor’s Manpower Office. Both offices next joined the Department of Economic Security. OEO was housed in Metro Square for a time, co-located with the Minnesota Community Action Association. They even shared a secretary!

OEO had several addresses while at DES, including 390 North Robert Street, the American Center Building on Robert and Kellogg overlooking the Mississippi River, and Rice Street. In 1996, OEO was transferred to the Department of Children, Families and Learning (CFL) and after a brief stay back at the Capitol Square Building, moved with CFL to Roseville on Highway 36 and Snelling Avenue. In 2003, OEO moved again to Metro Square to become part of the Department of Human Services (DHS), returning to an old address and old friends. Currently OEO is located in the DHS 444 Lafayette Road office.

Programming

As it happens with CAP (Community Action Program) agencies at the local community level, programs have come and have gone from OEO. Some programs started at OEO and then grew and were spun off or left behind over the years. Programs that started at OEO and are now located within another agency include: state funding for Head Start, the Low Income Energy Assistance Program, the Weatherization Assistance Program, Twin Cities Voice Mail, and the Lead Hazard Reduction Program.

OEO currently operates programs in three broad areas. First - Community Action, Financial Fitness and Asset Building; second - food programs including SNAP Outreach and SNAP Education, The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), and the Minnesota Food Shelf Program; third - homeless programs including Safe Harbor, Transitional Housing, Emergency Shelter programs, and Homeless Youth Programs. Funding for these programs and activities comes from the state legislature, congress, foundations and corporations. As always, Minnesota OEO values relationships and partnerships with local agencies and Tribal Governments, and remains committed to the original OEO mission of being a voice for the poor within state government. Ongoing relationships with key community partners are crucial to shared success.

Structure of Community Action

In addition to being a voice for the poor within state government, states were asked to promote the development and strengthening of community-based institutions, undertake research and test innovative solutions, and develop and support local programs. At the state level, in the 1970’s Governor Anderson created Regional Development Commissions – Prairie Five and Region 6.
In 1981 changes occurred at the federal level for the configuration of funding for Community Action activity. When the Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) replaced the Community Service Act, states assumed the administrative role for funding local Community Action Agencies.

Also in the 1980’s, Minnesota OEO adopted ideas from Total Quality Management (TQM). Most notably, Minnesota OEO determined that grantees, Community Action Agencies and Tribal Governments were their customer. This set an even more positive and supportive tone for engagement and partnership. Newer iterations of TQM and other improvements have been incorporated into the OEO philosophy over the years including: lean, continuous improvement, outcome-based management, customer satisfaction, positive youth development and the set of guiding principles adopted from Region V Head Start. All of these enhancements have been consistent with the original principles set forth by the federal OEO.

OEO understands that people experiencing poverty and those who are hungry and homeless, face many barriers. Leaders at DHS have encouraged staff to think of "people not programs". This approach fits well with OEO values. The idea of comprehensive and integrated programming in an environment of ever more demanding rules and regulations, is a balancing act for OEO and its partners. Strategic partnerships with advocacy organizations, Tribal Governments and grantees have been beneficial to advancing the vision and mission of OEO and its partners. The Minnesota Community Action Association is a key partner.
History

The history of Minnesota’s Community Action Association and related sector organizations is divided into two major eras.

Minnesota Community Action Association was incorporated in 1969 under the leadership of Father Charles Strack. This initial era’s governance structure included a board composed of CAA executive directors and representatives from major sectors including: Community Services Administration (CSA), United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW), Manpower, Senior Citizens, Head Start, and Community Action Program (CAP) Directors. Father Strack was followed by Bob Bester (1976-1978) who, in turn, was followed by Steve Watson (1978-1988).

In 1982, as part of the transition to the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) block grant era, the association migrated to a governance model in which the board was composed of executive directors only. This model continues today. A by-product of this association redesign was an evolution of sector organizations including: Minnesota Head Start Association (MHSA), Minnesota Weatherization Advisory Group, Energy Co-coordinators Association, and Minnesota Community Action Data Systems.

Over the years, the association has held various names. It was originally incorporated in 1969 as the Minnesota CAP Directors Association. In 1971, it was legally renamed the Minnesota CAP Association and in 1992 legally renamed the Minnesota Community Action Association. In 2006, it legally became the Minnesota Community Action Partnership. Association leaders after 1988 were: Denise DeVaan (1988-1999); Tarryl Clark (1999-2006); and Arnie Anderson (2007-present).

Major State Funding Events

1975
• Obtained state funding.
• Successful replacement of EAP/CAP transfer with state funding.
• Mandated minimum 5% EAP/Weatherization transfer.

1997-98
• Increased state funding to $19 million, in conjunction with transfer to new Department of Children, Families and Learning.

1998
• Established FAIM (Family Assets for Independence in Minnesota).

2009
• Secured Great Recession “Stimulus Funding” which temporarily increased federal funding for the Weatherization Program ten-fold to $140,000,000.

2009 – 2013
• Maintained key program funding stability post-Great Recession.

By 2013, the statewide Community Action network had evolved into Minnesota’s largest, private nonprofit social services network serving all 87 counties.

Major Program/Policy Events

1975
• Creation of Community Workers Fund to support lobbying.

1990
• The name change to Minnesota Community Action Association (MCAA) included the creation of a delegate assembly at annual conferences to generate the association’s advocacy agenda.

1992
• Creation of Minnesota Community Action Association Resource Fund, a 501(c)3 corporation, to support related work and informal coalitions.

2003
• Community Workers Fund evolved into Power Action Leadership in pursuit of broader, progressive grassroots lobbying capacity. Power Action Leadership, in turn, has evolved into strategies using professional lobbyists and advocacy for policies that can garner bipartisan support.
• Creation of political action committee: MN CAP-PAC.

2004
• Introduction of Circles of Support and continuous quality improvement concepts.
2007- 2011
• Provided key leadership to Minnesota Commission to End Poverty by 2020 and its successors.

2013 - Present
• MNSure – Connecting Minnesotans with health insurance options through MNSure Navigator programs and outreach.

In partnership with Minnesota Office of Economic Opportunity:

1998 - Present
• Implementation of Results Oriented Management and Accountability.

2000 - 2007
• Planning and design for second generation statewide data system, aka CAP Integrator.

2007 - Present
• Implementation of CAP Integrator renamed as Visions.

2014, the last remaining public community action agency, Olmsted Community Action, merged into Three Rivers Community Action.

Community Workers Fund (CWF)

In addition, of special importance to Community Action in Minnesota is the Community Workers Fund (CWF). The CWF was established on October 23, 1973, to receive money for national and state lobbying activities to advance CAA efforts toward the elimination of poverty. CAA employees may contribute to this fund, which supports a registered lobbyist at the state Capitol and participation in national and regional legislative efforts. Initially, contributions were sent directly to the Minnesota CAP Association. But since the Association is supported by federal funds, it was decided that CWF funds should be collected and distributed by an independent corporation. Articles of incorporation and by-laws were submitted for the CWF on February 16, 1977, recognizing it as an independent nonprofit corporation. Tax exempt status was achieved in 1981.

National Community Action Foundation

The Association is also a member of the National Community Action Foundation (NCAF), which provides training, information and support for CAAs nationwide. Funds solicited for the NCAF Political Action Committee, with representation by region, provide lobbying and legislative support at the national level.
Location

The Bois Forte Reservation is located in northern Minnesota in Koochiching and St. Louis counties, approximately 40 miles south of the Canadian border. The tribal headquarters are in Nett Lake, Minnesota.

History

What does the name “Bois Forte” mean?

Bois Forte, or “strong wood,” was the name given by French fur traders to the Native Americans living in the densest forests of what is now northeastern Minnesota.

How did the Bois Forte people traditionally live?

The Bois Forte people lived in harmony with the rhythms of nature, moving through the woods as the seasons changed to fish, hunt, pick blueberries, and make maple sugar. This began to change when Europeans started arriving in the late 1600s and early 1700s. Since that time, the Bois Forte people have seen many changes; the great forests are gone, there are many more people and far fewer animals. Despite these alterations, the Bois Forte have endured and built a diverse, growing economy at the same time they have preserved their ancient traditions; harvesting wild rice, tapping maple trees and picking berries to name a few. Weaving everything together is a sense of community, expressed as gatherings and celebrations in powwows and sacred ceremonies.

How did the Bois Forte people come to the area where they currently live?

The Bois Forte Band of Ojibwe has lived in northeastern Minnesota for centuries, but did not originate here. The people journeyed from the east coast up the Saint Lawrence River around the Great Lakes and followed the rivers and lakes inland. During the early years of fur trading with non-Indians, the Bois Forte people moved inland from the Grand Portage area to the mouth of the Vermilion River.

Where is the Bois Forte Reservation?

The Bois Forte Reservation is located in northeastern Minnesota. The Reservation consists of three parts. The largest section is at Nett Lake in St. Louis and Koochiching counties. It is home to the majority of Bois Forte Band members and the Band’s Tribal Government Offices. The Vermilion Reservation is located near the city of Tower on Lake Vermilion in St. Louis County. It is home to Fortune Bay Resort Casino, the Bois Forte Heritage Center, the Vermilion Family Wellness Center and the Vermilion Community Center and Health/Dental Clinics. Deer Creek in Itasca County is also part of the Bois Forte Reservation although no Band members live there.

How was the Bois Forte Reservation created?

To obtain Indian people’s rich land and natural resources, the U.S. government signed a series of treaties with Indian nations in the 1700s and 1800s. Under the terms of the Treaty of 1854, Indian people in northern Minnesota ceded land from International Falls to Duluth to Grand Portage. The Bois Forte Indians were given the right to select reservation lands in the vicinity of Lake Vermilion, which was the heart of their community, and they retained the right to hunt and fish in the ceded area.

But when reports of gold beneath the Bois Forte people’s lands began to circulate, non-Indians wanted the land. That led to the Treaty of 1866, in which all claims to a reservation near Lake Vermilion were relinquished and a reservation of about 100,000 acres was established at Nett Lake. Even though the Vermilion reservation was reestablished by an 1881 Executive Order, the Bois Forte Indians were only given back about 1,000 acres in the Vermilion area, instead of the tens of thousands they had been promised in the Treaty of 1854.

What happened during the 19th century?

The federal government adopted a policy of assimilation, trying to squelch Indian traditions and press Indians to adopt the customs of white people. Some Indian children were taken away from their families and sent to boarding schools, where they were punished for speaking their native languages. Despite this harsh policy, the Bois Forte Band and many other Indian nations tenaciously held on to their languages, traditions and cultures.
How was the Bois Forte Band government of today created?

The federal Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 recognized that assimilation had failed and that Indian people and Indian governments should be strengthened, not weakened. It was followed by other policies of the twentieth century, such as the Freedom of Religion Act, the Indian Child Welfare Act, and the Indian Self-Determination Act, which marked a new respect for Indian sovereignty and self-governance. Indian nations like Bois Forte were offered the choice of managing their own government programs.

Also during this century, the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe was formed as a political union of six Chippewa bands. This helped the Bois Forte Band further strengthen its government. By 1997, the Bois Forte Reservation Tribal Council had assumed full responsibility for the delivery of all governmental programs and services to its people.

When was Fortune Bay Resort Casino created?

The seeds of Fortune Bay’s success were planted in the mid-1980s, when the Bois Forte Band opened its first casino, which offered high-stakes bingo. Then, in 1988, the federal Indian Gaming Regulatory Act was signed into law, recognizing that tribes have the power to regulate gaming on their own land. The Bois Forte Band signed gaming compacts with the state of Minnesota, and in 1996 the Band opened Fortune Bay Resort Casino, which quickly grew into one of the region’s most successful businesses.

Today Fortune Bay employs over $50 people, annually injecting more than $30 million into the economy of northeastern Minnesota. Fortune Bay is a full service resort including a hotel, conference center, casino, restaurants, 84 slip Marina, RV campground, nationally award winning Heritage Center and Wilderness Golf Course. Fortune Bay’s revenues have helped fund vital programs and services that benefit Bois Forte Band members and the surrounding communities.

The Bois Forte Band has carefully reinvested their revenues and diversified their business portfolio as part of their commitment to strengthening the region’s economy and increasing Band member employment. Under the management of the Bois Forte Development Corporation, the Band now owns and operates Fortune Bay Resort Casino, the Wilderness Golf Course, FM 94.5 WELY: End of the Road Radio, Powerain Manufacturing, Inc., the Y-Store, the Nett Lake Convenience Store and Bois Forte Wild Rice.
Since the early 1990’s, Fond du Lac Band leadership has chosen to use CSBG funds to pay staff salaries, in order to leverage funds for other programs. The CSBG program has been within the Fond du Lac Reservation Planning Division since the early 1990’s and is used to pay, in part, the salary for the Economic Development Planner and the Planning Director. The Planning Division is a critical part of the development of the Fon du Lac Reservation. This division writes grants, provides program administration, does project administration and is involved in all economic development activities.

Since 1990, the Fond du Lac Reservation has been active in economic and infrastructure development to support the increasing needs of the Band and its population. The Band, in cooperation with CSBG, has developed and now operates eight businesses in the Cloquet area that serve the Reservation and surrounding community, including: Fond du Lac Black Bear Casino and Hotel; Fond du Lac Black Bear Golf Course; Fond du Lac Construction Company; Fond du Lac Propane Company; WKLK Radio station cluster; Fond du Lac Gas and Grocery; and, Fond du Lac Transit.

The Reservation also owns and operates a second casino named the Fond-du-Luth Casino in Duluth. Between these business enterprises, education and human services programs, the Fond du Lac Reservation employs over 2,100 persons, with an annual payroll in excess of $45,000,000; this total makes Fond du Lac the largest employer in the greater Cloquet area.

Similarly, the Band has increased community services with CSBG assistance. Since 1993, the Reservation has built a Tribal Center for the Reservation’s administration; the Cloquet District community center; two health center additions; community centers for Sawyer and Brookston Districts; one K-12 school; three major sewer and water line additions; 24 Supportive Housing units; 10 assisted living units; and 10 veteran housing units. There are also multiple single-family home projects, as well as road projects.

In addition, CSBG funds have been valuable insofar as planning staff (whose salaries are paid through CSBG) are able to secure grant funding for new program development or existing program operation costs. Planning staff over the years have written grants that started and support the Law Enforcement Division, the Transit system, Head Start, the Elderly Nutrition Program, Tribal Court, Supportive Housing, Assisted Living, and several other programs.

The Fond du Lac Band is grateful for the support from CSBG over the past 30 years.
program also provides transportation and child care to clients, to assist them in completing their six- to 12-month recovery process. Scheduling/time management provides structure, helping clients to become proactive in their decision-making and avoid relapse and risky situations.

Tagwi uses the Matrix manual, the Red Road to Sobriety, White Bison, AA and NA, for treatment education components. The MI/CD or co-occurring monthly education helps increase clients’ knowledge of how addiction and chemical use interact with their mental health, and vice versa. Tagwi LADC/MSW work with the Mental Health Case Manager to bring information to clients using Hazelden’s best practice curriculum, “Dual Diagnosis Series”.

Quarterly, clients receive a week of HIV/HEP-C, safe sex and IV needle use education. Case managers use the Minnesota State “Intersection of Addiction and HIV” training manual. Tagwi has been fortunate to have a local speaker discuss her recovery from addiction and HEP-C. In 2013, a speaker from WINDOWS came and co-facilitated to men and women (separately) on Sexual and Domestic abuse. It is hoped that this presentation and collaboration can be offered again, to help educate clients on healthy relationships, how to protect themselves, and access help if needed.

Groups consist of drum/meditation, talking circle and education, wellness activities and individual counseling sessions. In addition to group meetings, all clients complete “Assertive Communication”, “Effective Communication” and “Healthy Relationship” sessions throughout treatment. Tagwi encourages both male and female clients with children to also participate in “Positive Indian Parenting” classes. A noted increase is seen in the number of fathers in classes and the number of families who gain custody of their children from foster care.

Clients participate in fitness, crafts (e.g. beading, moccasin-making, regalia-making), and other community activities. Wellness groups focus on exercise, nutrition and sober activities getting clients into their community. With the expectation of exercise at least three times a week, clients can double their chances of recovery. Culture and spirituality are an important part of treatment and recovery, including; daily smudging, talking and healing circles, monthly lodges, gathering, drum and language (word of the day). Families are invited to attend Family Week, graduations, “change of season” feast, and feating of the drum. Great times for clients and families to support one another in recovery.

In 2013, 24 individuals graduated from the program. About 84% of all alumni are sober a year after graduation; those who have a slip tend to re-engage in treatment on their own. Since July 2013, 21 clients have become employed; 11 have secured housing; seven have entered college or received their GEDs; six were reunited with children; and two had driver’s licenses reinstated. Not all of these aforementioned clients are graduates of the program; some continued to be in treatment at year-end and others were discharged for various reasons. Thus, these results show that Tagwi has had a positive impact on clients’ overall lives, even when they do not graduate from the program.
The Indian community that provided services and trade at the Grand Portage continued working with the British in Canada. The population in Northern America declined. In 1824, Schoolcraft reported 60 people. For a while in the 1830’s the American Fur Co. used Indian people to operate a commercial fishing station at Grand Portage. It did not last long. To this day close ties continue with the Ojibwe in Canada since the border often splits extended families.

The Grand Portage Indians were members of the Lake Superior Band but were not participants in the early Ojibwe treaties with the United States. They protested being ignored in the 1842 Treaty when Isle Royale was ceded and they then received annuity rights. In the 1854 Treaty they ceded their lands in the Arrowhead region of Minnesota and accepted the Grand Portage reservation. During the allotment era, no serious attempt was made to relocate the people to White Earth. Government

The Grand Portage Tribal Council is the governing body of the reservation and is a member of the MCT. The Tribal Council consists of a Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary/Treasurer, Council man, and Council woman. In 1996, Grand Portage entered the Self-Governance Program by contracting to administer its own programs from the BIA. The State of Minnesota is responsible for criminal and some civil jurisdictions. The Tribe established its own court in September 1997. It collects its own sales tax.

The Tribe, working with the local residents, the State, and the Environmental Protection Agency, established a Land Use Ordinance for the reservation that was approved in 1996. This ordinance designates areas of land use according to tribal priorities for wildlife habitat, timber production, and protection of the resources for recreational purposes. A primitive area had been set aside in an eastern portion of the reservation in 1956. The hunting and fishing rights of tribal members in the ceded lands of the 1854 Treaty are regulated under the Tribal Code and enforced by the 1854 Authority.

---

**Leech Lake Reservation**

**Location**

The Leech Lake Reservation is located in north central Minnesota in the counties of Beltrami, Cass, Hubbard, and Itasca. The tribal headquarters is in Cass Lake, Minnesota.

Located along US Highway 2, the reservation is southeast of Bemidji with Walker just outside on the southwest corner. Cass Lake is the largest community within the reservation. Eleven communities make up the reservation. In addition to Cass Lake, there are Ball Club, Bena, Inger, Onigum, Mission, Pennington, Smokey Point, Sugar Point, Oak Point, and Squaw Lake. Oak Point had previously been known as Squaw Point, but was renamed in 1995.

**History**

In the 1600’s, the Dakota Indians had communities at Leech Lake. The Ojibwe bands moved into the region during the mid-to-late 1700’s. The first Ojibwe settlements were on small islands on Leech Lake. This area in north central Minnesota was the home of the Mississippi and Pillager Ojibwe bands. In 1847, treaties took sections on the southwest corner of their lands with the Mississippi and Pillager bands from the Menominee and Winnebago tribes that were to be moved from Wisconsin. The remaining land was ceded by treaty in 1855 that established the reservation. The 1864 Treaty expanded and consolidated the reservation in the area of the three lakes. The intent at that time was to have the other Minnesota Ojibwe bands move to the Leech Lake area. By 1867, the plan was changed and White Earth Reservation was created to be the home of all Ojibwe people. The area of the Leech Lake Reservation was reduced by executive orders however, in 1873 and 1874 added land.
Located along US Highway 2, the reservation is southeast of Bemidji with Walker just outside on the southwest corner. Cass Lake is the largest community within the reservation. Eleven communities make up the reservation. In addition to Cass Lake, there are Ball Club, Bena, Inger, Onigum, Mission, Pennington, Smokey Point, Sugar Point, Oak Point, and Squaw Lake. Oak Point had previously been known as Squaw Point, but was renamed in 1995. The reservation is split among four counties, Cass, Itasca, Beltrami, and Hubbard and is divided among seven Minnesota school districts.

Drained by the headwaters of the Mississippi River, the area is generally swampy. With some 40 wild rice producing lakes, it has the largest natural wild rice production of any of the State’s reservations. The land is mostly second growth. The Leech Lake Tribe holds the smallest percentage of its reservation of any of the state’s tribes. County, state, and federal governments owned well over half of the original land. Of the 677,099 original acres, 212,000 acres are surface area of the three big lakes. Of the remaining 465,000 acres, other levels of government own 332,804 acres. The National Chippewa Forest has the largest portion of the land. Seventy-five percent of the National Forest is within the reservation.

The Leech Lake Tribal Council is the governing body with their offices in Cass Lake and is a member of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe. The Tribal Council consists of a Chairman, Vice Chairman, District 1 Representative, District 2 Representative, and District 3 Representative. In the early 1990’s, the Tribe contracted with the BIA to operate programs under self-governance procedures as one of the second groups of ten tribes allowed into the pilot project. The State is responsible for criminal and some civil jurisdiction over Indians on the reservation. The Leech Lake Tribe issues its own automobile license plates.

The smaller communities have facilities for community events and services such as medical clinics and programs for elders. The people have organized their own community councils to give a political voice to their concerns. Health services are provided at the IHS hospital and clinic in Cass Lake and clinics in the other communities. If care that is more extensive is needed, the hospitals in neighboring cities are used. The Tribe operates a halfway house and an ambulance service, however, fire protection is from neighboring communities. In 1995, the Tribe began a burial insurance program for all enrolled members.

Education and programs for children are provided by two tribally run childcare facilities, Head Start programs in seven communities and the K-12 Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig tribal school. The Tribe sponsors and provides funding for the Leech Lake Tribal College that began in 1990. The college is located in Cass Lake and offers AA degrees with credits transferable to Bemidji State University and other higher education institutions.

In the first major hunting, fishing, and wild rice rights cases in Minnesota, the Tribe confirmed that it had the right to control these activities on the reservation. The State pays the Tribe for its restraint in using the reservation’s resources. In addition, the State conservation officers are deputized by the Tribe to enforce tribal natural resource codes.
After defeating the bands, the United States punished the Dakota by nullifying its treaties with them, voiding annuities that had been granted as part of the terms of the treaties, and removing all Dakota from what is now the State of Minnesota. Many families returned to their homeland in spite of this government imposed exile, and because some had been loyal to the United States during the Outbreak, those loyalists were permitted to stay on the Minnesota lands provided for the Dakota under the treaties.

In 1863, while Congress stripped the Sioux of their Minnesota lands, it authorized the Department of the Interior to allocate up to 80 acres of that land to each loyalist. Despite this recent history of war, exile and colonization, the Dakota continue to survive and prosper in the land of their origin.

In the 1883 census, six families were reported in Redwood. Good Thunder came from Flandreau, South Dakota and in 1884 purchased 80 acres at the Lower Sioux community. Charles Lawrence bought the adjacent 80 acres. Within a few years a little colony joining them including a few other Dakotas who had been able to survive in Minnesota, protected by Alexander Fairbault. A 1936 census report 20 Mdewakanton families, 18 families from Flandreau, South Dakota, and one Sisseton, South Dakota, family.

The land is primarily rich agricultural land in the river flood plain and the wooded bluffs behind. The community was built on the hillside and uplands. It centers around the tribal offices, a new community center, Tipi Maka Duta (the Lower Sioux Trading Post), and St. Cornelia Episcopal Church built in 1889 and now on the National Register of Historic sites. St. Cornelia’s is built on land donated by Good Thunder. It has been the recent site of reburials of Kaota people whose remains had been held by museums and universities. The Minnesota Historical society has an interpretive center in the area, explaining the 1862 battles.

Government

The Lower Sioux Community Council is elected and operates under an IRA constitution. The State exercises criminal and some civil jurisdiction on the reservation. The tribal court was organized in 1993. It deals with civil cases including contract law and workers’ compensation cases as well as tribal governance matters. Social programs and community health services are administered by the Tribe, funded by various governmental programs and the Tribe. Tribally funded health insurance policies cover the medical costs for resident members as well as tribal and casino employees. Redwood Falls and Wilmar hospitals are used.

Redwood Falls is the public school for the community Indian children. In response to parental concern about their children’s education, an Indian-focused charter school was formed at Morton. The Tribe provides financial help to any member wishing to get further education beyond high school.
the Anishinabe leaders in the Mille Lacs region were pressured to cede their lands to the United States government and relocate on lands to other parts of the State. Some Band leaders decided to move while others refused to leave the places where their people had lived for generations. By the early 20th century, federal Indian officials referred to these groups as the Non-Removal Mille Lacs Chippewa Band. This distinguished them from Band members who had resettled earlier on White Earth and other Chippewa reservations in the State.

The Non-Removal Mille Lacs Band members are the descendants of people who simply loved their homelands too much to leave them behind. Through their self-reliance and courage and persistence of their leaders, they survived harsh treatment at the hands of white developers and settlers who transformed their forest lands into lumbering towns, dairy farms, and later, recreational fishing and tourist centers. They also regained a tiny portion of their homelands, which now collectively makes up the Mille Lacs Reservation.

In one way or another, nearly everything about the present day life of the Mille Lacs people - their cultural life, the tiny land base on which they are building a new future for their people, their relations with outsiders and state and government officials - has been influenced by the past. An understanding of their history is essential to any understanding of their present life and provides a portrait of a people who stood against the currents of American history unfolding in the State of Minnesota and won a measure of justice for themselves and the generations following in their footsteps.

The Mille Lacs Reservation is located in east central Minnesota. The tribal headquarters is near Onamia, Minnesota. The reservation was established by the 1855 Treaty. The Tribe owns approximately 16,000 acres of land located within four townships on the south end of Mille Lacs Lake. Additional communities exist in Aitkin and Pine counties and three islands. The reservation has a community center, schools, clinic, museum, casino/hotel complex and Government Center.

The purpose of the tribal government of the Mille Lacs Band is to promote the general welfare of its citizens by establishing duties, responsibilities and procedures for the conduct of domestic and external affairs. For many years, the Band operated under a single agency form of government known as the Reservation Business Committee (RBC). However, the Band determined that a separation of power, similar to that employed by the United States federal government, would be a more effective and responsible way to run the reservation.

Government

Mille Lacs tribal government consists of executive, judicial and legislative branches. Mille Lacs is a member of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe.

The executive branch is responsible for the management and development of all the programs within tribal government. A chief executive is elected for a 4-year term. The Administrative Policy Board (comprised of the commissioners of administration, education, natural resources, health and human services, and the assistant commissioner of administration) is responsible for budget development, personnel oversight and personnel policies.

The legislative branch is made up of the Band Assembly and the assistants of the Band Assembly members. The Band Assembly passes all laws, makes changes or amendments to tribal law, passes tribal resolutions and appropriates funds for all tribal programs.

The judicial branch is made up of the judges and officials of the Tribal Court. The court is headed by a chief justice, and also served by associate justices. Mille Lacs Tribal Law Enforcement Officials have concurrent jurisdiction in Mille Lacs County, meaning that tribal police have the authority to pursue charges either through County Court or Tribal Court.

Community Development

Economic Development

The Mille Lacs Band has helped build and diversify the East Central Minnesota economy through Grand Casino Mille Lacs, Grand Casino Hinckley, and other Band-owned businesses such as a cinema, a grocery store, convenience stores, a travel agency, and a golf course.

Economic Summit

The Mille Lacs Band hosts the annual East Central Minnesota Business Development Summit, which provides an opportunity for business leaders, state and local government officials, and community organizations to assess regional trends and generate ideas to strengthen local economies.

Wastewater Treatment Plant

The Mille Lacs Band Corporate Commission owns ML Wastewater Management, Inc., a nonprofit corporation that provides wastewater treatment services to thousands of residents and businesses on the west side of Mille Lacs Lake and helps protect the lake from pollutants.

High-Speed Rail

The Band has contributed to the coalition proposing Northern Lights Express, a high-speed passenger rail line between the Twin Cities and Duluth. Hinckley is one of the proposed stops along the route.

Housing

The Mille Lacs Band has funded and built hundreds of homes for Band member families in the past two decades. The Band also operates three Elder assisted living units on the reservation, which help keep Elders in their home communities while meeting their daily health and cultural needs.
Education
In District I of the reservation, the Mille Lacs Band operates the Nay Ah Shing Schools, whose standard academic curriculum is enhanced by Ojibwe language and culture programming. Two year-round Ojibwe charter schools operate independently of the Band in the District II and III areas of the reservation. The Band also operates the Mille Lacs Tribal College and makes scholarships available to Band members attending colleges around the country.

Health and Human Services
The Band operates three reservation-area clinics and public health services that help Band members with fitness, nutrition education, family planning, tobacco cessation, chemical dependency, and other needs.

Natural Resources
The Band’s Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has programs in place to protect local lands and waters and the fish, wildlife and plants that rely on these resources. Its work includes monitoring air and water quality, collaborating with other governments on water and fisheries management, managing wild rice beds, and regulating hunting, fishing and gathering on the reservation.

Community Involvement
The Mille Lacs Band is a partner to organizations including the Mille Lacs Area Human Rights Commission, Voices of Unity on Mille Lacs, and groups that promote Band priorities including education, health, voter awareness, and community collaboration.

Community Giving
The Mille Lacs Band, Grand Casino Mille Lacs, and Grand Casino Hinckley have given millions of dollars in charitable donations to law enforcement agencies, educational institutions, hospitals, food shelves, and other organizations and projects that serve local communities and the region. The Band is also one of the three tribal members of the Minnesota Tribal Government Foundation, which contributes to causes that promote tribal sovereignty, advance economic development, and improve conditions on the state’s Indian reservations. The organization donated $500,000 to eight recipients in 2008 alone.

Prairie Island Indian Community

The Prairie Island Indian Community is located on an island in the Mississippi River 14 miles north of Red Wing and 30 miles southeast of St. Paul. The tribal headquarters is located near Welch, Minnesota and has members mainly of the Mdewankanton Band.

History
The Mdewakanton, “those who were born of the waters,” have lived on Prairie Island for countless generations. This land, with the wooded shores of the Mississippi and Vermillion Rivers embracing a broad and fruitful prairie, is a spiritual place for our people. The medicine gatherers came here hundreds of years ago and come here still to pick medicines to heal our people, body and spirit. Traditional cultural and spiritual ceremonies are filled with color and dance. The spirit is alive.

Although the rich tribal heritage lives on, an unfortunate series of historical events contributed to great suffering - primarily from the impact of European settlers and the subsequent imposition of government treaties. Many families were faced with countless injustices, forced into poverty, war and imprisonment, and eventually evicted from the Prairie Island territory.

However, hope inspired some families to return to Prairie Island to buy back small parcels of their ancestral home. In 1936, nearly 50 years later, the federal government officially recognized this area as a reservation, awarding them 534 acres. Although poverty was still prevalent, the culture of home was redefining itself. The seeds of self-sufficiency were once again being planted in these sacred grounds.
Economic revival began taking root in 1984 when Treasure Island Bingo opened, and subsequently in 1988 when gaming was expanded - known today as Treasure Island Resort & Casino.

**How the Prairie Island Indian Community Came to Be**

Prairie Island Indian Community members are descendants of the Mdewakanton Band of Eastern Dakota, also known as the Mississippi or Minnesota Sioux, who were parties to treaties with the United States from 1805 to 1863.

In the treaty of Oct. 15, 1851, the tribe ceded much of their Minnesota lands to the U.S. government, keeping for themselves a 10-mile-wide strip of land on either side of the Minnesota River from Little Rock to Yellow Medicine River. However, the Treaty of June 19, 1858, allotted this land in 80-acre plots to each family head. The surplus land was sold for ten cents an acre. Reduced to starvation, the Dakota were forced to fight for their survival.

In August 1862, fighting erupted between the Dakota and white settlers because the Dakota were not receiving annuity payments for selling their lands and were struggling to survive. This was known as the Dakota Conflict, resulting in the deaths of many Dakota and whites. Thirty-eight Dakota were hanged in Mankato in December 1862 upon the order of President Abraham Lincoln.

**The Creation of Prairie Island Reservation**

The Prairie Island reservation was created when the secretary of the interior purchased land and placed it into trust. About 120 acres was purchased at Prairie Island for the landless Mdewakanton residing in Minnesota on May 20, 1886. Subsequent purchases by the secretary under congressional appropriations and later the Indian Reorganization Act expanded the reservation’s borders. Under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, an additional 414 acres were purchased for other Indian residents whose names appeared on the Minnesota Sioux rolls.

The tribe has a limited land base. In 1938, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers built Lock and Dam Number 3, which flooded Community land including burial mounds and created a larger floodplain, leaving the tribe with only 300 livable acres. More recently, in 1973, Xcel Energy (formerly known as Northern States Power Company) began operating a nuclear power generating plant on the Island and now stores spent nuclear fuel in dry cask storage containers only three blocks from the Community.

**Prairie Island at a Glance**

**People (2007)**

- More than 700 tribal members (approximately half under 18 years of age).
- Only about half of the tribal membership lives on the reservation (due to limited land base and available housing).
- Tribal members are descendants of the Mdewakanton Band of Eastern Dakota.

---

**Reservation**

- Approximately 1,800 acres of trust land (excluding Parcel D)
- Approximately 426 acres of taxable fee land at Mt. Frontenac and 249 acres of fee land at the intersection of Hwy. 61 and Hwy 316
- Located just north of Red Wing, Minn., in Goodhue County
- Located 600 yards from Xcel Energy nuclear power plant and nuclear waste storage site

On May 12, 2006, President Bush placed into trust Parcel D for the tribe. The 1,290 acres are intended to replace tribal land that was flooded during the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ construction of Lock and Dam Number 3 in Red Wing, Minn. The land is not buildable.

**Prairie Island Development**

The Prairie Island Indian Community employs more than 1,600 people in its gaming, government and business operations, including Treasure Island Resort & Casino, Mount Frontenac Golf and Dakota Station. The federally deputized Prairie Island Police Department - the first licensed police department for the Community - was created in 2003. The department currently employs nine sworn officers, a probation officer and an emergency management coordinator.

**Taxes**

As the largest employer in Goodhue County, Prairie Island generates more than $13 million in annual state and federal taxes. Prairie Island tribal members are subject to many of the same state and federal taxes as everyone else. Most tribal members pay state and federal income taxes, and those who live off the reservation also pay property taxes. Tribal members who live on the reservation pay no property tax because the land they live on is held in trust by the federal government. Tribal members who work directly for the tribal government pay no state income tax for the same reason the state of Minnesota cannot tax employees of the state of Wisconsin. However, these tribal employees pay federal income taxes.

**Tribal Heritage**

The Prairie Island Indian Community is a federally recognized Indian tribe located on the banks of the Mississippi River near Red Wing, Minn. The Community’s ancestors have resided in that area for centuries. They remained there following the Dakota Conflict, despite the fact that their reservation was disestablished by President Lincoln and many Mdewakantons and other Sioux Communities fled the area to avoid federal military retribution, and ended up scattered throughout Minnesota, South and North Dakota, Montana and into Canada. The Community was reorganized in 1936, pursuant to Section 16 of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. The Community is governed by a five-person Tribal Council, which consists of a president, vice president, treasurer, secretary and assistant secretary/treasurer. Tribal Council officials are elected by the members of the Community to two-year terms. Membership into the Prairie Island Indian Community is descendant-based.
Northwest Angle at 156,900 acres total 825,654 acres, larger than the state of Rhode Island. Red Lake is the largest fresh water lake in the country wholly contained within one state. The lake, Mis-qua-ga-me-we-saga-eh-ganing to the Red Lake Ojibwe, is held sacred.

*In 1863 in what is known as the “Old Crossing Treaty”, Red Lake ceded 11,000,000 acres to the U.S. In 1889, Red Lake cedes another 2,900,000 acres referred to as the “Act for the Relief and Civilization of the Chippewa”. In 1902 Red Lake finally ceded 256,152 acres to the U.S. known as the ”Western Townships”.

The tribal government has full sovereignty over the reservation, subject only to the federal government. Red Lake, because of its unique status is often referred to as a “closed” reservation. Because the land is held in common, few non-members live at Red Lake. The Tribe has the right to limit who can visit or live on the reservation. The Red Lake Nation is exempt from Public Law 280; consequently the state courts or government has no jurisdiction at Red Lake. Laws are made by the Tribal Council and enforced by the Tribal Council and Federal Courts.

In 1918 the Red Lake General Council Constitution was established. In 1958 a revised Constitution and By-laws was adopted by the members of Red Lake Nation, followed by the first secret ballot election of Tribal Government in 1959.

An eleven member Tribal Council, three officers elected at large and eight council members, two from each of the four communities, governs the Red Lake Band. Seven Hereditary Chiefs, descendants from those who negotiated the 1889 Land Agreement, serve for life in an advisory capacity to the Tribal Council. In 1997, the Tribe began administering its own programs under a Self-Governance Contract with the BIA. Red Lake is not a member of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe (MCT).

**Communities**

There are four reservation communities.

- **Little Rock**: Located about five miles west of Red Lake. It has a community center and an Indian-owned store.
- **Ponemah**: Located near the end of the peninsula where Upper and Lower Red Lakes are joined. Ponemah, (also known as Obashing) because of its relative isolation, practices many of the old traditions and culture. It has a community center, an elementary school, Head Start, a health clinic, programming for elders, and powwow grounds.
- **Redby**: Located about five miles east of Red Lake. Several tribal businesses are located in Redby along with some tribal programs including an adolescent group home and a chemical dependency treatment facility.
- **Red Lake**: Home of the Tribal Government and several tribal programs and businesses. There is a modern IHS hospital, the Jourdain/Perpich Extended Care Facility for the elderly, and several others. Community buildings include the Humanities Center that houses the Head Start program, a
swimming pool and other recreational and group facilities. There is a new Boys and Girls club and powwow grounds. An elementary, middle and high school operated by the state of Minnesota is located at Red Lake.

**Economy**

Employment on the reservation is very limited, resulting in high unemployment rates. The Tribal Council is the main employer through government operations and tribally owned businesses such as Red Lake Builders which constructs both buildings and roads, retail centers, Red Lake Nation Foods, and others. There are also several small businesses many operated out of homes, including many traditional craftspeople. A farm was purchased on the southwest corner of the reservation in 1994 and the Tribe has continued with a successful paddy rice operation.

The Tribe has three casino operations all built on trust land funded by, and has always been managed by, the Tribe. Under the organization of Red Lake Gaming Enterprises, the three are Seven Clans Casino Thief River, the largest with a hotel and outstanding indoor water park. Seven Clans Casino Warroad, located on beautiful Lake of the Woods, and Seven Clans Casino Red Lake located in Red Lake on the Reservation.

**Leadership**

Red Lake has a history of leadership among Indian Tribes and has been at the vanguard of many initiatives in Indian Country. These include the first tribe in the Country to have tribal auto license plates. Red Lake elected the first Indian County Commissioner in the State and a Red Lake Spiritual Leader became the first non-Judeo-Christian chaplain of the State Senate. It is the first reservation in Minnesota to build an archives-library program to preserve tribal records and historical material, and more.

In the 1640s, the first recorded non-Indian contact with the Dakota took place. For the next 200 years, our ancestors tolerated the presence and ever increasing numbers of non-Indians encroaching on their homelands.

**The Treaty and Reservation Era**

Beginning in 1805, a series of treaties forced on the Dakota Nation would take away their homeland, destroy their ability to provide for themselves, and create an increasing reliance upon the U.S. government’s promises for payments and goods. For the next several decades, missionaries, fur traders, Indian agents, and the U.S. government all worked first to change the culture of the Dakota and later to eradicate the Dakota Nation. Finally, in 1862, the Dakota could no longer allow this mistreatment. Our ancestors battled for their homelands, their way of life, their culture. The events of 1862 ended with the largest mass execution in United States history when 38 Dakota were hanged at Mankato.

**Twentieth Century Life**

In 1969, after years of persistence in dealing with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community was finally given federal recognition and began the difficult process of creating a government and economic system that would support Community members. The struggle for economic security was difficult, and there were many obstacles.

Life on the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community was like that on many other reservations. Deficient government policies had left us with dirt roads, inadequate housing, and few prospects for a better future for our children. Health care, educational opportunities, and steady employment on the reservation seemed only to be a dream. During the early 1970s, Community members depended on food subsidies, and low paying jobs were the norm. But Mdewakanton Dakota families did not give up. Through a number of tribal initiatives, members created a health care program, a childcare facility, and a home improvement program.

**The Arrival of Indian Gaming**

Then in 1982, life changed dramatically. Tribal Chairman Norman Crooks (father of current Chairman Stanley Crooks) and other Community members heard about the success of high-stakes bingo in Florida. They saw the opportunity and opened the Little Six Bingo Palace on October 16, 1982. The future began to look brighter. Busloads of people began arriving, and gaming was a success like no other. Tribal government services grew, jobs were created, and opportunities for the tribe and its members increased. Then in 1984 video slots were added at Little Six Casino. Mystic Lake Casino followed in 1992. During the 1990s the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community continued its transformation from an economically distressed reservation to one of the most economically successful Indian tribes in the United States. In this new era of self-sufficiency, the Community was able to use its inherent sovereign rights and growing economy to purchase additional lands and to radically improve its economic base.

**Twenty-First Century**

To protect tribal interests, diversification was made a priority, and enterprises were developed which provide services to the larger community. Dakotah! Sport and Fitness enabled thousands of local residents to enjoy increased good health by using its facilities. The Shakopee Dakota Convenience Store (SDCS) provides fuel, groceries, and a car wash. The Dakota Mall houses enterprises like the SDCS, a travel agency, and a credit union. Playworks is a one-of-a-kind facility for families and children. Dakotah Meadows RV Park has 119 paved, pull-through RV sites with electric, water, and sewer hook ups and six tipis for overnight rental. A hotel was added at Mystic Lake Casino as an added service for guests and to help make Mystic Lake Casino a destination resort. Today, Mystic Lake Casino Hotel is known as one of the largest and most successful Indian-owned casinos in the United States and is one of the largest tourist attractions in the Upper Midwest.

The Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community continues its infrastructure improvements and growth in the new century. Since 2000 the Community has dedicated the Tiowakan Spiritual Center and Community Cemetery, completed second and third hotel towers, opened a storage and archival facility, completed the Playworks LINK Event Center, opened The Buffet at Mystic Lake, opened a Mystic Lake retail store at The Mall of America, and completed Phase III and Phase IV at Dakotah Meadows RV Park. The Community has completed construction of new parking ramps, built Dakotah Parkway, and opened a new championship golf course, The Meadows at Mystic Lake. In 2001 the SMSC developed a professional fire department called Mdewakanton Emergency Services. The department now responds to an average of 200 calls a month and provides mutual aid to area departments upon request. Ambulance service was added in 2004, and monthly transports average 60.

On May 30, 2005, a Veterans Monument honoring tribal veterans was dedicated on the grounds of the Tiowakan Spiritual Center.

In 2006 a state-of-the-art Water Reclamation Facility was completed which utilizes biologically aerated filter technology to treat water for reuse as irrigation for the golf course. The building also houses the largest Green Roof in the Midwest, over 30,000 square feet containing more than 45,000 plants. The WRF also produces vast quantities of treated biosolids which are useable as fertilizer. In its first year in operation the WRF won three prestigious awards for excellence.

In March 2007 the SMSC opened a pharmacy at the Dakota Mall to provide services for Community members, employees, and their families. In September 2007, the SMSC opened a Wellness Center which initially features a Physical Therapy and Chiropractic Care Clinic. A vision clinic is also planned.

Ground was broken September 13, 2007, for an innovative venture to generate electricity using agricultural byproducts. Called Koda Energy this environmentally friendly project is a joint venture with Rahr Malting of Shakopee. Waste from malting and food processing will be burned to generate electricity. Considerably cleaner than a coal plant, this “green” biomass energy generation project will someday be able to provide energy for all Community needs with excess available to sell to others. The project is expected to be operational by December 2008.

A second Shakopee Dakota Convenience Store opened in October 2007, offering the same great service and products as the first SDCS. In the fall of 2007 a new...
Entertainment Center opened at Mystic Lake Casino Hotel which contains the Mystic Showroom and a new Bingo Hall. Construction also began on two projects (a second ice arena at Dakotah! Sport and Fitness and an addition to the fire station) which will feature green initiatives. The fire station addition will contain solar panels and skylights and will utilize daylight harvesting to conserve energy. The second sheet of ice will contain a green roof, daylight harvesting, and skylights. Construction to relocate Little Six Casino across the parking lot to the original site of Little Six Bingo took less than a year to complete. The new Little Six Casino opened to the public on December 14, 2007, on the site where the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community first introduced High Stakes Bingo and Indian Gaming to Minnesota October 16, 1982, changing life for the Community dramatically.

The success of the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community’s enterprises has allowed the Community to create and provide numerous education, health, and social service programs for Community members, staff, and Native Americans living in Scott County.

The Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community is proud to be a leader in sharing its prosperity with other Tribes and Communities by making charitable donations. Over the past several years the SMSC has donated more than $115 million to charitable organizations and Indian Tribes, including a gift of $12.5 million to the University of Minnesota for a new football stadium and for an endowment for scholarships in 2007.

The SMSC also provides much needed employment opportunities for more than 4,140 Indian and non-Indian people from the surrounding area. Millions of dollars are pumped into the area’s economy each year as a result of the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community’s successful business enterprises.

Today, Mystic Lake Casino Hotel is known as one of the largest and most successful Indian-owned casinos in the United States and is one of the largest tourist attractions in the Upper Midwest. It is in the forefront of gaming technology and is a leader in the hospitality industry.

To honor our ancestors and continue our Dakota traditions, the Community engages in a variety of cultural activities in addition to our annual Wacipi. The Community works to preserve cultural sites. Children and adults are learning the Dakota Language, song, and dance. The SMSC story is being told to a wider audience through the distribution of videos, commercials, informational and town hall meetings, the internet, and kiosks.

The Shakopee Mdewakanton Dakota are proud of our accomplishments, and we honor our ancestors, for it is because of their strong sense of survival and pride in being a Dakota, that we have the ability to prosper today.
Since its formal designation as an Indian community, Upper Sioux has struggled with poverty, substandard housing, inadequate health care, and the subtleties of racism. Tribal leaders continually strived to improve the standard of living and the quality of life on the reservation. The population was small, and Upper Sioux’s share of program monies from the federal government was minimal, yet elected tribal leaders still managed to provide the “bare-bones” programs in housing, health care, and education. Through the 1970’s and 80’s, conditions improved very little despite many vocal supporters, both Indian and non-Indian, and we continued to struggle for survival on our small tract of land along the Minnesota River.

In the late 1980’s the legal standing of tribes as a sovereign nations had been acknowledged in the highest federal courts. In 1990, following these court decisions, the Upper Sioux Community did as many other tribes had done - we exercised our rights as a sovereign nations to capitalize on a financial opportunity by building and opening Firefly Creek Casino.

Since that time, the Upper Sioux Community has relocated their gaming enterprise out of the Minnesota River flood plain. In 2003, Prairie’s Edge Casino Resort opened on the bluff overlooking the Minnesota River valley. In addition, USC Propane was formed to service the propane needs of the Upper Sioux Community and the surrounding area. To further diversification, the Upper Sioux Community opened Prairie View RV Park in 2006.

The development of the tribal enterprises over the last several years has helped to revitalize and energize the Upper Sioux Community, allowing us an opportunity to obtain economic independence. During this dynamic period for the Upper Sioux Community, we have seen substantial growth in employment opportunities and Tribal services. Through the creation of our Tribal Police department, we can now exercise our inherent sovereign rights for the protection of Tribal members and Tribal lands. The Upper Sioux Community has been able to reacquire over 900 acres of our historic homelands, further strengthening our ability to address the growth of their Tribal membership, which stands at 453. Through their efforts, the People of the Yellow Medicine, now and into the future, will continue to enhance and strengthen our culture and traditions; and establish a stable future for future generations of the Pejuhutazizi Oyate.

The White Earth Reservation contains 829,440 acres and is located in the northwestern Minnesota. It encompasses all of Mahnomen County and portions of Becker, and Clearwater Counties. The reservation is located 68 miles east of Fargo and 225 miles northwest of Minneapolis/St. Paul. The Tribal headquarters is located in White Earth, Minnesota.

The White Earth Reservation is named for the layer of white clay underneath the surface on the western half of the reservation. The land is typical of west-central Minnesota of prairie in the west, rolling hills and many lakes and rivers in the middle, and conifer forest in the east. Indian communities include White Earth, Pine Point/Ponsford, Naytahwaush, Elbow Lake, and Rice Lake. Other villages were built along the railroad track running south to north in the western part of the reservation, Callaway, Ogema, Waubun, and Mahnomen (all incorporated cities).

With the 1867 Treaty, great pressure was put on all bands in Minnesota to get them to relocate onto one reservation. Never the historic homeland of any Ojibwe group, it became a reservation in 1867 in a treaty with the Mississippi Band of Ojibwe. It was to become the home of all of the Ojibwe and Lakota in the state, however, not all bands wanted to move onto one reservation and give up their reservation. Mississippi Band members from Gull Lake were the first group to come and settle around White Earth Village in 1868. The 1920 census reflected those who had settled in White Earth: 4856 were from the Mississippi Band including 1,308 from Mille Lacs, the Pillager Bands had 1,218, Pembina Band 472, and 113 had come from Fond du Lac of the Superior Band.
The different bands tended to settle in different areas of the reservation. Mille Lacs Lake members moved to the northeastern part of the reservation, around Naytahwaush and Beaulieu. Pillager Band members settled around Pine Point in the southeast. After 1873, Pembina Band members from the Red River Valley moved into a township on the western side of the reservation. A community concentrated in the Village of White Earth where the government agency was located.

The Dawes Act of 1887, Nelson Act of 1889 along with the Clapp Act of 1904 and Snyder Act of 1906, enabled the rapid division of the reservation and allotments were given to individuals of 80 acres to head of household and 40 acres each to their children. There were many schemes to defraud individuals and minors from their land. Around the turn of the century much of the original Reservation land was illegally taken from allottee or their heirs through tax forfeit, minor sales, full blood or administrative sales. The timber was sold and cut and much of the land quickly passed into non-Indian ownership. In the decades since, there were several commissions and court actions to find out what happened.

The implications for hunting and fishing rights have had several court challenges. The Collier agreement of 1936 was an agreement between the Biological Service (now US Fish and Wildlife Service) and Bureau of Indian Affairs to establish the Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge. The agreement still allows White Earth members to hunt, fish and gather within the Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge. In 1977, Clark v. State of Minnesota was the issue before the court on whether the state has jurisdiction to enforce its game and fish laws against enrolled members of the White Earth Band on non-Indian owned land within the reservation. In affirming lower court dismissals of the prosecutions, the Minnesota court held the White Earth Reservation was not disestablished by the Nelson Act of 1889. In 1981, White Earth Band of Chipewa v. Alexander reaffirmed tribal treaty rights for tribal members on the reservation to hunt, fish, and to gather wild rice free of state regulations on all land within the White Earth Reservation.

In 1986 the White Earth Land Settlement Act (WELSA) required transferring 10,000 acres of state/county held land to the Tribe in exchange the Tribe allowed for cleared titles of 100,000 acres of privately owned land, although the titles have been cleared, the Tribe is still waiting for the Federal Government to complete the transfer of the 10,000 acres of land into trust status. The Tribe also received $6.5m for economic development, which was used to start their Shooting Star Casino.

White Earth has relatively very little allotted land still remaining in trust, reflecting the destructive land-grabbing history of the reservation. Currently, the tribe does own around 10% (compared to 6% in 1978) of the land within the reservation, Federal government owns 15%, State owns 7%, Counties own 17%, and Privates ownership is 51%. Individual Enrolled members do hold significant amounts of privately owned fee lands within the reservation and pay property tax to the counties. The tribe also own land which they must pay property taxes until they can get the land into trust status with the federal government. The trust application to put the land into trust status take years to complete with the federal government.

The White Earth Tribal Council is the governing body and the Tribe is a member of the MCT. White Earth Village is the location of the new tribal headquarters which opened in 2008, the IHS clinic, (which underwent a five-fold expansion in 1995), the Circle of Life K-12 tribal school, and a senior’s housing project and a new community center (2008). Because of the widely scattered settlement pattern on the reservation, government services, social programs, Head Start and daycare are provided at various centers, Nay-tah-waush, Pine Point, and Rice Lake. There is an additional Head Start at Waubun and health stations at Nay-tah-waush and Pine Point. Hospitals are in communities off the reservation and in Mahnomen. The Tribe assists various services such as the hospital, fire departments, rescue squads and ambulance with some funding, with major funding going to law enforcement on the Reservation.

Seven Minnesota public school districts serve Indian children: Bagley, Detroit Lakes, Fosston, Mahnomen, Park Rapids, Waubun, and Nay-tah-waush. The White Earth Community Service Center serves as a recreational building, swimming pool and gymnasium. The center is operated by the Tribe and on tribal. The Pine Point School, K-8, is a part of the State system; it started as an Indian experimental school in 1969. Under special legislation, the Tribe administers it. In 2005 a new charter school was started in the community of Nay-tah-waush.

Criminal jurisdiction of Indians is provided by the state, the Tribe has civil jurisdiction. The Tribe has a conservation department, a police department and a civil court and is working on developing its own criminal code.

The White Earth Reservation is in an area of especially severe continuous unemployment. The Tribe’s Shooting Star Casino and Hotel in Mahnomen has been a successful operation and is the largest employer in Mahnomen County. Even though the land was purchased with monies from the WELSA Act and should have been tax exempt, the casino has paid property taxes up until this past year. There is a 390-room hotel with swimming pool, arcade, entertainment, a full range of food service options and an RV park. A great deal of investment in infrastructure has been required, resulting in expanded water and waste treatment facilities, telephone systems, and highway development.

As a community development project, the Manitok Mall was built adjacent to the casino complex. It has shops and other amenities for those coming to the casino. The Tribe also owns and operates the Ojibwe Building Supplies, Ojibwe Office Supplies, a Solid Waste Transfer Station and their own third-party health insurance claims administration office. They are in the process of starting a new business called Native Automation Solutions, Inc. which has recently gained 8(a) status from SBA. In 2006 two 24-unit apartment complexes were opened in Mahnomen and an additional 25 new homes were completed in 2007.
Anoka County Community Action Program, Inc. (ACCAP) was incorporated on June 24, 1965, as the Anoka County Council of Economic Opportunity (ACCEO) under the auspices of the Anoka County Board of Commissioners. The original 31 Anoka County residents who formed the first council are a veritable who’s who of Anoka County in the 1960s and 1970s.

The year of 1965 was a momentous one in another regard: A month before ACCEO was organized a vicious tornado roared through Fridley and leveled a good portion of the city. The Mayor of Fridley, who was working frantically to obtain federal and state disaster relief funding to rebuild his city, took time out on June 28, 1965, to write the following letter of support for the new Council for its very first grant application: “I understand that there is an effort being made to organize Anoka County in order that we can participate in the benefits of the Economic Opportunity Act. This is to let you know that we have our support and encouragement, and stand ready to help implement this program in whatever way we can.” The Mayor’s name was Bill Nee. Mr. Nee became a long-term board member, also serving as chair from 1984 to 1998.

On October 27, 1965, ACCEO received the grant for $38,459. It was approved by Sergeant Shriver, National Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity and funded program development. Total funding for ACCEO’s first year of FY1966 (including “in-kind”) was $91,350 and consisted of four programs: Administration; Summer Head Start (which was not started until 1966); Medicare Alert, which informed senior citizens about a new program called Medicare; and “Operation Pickle”, which afforded the opportunity for a few low-income families to grow cucumbers for Gedney Corporation.
The Anoka County Community Action Program, Inc. is an innovative catalyst for empowering lower income Anoka County residents to achieve their aspirations and dreams.

Our vision is one of a caring Anoka County community where basic needs are provided so that all residents can achieve and enjoy economic self-sufficiency.

ACCAP believes that poverty is transitional and is based on individual, institutional, and societal factors, which at times may be beyond an individual’s control. Further, the agency believes that alleviating poverty is the responsibility of the whole community. ACCAP believes the following: Cultural competence is a necessary component of an anti-poverty program and demands that we commit to ongoing learning about cultural difference; we must actively seek to have the multi-cultures present in our community reflected in the organization; we must continuously address the issues of culture as they relate to provision of quality services; and, we must actively and tenaciously challenge discrimination and bias through the agency and community.

It is ACCAP’s belief that our customers are best served when we engage the resources of others in mutually beneficial relationships that support a coordinated and integrated approach to service delivery. We believe that being, and remaining innovative, is essential. We believe that quality is never compromised, and that our commitment to quality and innovation results in continuous learning, a willingness to take risks, and the involvement of communities and community members in the planning, implementation and evaluation of our programs and services.

**Agency Highlights**

ACCAP has had many programs throughout its inception. Some of these programs have come and gone based on the needs of the residents in Anoka County.

**1966**
- First Needs Assessment done by the Council. Needs in priority were Family Counseling, Head Start, Upward Bound, Operation Outdoors, Home Management and Neighborhood Center.
- Developed first project, Medicare Alert, to inform senior citizens of a new health program called Medicare.
- Second project, Operation Pickle, helped low-income residents grow and sell cucumbers.
- First Head Start classes opened.

**1967**
- Neighborhood Youth Corp (NYC) funded.
- Family Counseling funded.

**1968**
- Organized a GED program for county residents at Fridley Senior High.

**1969**
- Initiated the first Head Start program in the United States.

**1970**
- Organized advisory component “Community Organization”.

**1971**
- Established Lakes Community Clinic.
- Organized Northwood Homeowners Association.

**1972**
- Began Drop Out Program for high school dropouts.
- Organized Senior Transportation System in Anoka County (STS).
- Organized Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) in Anoka County.

**1973**
- ACCEO spins off RSVP and STS to Anoka County.
1974
- Organized North Suburban Consumer Advocated for the Handicapped (NSCAH).
- NYC programs transferred to Anoka County Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) program.
- Opened the Well Senior Citizen Clinic.

1975
- Organized Farmers Market – St. Timothy’s Catholic Church.
- Established South Anoka Community Assistance (SACA) Program.
- Instituted Weatherization program in Anoka County.

1976
- Developed Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MHFA) Housing Rehabilitation Program.

1977
- Changed name to Anoka County Community Action Program, Inc.

1978
- Organized Senior Citizen Outreach Program.

1979
- Contracted with Minnesota Citizens Organized ACting Together (COACT) for community organizing services, which subsequently became All Parks Alliance for Change.
- Established Carpenter Union Apprenticeship Program.

1980
- Organized “Handi-Kids” chore worker program.
- Organized “You Can” Canning Center at St. Timothy’s Catholic Church.
- Established MHFA Accessibility Program in Anoka County.

1981
- Established Cheese Give-Away Project (TEFAP).
- Organized Home Delivered Meals Program for rural Anoka County.
- Obtained CDBG Home Rehab from Anoka County.
- Built Grasslands Housing for people with physical disabilities.

1982
- Organized Anoka County Community Housing Resource Board.
- Helped organize the Anoka County Affordable Housing Coalition.

1983
- Established ACCAP Transit (a para-transit program).
- Organized FEMA Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP).
- Developed Methane Extraction Project-Ramsey Landfill.
- Established Senior Citizen Chore Service Program (now Chores & More).

1984
- Piloted Fiber Fuel Furnace Project.
- Piloted “Fair Share” Fuel Assistance Program.
- Expanded Head Start services into Washington County.
- Expanded Head Start services in Anoka County.

1985
- Organized Transit Services for Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) clients.
- Organized Growth Unlimited Development Corporation (a CDC).
- Renovated Convent of St. Timothy’s with ARC Anoka County.
- Renovated Shiloh House for Emergency Shelter.

1986
- Developed HUD “312” program for Urban Homestead Program in Anoka.
- Acquired and renovated the Blaine Women’s Transitional Housing.
- Renovated the rectory at St Tim’s for transitional housing.
- Head Start began a summer enrichment program with United Way funding.
- Organized Share-A-Home project in Anoka County with Lutheran Social Services.

1987
- Developed Car Purchase Loan Program for Job Training clients.
- Acquired and renovated Fridley Transitional Housing with Elim Housing Service.
- Renovated the rectory at St. Timothy’s for transitional housing.

1988
- Acquired, moved and renovated houses for Urban Homestead Program in Fridley.
- Purchased “The Pines” apartment building in Spring Lake Park with RISE.
- Purchased “The Oaks” residence for ventilator dependent adults.
- Piloted Youth Employment Drop Out Prevention Program.
- Opened Furniture Warehouse.
- Purchased “Tyler Heights” apartment building.
1989
• Acquired the Knights of Columbus Hall in Coon Rapids and renovated into Head Start Family Development Center.

1990
• Acquired and renovated 3rd and 4th HUD houses in Coon Rapids and Columbia Heights for ARC and LSS.
• Developed “Suburban Homestead” project with City of Coon Rapids.
• United Way designates ACCAP as lead agency for Human Service Center.
• Renovated the convent at the Church of Immaculate Conception for homeless women and their children.

1991
• Developed “I Care” fund with Midwest Gas.
• Human Service Center of Anoka County opened, currently houses 21 different human service agencies.
• Purchased “Wylderwood” apartment with RISE.
• Became grantee for Child Care Resource & Referral Program (CCR&R).

1992
• Purchased a four-plex in Blaine for transitional housing.
• Purchased a four-plex in Anoka for Emergency Shelter for single adults.
• Purchased a four-plex in Fridley for family housing.
• Centerpoint Energy contract with ACCAP to weatherize their fuel assistance eligible clients’ houses.

1993
• Expanded Suburban Homestead to Andover and Ramsey.
• Purchased 22-unit SRO in Columbia Heights called Theater Heights.
• CCR&R began Starting Out Successful Program for new caregivers starting a business.
• ACCAP leases 53rd house in the HUB $1 loan program, becoming the fourth largest participant in this program in the nation.
• Expanded Head Start services to over 500 children and families.
• The newly renovated Head Start Family Development Center opened.
• Purchased twin home in Andover for transitional housing.
• Opened Cornerstone Child Care.

1994
• Purchased eleven HUD leased houses.
• Purchased old Alexandra House for public use. Established first HUD house as group home with Anoka County Human Services.
• Sold first HUD house to formerly homeless family.
• Purchased “Anoka West” – 31-unit apartment in City of Anoka.
• Purchased building for Central Center for Family Resources for use as a drop-in center for adults with mental health disabilities.
• Established Senior Information Line.
• Developed Arrearage Forgiveness program with Minnegasco.
• Purchased three apartment buildings containing 18 units of Single Resident Occupancy (SRO) housing and affordable family housing in Fridley.
• Purchased “City View” four-plex in Fridley for family short-term transitional house.
• Secured financing to maintain six group homes serving adults with developmental disabilities throughout the county.

1995
• Established residence for at-risk youth, collaboration with LSS.
• Purchased residence for special needs adults.
• Purchased building containing 12 units for large families with disabled members.
• Opened Head Start Family Learning Center providing early computer learning readiness for all Head Start children and computer training for parents.
• Purchased rental property for temporary transitional housing.
• Purchased Board & Lodge in Columbia Heights for 16 at-risk adults.

1996
• Built five Liberty Park Townhomes in Coon Rapids for families with physically disabled members.
• Collaboration partnership with Anoka County and NE State Bank.
• Head Start began a birth to age three program for children and families.
• Purchased residence for disabled men.
1997
- Purchased residence for disabled women.
- Anoka County contracted with ACCAP to administer Child Care Assistance Program.
- Expanded Head Start to serve over 600 children and families.
- Head Start began first full-year/full-day program.
- Opened new center in Anoka.
- Head Start opened a Child Development Center in Cottage Grove serving Washington County.
- Groundbreaking for a 24,000 square foot addition to the Anoka County Family Development Center.

1998
- Developed and implemented a tax credit partnership for HUD-leased homes, Woodfield Apartments, and Oak Manor Townhomes in Coon Rapids.

1999
- In collaboration with other Community Actions, Family Assets for Independence (FAIM) was created and piloted in Anoka County.
- Highway Department donated ACCAP six houses in Andover to move and remodel.
- ACCAP built six houses in Andover and sold to first-time home buyers.

2000
- Established ACCAP’s Home Ownership Department.

2001
- Assisted in formation of Free to Be.
- Established permanent location for our home-to-home furniture outlet at Anoka County’s Rum River Center.
- Completed and sold three prisoner-built single-family homes.
- Expanded Early Head Start and full-day, full-year Head Start.
- Pilot mobile home project was recognized by the legislature & written into statue.

2002
- CCR&R now has access to an internet database for parents to use to find childcare statewide.
- ACCAP launched its own web site www.accap.org.
- Tax credit partnership for Ramsey Sunwood Townhomes and developed Coon Rapids Townhomes wholly owned by ACCAP.

2004
- Connexus Energy contracted with ACCAP to administer its residential energy conservation program providing free electric energy saving appliances to Connexus fuel assistance eligible clients.

2006
- Became sponsors of Anoka County’s Healthy Start program.

2007
- ACCAP Twice Nice Shop was created to provide used goods at an affordable price to residents.
- ACCAP’s Head Start program won a prestigious “Best Practices” from MN Community Action Partnership for improving dental services for Head Start kids.

2008
- In response to the foreclosure crisis, ACCAP created a Foreclosure Hotline to help with the increase of foreclosure calls and added three counselors.

2009
- Homelessness Prevention and Rapids Rehousing Program (HPRP) was created to provide temporary assistance to partner agencies.

2010
- Head Start received the Minnesota Center of Excellence Award.

2012
- In partnership with Anoka County, created PC’s for People.
- Acquired Tenant Based Rental Assistance for Anoka County.

2013
- CCR&R changed its name to Child Care Aware, to align with national name change.
- In collaboration with Anoka County, started MNsure Assistor and Outreach.

2014
- The Governing Board, using non-governmental resources, funded Anoka County Job Training Center (ACJTC), to provide a flexible gap filling program for clients that resulted in ACCAP winning a veteran’s services award from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development.
- Head Start received a “Promising Practices” award from MinnCAP for its innovative Fatherhood Partnership Project.
Success Stories

Bukola

Bukola Oriola, a Nigerian immigrant, faced incredible odds in escaping her nightmare as a victim of human trafficking in Ramsey, Minnesota. Held captive by threats of violence and deportation, deprived of basic necessities, Bukola sought a way out. Yet unlike people from the United States who might know how to get help, she did not know where to go for help, in fear of her captor and of making a mistake.

Then one day, Bukola’s captor called the police to make false allegations about her. Faced with this obstacle, she thought of one trustworthy person who might understand - the public health nurse who had visited her while pregnant. Bukola had given up hope when this nurse recognized signs of abuse in her eyes and voice. She suggested Bukola go to the Alexandra House for help and protection.

Bukola arrived at the Alexandra House in 2007 with nothing but her son, the clothes on their backs and some important papers. She had escaped! After recovery, therapy and love from Civil Society and friends, Bukola set out with even greater determination than she thought possible. With God on her side, she set goals of owning her own business, becoming an advocate for abused and trafficked victims in the United States, and becoming financially independent so she would never have to rely on someone again for food and shelter.

Now, Bukola has expanded her business and is living independently. She has written a book on her experience of human trafficking and speaks at conferences, colleges, television shows and events in the upper Midwest, all with her own money and a little help from FAIM savings. She is happy and successful. She has overcome the odds and met her goals!

Her business has become a reality with the help of FAIM (Family Assets for Independence in Minnesota). In the beginning, she braided hair at a 12 foot x 12 foot shop, with her son swaddled to her back. Bukola had no car, no child care, and meager belongings, but she had tenacity and hope to see her dreams come true. Saving little by little, Bukola leveraged the FAIM program to help her finance her original business and then went on to expand it a four times the size! Now, Bukola is launching her own product line and conducting training seminars. With the opportunity and head start that FAIM gave her, Bukola has been able to become independent. Today she has a full line of customers and her business is growing everyday. Bukola owns a car, her son attends school, and they are healthy, safe and prosperous.

There were many challenges along the way including debt, language barriers, cultural differences, emotional scars, and legal battles. Bukola faced all these challenges, as well as a constant fear of her captor, with no family in the United States. She was a single mother struggling in the cold of Minnesota, far away from her warm native land of Nigeria. Yet, she attended financial and business seminars to gain new knowledge of how to become profitable and market her business, all of which was challenging to her. But, Bukola didn’t give up. She relied on a trusted circle of friends and outreach programs, never squandered or deviated from her path and goals, and today is a shining example of how a person can succeed when given the chance. Her business and life continue to blossom and today she is helping other victims fight to gain their freedom and independence.

Desereae

Desereae enrolled in Anoka County’s Minnesota Youth Program when she was a 14-year-old in foster care. Desereae had never had a job before and took full advantage of the opportunity to learn new job skills. Youth Program staff placed her at a middle school as a custodial assistant. Within Desereae’s first month of work, her work site supervisor contacted the Youth Program asking if there was any type of award given to students for great performance. At the end of the summer, Youth Program staff met with Desereae to offer her year-round services and she was subsequently co-enrolled in the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) program.

Desereae’s next work experience was at Twice Nice, a thrift shop operated by Anoka County Community Action Program. She quickly developed customer service skills and working knowledge of a busy retail store. She continued to excel in her position at Twice Nice, while also in her high school studies. She graduated from Blaine High School and was adopted by her foster family.

Her work site supervisor stated: “Desereae has been a huge asset to Twice Nice. Once reserved, soft-spoken and completely unsure of herself and her surroundings (she) has now grown into a confident, self-assertive and strong young woman. Desereae is a strong leader in a very diverse environment. She is a true ‘team player’ with her knowledge of the business and working with over 200 volunteers, community service workers and other Work Force participants. She tackles all projects wholeheartedly and her sense of loyalty and belief in our store has greatly contributed to the success that we have had so far.”

Since her initial work experience placement at Twice Nice, Desereae was promoted and hired as a permanent staff member in the position of Thrift Store Technician where she continues to work. Her long-term goal is to attend college and obtain employment with Animal Control.
The Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency (AEOA) was incorporated in April 1965 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, established as a Community Action Program (CAP) for the northeast Minnesota counties of St. Louis, Lake, and Cook. Agency programming subsequently extended to the four neighboring counties of Aitkin, Carlton, Itasca, and Koochiching. Several agency services expanded to the city of Duluth beginning in the 1990s, and transit services were extended to Pine County in 2011.

The story of AEOA's first 50 years is one of service, growth, and partnerships. AEOA's eight-county service area, home to about 325,000 citizens, encompasses the vast Arrowhead Region that stretches from Lake Superior to the Canadian border and from Minnesota's central lakes region to the northern wilderness lakes of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area (BWCA).

The agency’s 20,000 square miles of service area is predominately a rural geography dotted with thousands of lakes surrounded by forests, making tourism and forest products primary economic drivers; and, of course, the iron mining industry looms large in the past, current, and future story of the region. The region is also on the cusp of another mining boom, with the prospect of precious metals mining in its near future.

The region boasts hundreds of small communities throughout, and the agency is present in many of the larger communities in the form of office facilities, Head Start or Adult Basic Education (ABE) classrooms, WorkForce Centers, senior dining sites, etc.
By the time Carlton County was integrated into the system in 1986, Arrowhead Transit stretched from the shores of Lake Superior to the Canadian border at both Manitoba and Ontario, marking one of the largest transit service areas in the nation. Although the region is dotted with a handful of cities—ranging from Duluth and International Falls to Hibbing and Ely—the area’s geographic largess produces a mostly rural population separated by long distances between homes and destinations.

During the 1970s and ‘80s, AEOA worked with other rural transit providers to form the National Association for Transportation Alternatives (NASTA), the precursor to today’s Community Transportation Association of America, designed to better serve rural communities and populations.

Today, the system carries more than 600,000 annual riders on a fleet of more than 80 vehicles operated and supported by 81 drivers and dispatchers and another 17 mechanics, managers, and administrative personnel—one of the most extensive rural transit operations in the country. A total of 10 maintenance facilities and garages, of which five are directly owned by Arrowhead Transit, keep the operation going, which is no small feat, considering northeastern Minnesota’s cold, snowy winters.

As one of the nation’s largest regional community transportation providers, Arrowhead Transit today both reflects its innovative roots and embraces new opportunities for its future. Pine County recently came on-board, to mark Arrowhead’s eighth service county, largely through the same partnership-first focus that has defined the system’s history.

**Employment and Training**

Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency has always seen employment and training programs as a primary means of accomplishing its mission to provide opportunity for low-income people. The Employment and Training Department has been in place since the agency’s inception, providing services across the seven-county Arrowhead Region to the un- and under-employed, under-educated, and those on public assistance. The department’s mission is to promote the values and benefits of work and help people succeed as an employed adult.

The agency is a certified employment and training service provider and a partner in Minnesota’s WorkForce Center System. In northeast Minnesota, the agency works closely and collaboratively with five area partners to ensure coordination of efforts and extension of resources. The agency is co-located in seven area WorkForce Centers, providing customer convenience and comprehensive services.

The Employment and Training Department has 50 years of successful experience in the delivery of welfare-to-work services — providing work experience, employability assistance, assessment services, employment planning, guidance, counseling, and support to thousands of individuals and families on public assistance. Contracting with area county human service programs, the department has successfully assisted thousands of individuals and families in reaching employment goals and moving off public assistance programs.

This department has 35 years of successful experience in delivery of Adult Basic Education (ABE) services and has developed the largest statewide consortium of ABE services in Minnesota. Partnering with area independent school districts and community colleges, AEOA continues to achieve educational outcomes that lead the state and nation. Thousands of successful students have achieved GED certification and basic education goals.

In addition, AEOA’s Employment and Training Department has 50 years of successful experience in the delivery of youth services. Partnering with county agencies and local providers, the department has successfully administered a variety of youth programming toward the goal of educational success, employability, and transition to adulthood; this has been accomplished by running dozens of youth training activities to prepare youth for school, develop life skills, and succeed in the world of work, while counseling, guiding, and assisting these youth as they struggle with life issues.

And finally, the department has 50 years of experience in assisting seniors aged 55 and up with staying involved in their communities and supplementing their incomes through work programs. Partnering with area private and nonprofit employers, AEOA provides work experience, training in new technology, and assistance to ensure success in the workplace.

In total, AEOA’s Employment and Training Department consists of approximately 60 staff who provide work experience, employability, counseling, instructional, and support services. Their story is one of success through partnership and positive participant outcomes.

**Head Start**

Arrowhead Head Start began in 1965 as a six-week summer program serving 190 low-income children and families. It became a school-year program in 1968 serving Cook, Lake, and St. Louis counties. In the 50 years since its inception, Head Start has grown to serve 395 children and families, as it constantly evolves to provide a variety of service options to fit the ever-changing needs of clients.
In 1989, Head Start began its Home-Based Program, in order to meet the needs of low-income families living in very rural communities where there were not enough children to support a full classroom. This option continues today and has evolved to become critical for those families who are not able to transport children to a classroom.

In 1992, Arrowhead Head Start was part of a demonstration project, developing partnerships with area family child care providers to supplement the Head Start curriculum for families in need of full-day/full-year child care services.

In 1999, Arrowhead adopted a new option called the Combination Program. This option combined the benefits of a classroom setting with the more intensive services of one-to-one instruction in the child’s home. Since its inception, this option has expanded from two sites to five.

The Early Head Start Program began in 2002 with the goal of earlier intervention for families living in poverty. Pregnant mothers and children under three years of age receive services through full-year Home-Based or Center-Based programming.

In addition to its ever-changing nature, Arrowhead Head Start has consistently brought its services to the people. Through regular community needs assessments and exhaustive recruitment efforts, Arrowhead Head Start has always prided itself on identifying population centers with the greatest need and relocating its programming to accommodate those needs. Program options and/or locations are changed almost annually to ensure the most efficient and effective distribution of funding.

Arrowhead Head Start has consistently been a leader in providing the highest quality educational staff through relationships with area colleges that ensure ongoing training in cutting-edge educational techniques. In 1993, to address the growing number of children with special needs, a third staff person was added to classrooms to ensure more intensive one-to-one services.

Arrowhead Head Start enjoys a renowned reputation as a high quality program. It has received national recognition for its creative approaches to solving critical issues, such as serving children with disabilities, ensuring dental care for all children, promoting parent successes, and innovations in technology.

**Housing Services**

AEOA’s Housing Department began in 1978 with a Fuel and Energy Program that assisted low-income families and seniors with home energy conservation. Since then, AEOA’s LIHEAP (Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program) program has grown; and in 2013, the program assisted 8,775 households with heating bills.

In 1986, Arrowhead Weatherization received a series of grants from St. Louis County for energy conservation efforts. Since that time, AEOA’s Housing Department has weatherized more than 9,600 homes with Department of Energy funding. Between 2009 and 2012, the Housing Department hired 57 new staff, weatherized 1,788 homes, and provided water heater and solar assistance to 102 households utilizing ARRA (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) stimulus funding. The Department’s work expanded to Duluth and partnered with Minnesota Power, the City of Duluth, the Duluth HRA, Salvation Army, and other community organizations.

Over the past 18 years, the Housing Department has generated 97 safe, decent, affordable housing units in the communities served by the agency.

In 1996, AEOA Eveleth Limited Partnership was formed for the purpose of acquiring and rehabilitating the Italian American Building located in Eveleth, to rehab 12 single-room occupancy (SRO) units in one apartment complex. AEOA’s Housing Department continues to operate that complex today.

The Housing Department assumed operation of a homeless shelter in the city of Virginia in 1996 and moved on to construct “Bill’s House,” a 12-unit (eight transitional units and four emergency bed units) homeless shelter in memory of AEOA’s Homeless Outreach Worker, Bill Noyes. The shelter allows for a longer stabilization period of up to six months for a maximum of 12 homeless individuals. AEOA’s emergency shelter system has served approximately 2,142 individuals since its inception.

In 2010, AEOA’s Housing Department constructed a 15-unit (13 efficiency units and two two-bedroom units) apartment complex called the “Virginia Youth Foyer” to house homeless youth; the agency continues to manage this complex today.

The Housing Department has also assisted in the rehab of more than 3,000 homes occupied by low-income individuals. In 2011, the department began a partnership with Lake and Cook counties to provide Small Cities Development Program grants to eligible households. And, in 2012, Iron Range Resources & Rehabilitation Board (IRRRB) provided funding for a new initiative, the Home Energy Improvement Program, which provides funds for up to 35% of energy-related improvements to houses in the Taconite Assistance Area, whose individual incomes range between $35,000 and $90,000 a year.

Since 1995, AEOA has provided first-time homebuyer education to 3,523 people, delivered homeownership counseling to 1,828 individuals, and helped 915 first-time homebuyers purchase a home. AEOA has also assisted 1,260 households with foreclosure issues since 2000.

In 1999, the Community Technical Assistance Program, funded through the IRRRB, helped communities in the Taconite Assistance Area attract developers to construct new single-family housing to their communities. This helped jumpstart housing development for moderate-income households. Minnesota
Housing Finance Agency (MHFA) provided funding to the developers for both construction ($2.3 million) and gap financing ($777,000). IRRRB began using the skills of AEOA Weatherization and Rehab Inspectors to disburse $750,000 in Business Energy Retrofit funds for energy-saving upgrades on businesses from 2012 to 2014. These funds leveraged over $2.3 million in energy improvement funds in the Taconite Assistance Area.

New projects include: a housing rehab and weatherization collaboration with Kootasca Community Action and potential rehabilitation of a 16-unit apartment unit that serves low-income elders and persons with disabilities in Grand Marais.

In 2013, AEOA was funded by the Small Cities Development Program for improvements to seven commercial businesses in Lake County.

**Senior Services**

Senior Nutrition Programs (often referred to as “Senior Dining” and “Meals on Wheels”) celebrated 40 years of service across Minnesota. In the spring of 1973, AEOA was one of six providers in Minnesota to receive funds from the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) to pilot Senior Nutrition Services. The $32,000 grant provided for 160 meals per day. The successful pilot service was expanded statewide and by the fall of 1973, AEOA established eight sites and served 300 meals per day.

In the 40 years since, Arrowhead Senior Nutrition Services has expanded services to Itasca and Koochiching counties (1990), become the umbrella agency for several community-based programs, e.g. the Eveleth-Gilbert “Have Meals Will Travel,” (2003), and expanded service to the city of Duluth (2009). Today, Arrowhead Senior Nutrition annually serves over 425,000 meals at 67 locations.

Arrowhead Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) began in the fall of 1972 with a grant from ACTION, the national volunteer service agency. By the end of the first year, RSVP had placed 105 senior citizens in volunteer jobs and had reported 6,976 volunteer hours at 18 locations in greater St. Louis County. The project successfully received funding from CNCS (Corporation for National & Community Service) and/or the Minnesota Board on Aging to expand services to Cook County (1988), Lake County (1996), and the city of Duluth/southern St. Louis County (2003). From the 1972 focus on keeping senior citizens busy and happy, the project has become a major regional resource of older volunteers who are working toward meeting significant needs in their home communities. Today, 1,470 Arrowhead retired senior volunteers provide 189,000 hours annually to 225-250 organizations, with a focus on providing healthy futures for northeast Minnesota residents.

In April 2001, the Northland Volunteer Center (NVC) was placed under the sponsorship of AEOA, after being operated as an all-volunteer membership organization for many years. Under AEOA leadership, NVC has increased their outreach to include actively recruiting and placing volunteers under age 55 with nonprofit organizations in northern St. Louis, Lake, and Cook counties. Last year, 148 NVC volunteers gave 8,781 hours of service to 63 organizations.

NVC promotes volunteering for residents of northern St. Louis County by providing education and information and sponsoring special volunteer events like the annual Volunteer Fair, occasional network meetings, and Hall of Fame Awards, as well as coordinating the AARP Tax-Aide Program.

In 2013, AEOA's Senior Carnival celebrated its 30th anniversary and was attended by over 300 guests. The successful event was made possible by the generosity of six major sponsors, 23 exhibitors, and donations from 19 entities.

AEOA administers and coordinates the Northeast Minnesota Food Shelf Network that consists of 10 food shelves. In 2012, 5,424 unduplicated individuals were served and over 850,000 pounds of food were distributed. In 2013, the Seventh Annual Fundraiser, hosted by Senator Tom Bakk, raised $120,000 on behalf of the Network.

For FY/2013, AEOA's SNAP Outreach (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) conducted 26 presentations (attended by 400 individuals) and completed 92 applications for qualifying seniors in St. Louis County.

**Administration**

Agency oversight is the responsibility of the 33-member board of directors; 12 chairs have been seated over the agency’s 50 years. These volunteers come equally from the public, private, and consumer sectors and have shown tremendous leadership over the years, demonstrating their commitment to the mission of the organization. Among many duties, the board is responsible for the selection and oversight of the executive director, who, in turn, is responsible for the agency’s operation.

The executive director serves as the primary liaison between the board and professional staff, ensuring that the board’s direction is followed. This director is also responsible for hiring quality department leadership, coordinating cross-departmental efforts through a director leadership team, and, ensuring the augmentation of complementary departmental practices. The executive director also serves as the “primary ambassador and collaborator” of the agency, recognizing that AEOA shares common goals and purposes with many other organizations. Coalition-building with these partner organizations has been a key to the success of the agency. As well, the executive director serves as the primary political liaison, helping legislators create a policy environment sensitive to the needs of low-income people. AEOA has seen great stability in this key position, hiring only two executive directors in its 50-year history.
Conclusion

This agency’s history, while herein explored by department for easier grasp, is really more about collaborative efforts and internal partnerships to provide comprehensive customer services and the pursuit of a common mission.

AEOA’s mission, of strengthening communities by providing opportunities for those experiencing social and economic challenges, continues to be our touchstone and driving force. The agency continues to strengthen communities by recognizing the inter-relatedness of the entire community. By advocating for and helping low-income individuals become self-sufficient, we contribute to the well-being of the entire community.

AEOA retains its strong convictions about how we as a society should deal with issues of opportunity and poverty and how our nation’s ample resources should best be used. AEOA remains committed to the principles of service and partnership, while providing quality human services and effective advocacy to our region’s citizens.

AEOA will continue to provide a wide array of essential services to its citizens to help alleviate the most destabilizing effects of poverty. We will continue to provide “a hand up” in our desire to promote individual achievement and secure the health and prosperity of our communities. AEOA wishes to see all citizens pursue their dreams and enjoy the opportunities and benefits of living in a free and equal society.

Human Resources
The Human Resources Department was established in July 2000 to attract, develop, and maintain an effective workforce at AEOA. This department’s mission involves improving the applicant selection process, expanding employee orientation/training/recognition programs, designing appropriate workplace policies, and dealing with employee issues that arise, all the while ensuring that AEOA remains a fair and equitable workplace with opportunities for employee growth.

This department recently implemented computerized benefits administration, completing the transition to the SAGE-ABRA human resources system in 2009. System add-ons, including ABRA Workforce Connections and Time Star, the electronic timesheet, have furthered the move to computerized benefits. In December 2012, computerization of the staff application and selection process began, representing another milestone on the road to fully computerized personnel records.

Information and Fiscal Services
In 1979, AEOA received a grant to serve as the pilot agency for the development of transferrable client tracking and fiscal systems software called the Minnesota Community Action Data System (MCADS). A forerunner of future information systems, MCADS was implemented statewide, as well as out-of-state in Wisconsin, Ohio, Massachusetts, and Louisiana.

Throughout its 50 years of operation, AEOA has brought and managed with fiscal integrity more than $800 million of funding to the families of the Arrowhead Region.

Planning
Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency has always recognized the strength that planning brings to the agency, employing planning staff for decades. In 1996, the Planning Department was reorganized with a clear scope of work and the Director of Planning position was created as a senior management position in the agency. The Planning Department now provides support to management, the board, and its five operational departments through strategic planning; research and needs assessment; program development; and fundraising activities.

In addition, the Planning Department contributes the agency perspective to local, regional, and statewide entities that are focused on eliminating or alleviating poverty conditions. Planning staff work with diverse groups of people, manage multiple priorities, and utilize creativity and flexibility, while maintaining focus on the agency’s mission. Planning expertise requires environmental trend analysis, project facilitation and management, community liaison abilities, and outcome/evaluation methodology.
Deb Forte, Head Start Family and AEOA Employee

To look at the Alton-Lakeland area of Minnesota now, you’d never guess it was a very small farming community when I was a child. I grew up there in an old farm house, several miles from the nearest neighbor. My two brothers and two sisters were at least 10 years older than me. There were no other children my age in the area so I grew up a rather lonely and shy child. My home life was emotionally and verbally abusive.

My family was involved in a very controlling religious cult who strongly believed in the saying “spare the rod, spoil the child”, in the very literal sense. Through the years we moved several times, ending finally in Britt, Minnesota. By this time, I had very low self-esteem. I decided to quit school at the end of 10th grade and moved out of my parents’ house at the age of seventeen. I became involved in drugs and drinking, becoming a very messed up individual.

In 1981, I met my future husband, Ray. Things progressed, we married, had two fine sons. In 1987, we ended up in Gilbert, Minnesota. Coming from the kind of life I’d had, I knew nothing about how to be a parent. My husband had a similar background so he didn’t know either. All we knew was to love our kids and keep them fed and clean. I just knew I didn’t want my kids to ever experience what I had growing up.

My oldest son, Jacob, had his preschool screening. He had some speech problems and gross motor delays. He was referred to Head Start, thus began my involvement with Head Start. I was very hesitant to come in as a volunteer, especially since I had to bring my three-year-old along with me. I was also extremely shy and scared of people in general.

Mrs. Knutson (the teacher), and Jane Puzel (the assistant), made me feel important and really needed. They both encouraged me and made me feel like I had something worthwhile to say and do with the children. When some of the children actually responded in a positive way towards me it made me feel great. I could help just one child feel better about himself it made some of my childhood pains go away. I got so hooked on volunteering I was in the classroom every day for the next three and a half years.

During those years, I had many opportunities to attend workshops and improve my knowledge of child development. I also became a policy council representative. In 1990, with the help of Head Start, I earned my GED through an Adult Basic Education (ABE) program operated by AEOA and I began to think about going back to work. I didn’t want to give up my volunteering at Head Start. I loved helping children learn.

During this time, my youngest son, who was enrolled in Head Start, suffered a traumatic dog bite incident which affected my whole family. With the help of

Head Start we were referred to Range Mental Health and we were able to work out the issues this incident caused.

In the spring of 1991, Jane Puzel moved to a different job leaving the aide job open. Immediately, I applied and after an interview, I was hired. I earned my preschool CDA in 1993 and continued as teacher assistant with Carol Knutson as head teacher. We made a great team and were good friends. Unfortunately, she was stricken with cancer and in January 2000 passed away. Two months later, I lost my mother to breast cancer, which left me as primary caretaker of my father, who had Alzheimer’s. I tried to maintain him in his own home, but circumstances forced me to place him in a nursing home. A year later he passed away.

Through all this loss and grief, the wonderful staff of Head Start helped and supported me. I tried to maintain my work and not let my grieving interfere with the children, but my life had become gray and the joy had gone. Every time I walked into the Head Start room, I was reminded of the loss of my dear friend. I knew I had to move on but everything I had read about grief said to make big life changing decisions for at least a year after your loss. I knew I wanted to continue working with children, so when I heard Head Start was receiving a grant for an Infant/Toddler program I became excited. Here was a chance to work with children, yet move to a new environment and a new challenge. I was able to earn my Second Setting CDA as an Infant/Toddler teacher in 2007 and I continue to work as a toddler teacher.

So I now have 27 years of experience, 23 of them as an employee at AEOA. Head Start did way more than just educate me, it has changed my whole life and the life of my family. It has boosted my self-confidence and self-esteem. It has made me feel worthwhile and needed, like I could make a difference in the world. I am a completely different person than I was 27 years ago. Not just me, but my family too.

My two boys who attended Head Start have grown up. Through their teenage years, they both volunteered in the classroom for many hours. Both boys have a deep love and respect of children. They both remember their “Teacher Jate” and Mrs. Knutson. They both joined the Navy when they reached 18 years old. The oldest, Jacob, is now out of the Navy and going to the University of Minnesota in Duluth for his master’s degree in business and his four-year degree in chemical engineering. He has been employed for several summers as a Substitute Aide in the Toddler Classroom. The younger one, Quentin, is still in the Navy. He is a Communications Officer, First Class Petty on a Submarine. He has three wonderful children and a great wife.

We owe all of this to the “Head Start” my whole family received 27 years ago. I know myself and my family wouldn’t be in this good place in our lives without this wonderful program and all the fantastic, talented staff people who have helped us.
Bi-County Community Action Programs

History

1965

- Congress created the Office of Economic Opportunity to administer the programs of the Economic Opportunity Act. Federal jobs and training efforts were already growing and new programs, such as Head Start, had recently been launched to meet the special needs of the nation. The Office of Economic Opportunity needed local help in administering its programs and turned to the Community Action Agencies that had been forming in communities across the country in response to the War on Poverty.

- The initial meeting of the newly organized Bi-County Community Action Council was held in Spring 1965. The 12-person council would administer the Community Action Program in Beltrami and Cass counties and elected John Glas, Bemidji State University (BSU) President, as chair. Russell Schrupp was hired as executive director of the newly organized agency in July 1965. Verlie Boyer was hired as assistant director in August 1965 at a salary of $450 per month. Lucille Moe was hired as office secretary at a salary of $300 per month. Office space was obtained on the second floor of the Dickinson Building on 3rd Street in Bemidji.

1966

- The first program, Medicare Alert, to assist low-income residents was funded February 1966 for $2,965. This program, under the direction of Bill Wilson, had 10 voluntary aids to inform senior citizens about the benefits available to them under the health insurance and other provisions of the Social Security Amendments of 1965.

- A summer Head Start program was received in March 1966 in the amount of $20,863 in federal funds, to establish summer Head Start for low-income preschool children. The centers were located at BSU Lab School Bemidji; Northern School Bemidji; Backus and Pine River.

- The Bi-County CAP office was moved to the basement of the Court House in Bemidji in 1966.

- A cooperative project between Bi-County CAP (Bi-CAP) and Bemidji State University (BSU) received funding to establish Upward Bound at BSU. The project was funded on April 20, 1966 for $106,610. The project involved 100 disadvantaged students who were high school seniors but not planning to attend college due to economic and cultural circumstances. The students spent seven weeks at BSU and received tutoring during the school year.

- Six Community Action Councils in northwestern Minnesota received funding for the establishment of Neighborhood Youth Corp in April 1966. This project was funded at $30,450. During the summer, 67 young people in Beltrami and Cass counties were placed in 14 job sites in schools and local government offices. These youth worked 29 hours per week at $1.25 per hour. During the school year, 22 youth worked for 10 hours a week at $1.25 per hour.

- In July 1966, a grant was received to establish senior citizen centers in the two counties. Leonard Hocking was hired as program director with Lu Colie as his assistant. These two staff were involved in the Bemidji Senior Center and the Pillager Center. In Bemidji, a driver for the senior’s transportation program and delivering meals for the “Meals on Wheels” program was hired, along with a food service director and craft shop manager. The price of the delivered meals was 65 cents per meal. The craft shop was procured through the Bemidji Civic and Commerce, rent free and was open May to September.

- In September 1966, Bi-CAP was legally organized as a nonprofit corporation, under the laws of the State of Minnesota.

1967

- Another new pilot program, Nine Month Head Start Program, was funded for a total of $53,272. The project operated out of the Evangelical Mission Covenant Church in Bemidji and served 45 three-, four- and five-year olds. Joan Allen was hired as Head Start Director and also involved three teachers, six teacher aides, a cook and a custodian. The Head Start Policy Council was established during this program.

1968

- Executive Director Russell Schrupp resigned to accept a position with Rural Minnesota CEP in Detroit Lakes. Doyle Aultman was hired as executive director of Bi-CAP.

- The Outreach Advisory Board was organized and included six members who attended meetings to provide program suggestions and evaluation.

- The Blackduck Senior Citizen Center was organized with the assistance of Senior Coordinator Lu Colie.
1970
• Leslie P. Doyle of Walker was hired as executive director.
• Mr. William Stava was hired as executive director.
• In December 1970, Bi-CAP organized the first CAP Boutique so low-income families could sell handmade crafts, featuring ponchos, teddy bears, vests and robes.
• Bi-CAP offices were moved to 209 ½ Minnesota Avenue, Bemidji.

1971
• The Alcohol Problems and Counseling Program began in September 1971, with a grant from the Office of Economic Opportunity. Jack Longie was hired as the counselor/program coordinator.
• Lucille Moe was chosen as supervisor for a new program, Emergency Food and Medical Services. This program assisted families to become certified for the food stamps program, teaching budgeting and consumer and nutrition education.

1972
• Michael B. Ekre was hired as executive director in March 1972.
• The Bemidji Lion’s Club implemented a “Toys for Christmas” project in cooperation with Bi-CAP. A total of 1,600 children received gifts.

1973
• Glen Christianson was hired as program coordinator for the Alcohol Problems & Counseling Program in March 1973.

1974
• A farmers market was organized at the Gibson’s/Pamida parking lot and provided a market for fresh fruit and vegetables and handicraft items.
• In December 1974, Bi-CAP offices were moved to 201 3rd Street, Bemidji.

1975
• The first Weatherization program started, with Roger Swenson as program supervisor.
• With the help of Green Thumb, VISTA volunteers, and Rural Minnesota CEP, Bi-CAP used Bi-CAP crews to weatherize low-income households’ homes by installing insulation, storm doors, windows and weather stripping.
• Jim McGill was hired as outreach coordinator for Cass County.
• Anne McGill was hired as Head Start teacher at Pine River Head Start Center.
• Bi-CAP operated the Summer Youth Program in both counties for Rural Minnesota CEP. Bi-Cap operated the In-School Youth Program for Region V.
• Bi-CAP staff organized the Food Buying Club in Cass County that became the Countryside Coop.

1976
• The first Minnesota Housing Finance Agency Home Improvement Grant Program was developed to assist low-income residents improve their quality of life through housing renovation. The maximum amount spent on a home was $5,000. Its first year Bi-CAP served 82 homeowners with needed repairs/renovations.
• The Cass County satellite office was located in the Walker Armory and then relocated to the former Food Stamp offices in downtown Walker.
• A major community organization initiative was implemented and the agency received a VISTA grant to do community organization.

1977
• A house on the Ah-Gwah-Ching property was purchased for $750, to be utilized as Bi-CAP’s Cass County office.
• Developed Elderly Rural Transportation Program in September 1977 in Beltrami County, through a grant from Title III of the Older Americans Act and Beltrami County Board of Commissioners.

1978
• Bi-CAP began serving low-income households with Energy Assistance. During the first year, eligible households received $250 in assistance, which was distributed during the summer months.
• Developed an emergency food pantry (food shelf) in cooperation with First Lutheran Church in Bemidji. In addition, established food shelves in Cass County.
• Developed a clothing depot in Cass County.
• Linda Lien was hired as the Cass County secretary/receptionist.

1979
• The Cass County RSVP Program was organized and spun off.
• Bi-CAP served as catalyst for the organization of the Cass County Housing & Redevelopment Authority (HRA).
• Head Start was expanded to Kelliher, Pillager, and Motley to serve all communities in the two-county area.

1980
• Bi-CAP was one of five agencies in Minnesota to receive 34 State of Minnesota IBM system computers and became a regional processing center to serve other Community Action Agencies in client tracking, statistical reporting and fiscal activities.

1981
• In December 1981, President Ronald Reagan announced a federal plan to distribute surplus dairy commodities. This was viewed as a one-time distribution to reduce the large dairy commodity inventory and provide temporary food assistance to low-income and unemployed individuals.
1982
• A new project was funded by Farmers Home Administration, FM Technical Supervisory Assistance, to provide budgeting assistance and financial management counseling to FMHA housing loan homeowners to reduce the incidence of loan delinquency and foreclosure. The Surplus Commodity (Cheese) Distribution Program, serving about 5,000 households per month, began with products provided by USDA.

1983
• Bi-CAP, in cooperation with six other Community Action Programs in northwestern Minnesota, established the North Country Food Bank in Crookston, which enabled food shelves to obtain food at a greatly reduced cost.
• In January 1983, Beltrami County received a $600,000 Small Cities Development Grant that Bi-CAP operated to provide rehabilitation services to low-income households’ homes in Beltrami County.

1984
• In January 1984, 36 IBM computer systems were received to replace current agency computers.

1985
• In December, Bi-CAP offices moved to Mississippi Junction Offices located at 510 Paul Bunyan Dr. SW, Bemidji.
• Bi-CAP became involved in charitable gambling by selling pull-tabs at six gambling sites throughout Beltrami and Cass counties.
• In July 1985, Linda Lien was promoted to the position of assistant director of operations.

1986
• Lucille Moe was promoted to executive director after the unexpected death of Executive Director Mike Ekre.
• In December 1986, Bi-CAP’s first Self-Sufficiency Program was established to provide counseling and supportive services to low-income residents.

1987
• Northwestern Minnesota Initiative funded Bi-CAP for an Emergency Services grant in the amount of $6,500 to assist Beltrami residents experiencing an emergency in transportation, shelter cost, food, medical, basic clothing or household items.

1988
• A new grant, Emergency Community Services Homeless Grant, was received to provide counseling and referral services to homeless individuals.
• In cooperation with Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency in Virginia, nine senior citizens were trained to promote tourism in the two-county area. This program was called the Hospitality Host Program.
• A Discretionary Fund Self-Sufficiency Program was received from the Department of Health and Human Services for a National Demonstration Project to incorporate comprehensive counseling services as a Head Start component.
• Bi-CAP was one of five agencies in Minnesota selected to develop a comprehensive Youth Employment and Training Plan. The plan targeted high school drop-outs and at-risk youth. (Beginning phase of the current Youth Build Project).

1989
• Cheryl Hiltz was promoted to the position of fiscal director, replacing DeAnn Zavoral, who moved to East Grand Forks.
• In June 1989, Bi-CAP began the Self-Sufficiency Plus project, a national demonstration project in cooperation with five agencies, to help provide case management services to 133 families. The Interagency Networking Committee was established through this grant.
• The first transitional house was purchased by a Special Needs Housing grant from Minnesota Housing Finance Agency. This house was located at 315 Elm Street in Cass Lake and needed extensive renovations. The house was purchased for $4,000 and the agency spent a total of $7,755 to renovate the house.

1990
• In October 1990, The Volunteer Intergenerational Project (VIP) project began through a grant totaling $54,712 from the Department of Health and Human Services and Administration on Aging. The project was a collaborative between Bi-CAP and the Beltrami County Senior Citizen Council on Aging. Lisa Milen was hired as project coordinator.
• Another project, Women in New Development (WIND), was created in partnership with Women’s Economic Development Corporation. Through the partnership, women have been promoted as entrepreneurs and provided business development training and a revolving loan fund. Initial funding in the amount $40,000 was provided by U.S. West, with $25,000 from Small Business Administration.

1991
• Bi-CAP undertook operation of Kids’ Konnection Day Care on BSU campus during the summer of 1991. The day care licensing capacity was increased from 42 to 66 children. A Head Start classroom was to form a wrap-around service for BSU and BTC children that provided optional day care as needed.

1992
• In March 1992, Bi-CAP established a new project, Fathers Seeking Self-Sufficiency, with funding from CSBG Discretionary funds through Minnesota Department of Jobs and Training.
• In July 1992, Bi-CAP received a grant to establish Partners in Parenting, in collaboration with Minnesota Extension Service, RSVP and Cass County Public Health. This mentor mom project matched volunteers experienced in parenting with young, inexperienced moms. Funding for the project came from Sheltering Arms Foundation.
1993

• Bi-CAP moved into a newly remodeled office/classroom complex at 15th Street West. The space increased from 5,000 sq. ft. to 12,000 sq. ft.
• The Blackduck Head Start building was purchased in November 1993 for $35,000 using borrowed funds and two federal Head Start grants.
• Bi-CAP Head Start received funding to provide Head Start classes at the Northwood’s Coalition for Battered Women’s Shelter in Bemidji.

1994

• Security State Bank donated the Royal Motel to Bi-CAP. The building was moved to 15th Street West. One-half of the building was remodeled at the 15th Street location for a YouthBuild classroom/office/shop complex and the other half was moved to 1st Street South in Bemidji and remodeled for a rental duplex.
• The Family Loan Program was established in cooperation with Northwest Community Action as lead agency and provided loans to low-income parents for car purchases, car repairs, tool or uniforms needs related to work or school.
• In December 1994, Hyacinth Stiffler was promoted to be resource development coordinator.

1995

• Bi-CAP Head Start received an Innovative Grant from the State of Minnesota to establish a wrap-around program in the Bemidji area. Wrap-around provides on-site child care before and after the Head Start class for families who are working and/or attending school.
• The Women in New Development (WIND) Program was expanded to include the towns of Park Rapids and Fosston.

1996

• Bi-CAP administered a Frail & Elderly Program for Cass County to assist low-income seniors who would be unable to remain in their own homes without modification to their living spaces.

1997

• Bi-CAP received funding from the Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning to establish a Head Start Birth to Three program serving 20 families with a focus on pregnant women. A further emphasis was placed on first-time mothers, single parents and minority populations.
• Funding was received from Minnesota Housing Finance Agency for Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) project to increase the agency’s housing development capacity.
• Bi-CAP became a sub-grantee of YouthBuild USA for a Department of Labor Welfare-to-Work project. Bi-CAP YouthBuild’s goal was to serve 14 Welfare-to-Work YouthBuilders over a two-year period.

1998

• Bi-CAP opened the Caring Hands Day Care Center located in Blackduck at the Anderson Day Care Building on August 3, 1998 - licensed for 57 children: 8 infants, 14 toddlers, 20 preschool and 15 school-age children. A start-up grant was received from Northwest Minnesota Foundation for $30,000.
• Bi-CAP provided area child care providers with the opportunity to complete their Child Development Associate (CDA) training through BSU. In exchange, the child care providers provided slots for Head Start children during the next program year.
• In collaboration with Evergreen House, Battered Women’s Shelter, Ours to Serve House of Hospitality, and Beltrami County Social Services, Bi-CAP received a grant totaling $210,435 for a Family Homeless Prevention & Assistance Program (FHPAP).

1999

• A $200,000 collaborative grant with Bi-CAP of Backus and Pine River/Backus School was received from the Department of Children, Families & Learning to build an Early Education Center in Backus. The YouthBuild program built the complex during the summer of 1999.
• YouthBuild built a new house located on Florence Lane in Bemidji and sold it to a low-income family. The home cost was set at $96,000, of which $16,000 was to be forgiven, if the homeowner lived in the home for 10 years.
• Head Start planted two apple trees on the west side of the Bi-CAP office in Bemidji.

2000

• Black Mallard Meadow, a 22-unit, single-family housing development on Liberty Drive in Blackduck, became a reality. Funding sources included: the City of Blackduck, HUD Rural Housing and Economic Development, Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MHFA), and the Greater MN Housing Fund. Down payment assistance was secured from Anderson Fabrics. The plan was to complete the project in two phases. Phase one included all infrastructure and the completion of eight homes. By 2000, six homes were constructed by general contractors and two YouthBuild homes were in progress. Three homes were sold to qualifying homebuyers. Phase two would include an additional six contract-build homes and one or two YouthBuild homes.
• The Women in New Development (WIND) Program was expanded to include the towns of Park Rapids and Fosston.

2001

• Blackduck Caring Hands Childcare Center received the Minnesota Community Action Association Award for Excellence at the September 2001 Annual Conference. This center was a collaborative effort between Bi-CAP, Anderson Fabrics and the Blackduck Family Resource Center, licensed for 57 children (serving infants, toddlers, preschool and school-aged children). At that time, six Early Head Start and eight Head Start children were being served in this center.

2002

• Blackduck Caring Hands Childcare Center was awarded a $1,000 grant from WalMart.
Bi-CAP participated with the Region V Housing Committee to bring the Institutional Community Work Crews (ICWC) to Cass County to build affordable housing, by utilizing energy-efficient stress panel construction and minimum security inmate labor.

2003
- Due to a State un-allotment of $278,544 in awarded funds, Bi-CAP was forced to make program cuts in the following grants: Minnesota Economic Opportunity Grant (MEOG) - $223,086; State YouthBuild - $34,414; Emergency Shelter Program - $2,757; and Oil Program - $18,287.
- Bi-CAP administered the Backus Small Cities Project. The maximum loan amount a homeowner was eligible for was $23,000, with the deferred loan forgiven after five years. Bi-CAP planned to serve 23 households.
- Sold six Cass Lake lots to Leech Lake Band of Chippewa Indians for $10,000, which were purchased in 1995 with $6,350 in corporate funds.

2004
- Bi-CAP received funding from MHFA to purchase up to three homes in Beltrami County for the MURL Project. Purchased the Oldenborg property in Blackduck for $72,500, to be used for future housing development. This property is located north of the Black Mallard Meadow Project and consists of one house, a garage and five acres of land.
- Purchased Marge Mack home in Blackduck for the MURL Program.

2005
- Through a group effort, the Northwest MN Consortium was formed, including six counties: Beltrami, Cass, Polk, Hubbard, Mahnomen and three Indian Reservations; Red Lake, Leech Lake, and White Earth. The NW Consortium received $1.7 million dollars to be distributed between Bi-CAP and nine other service providers who participated in the process.
- This year marked the completion and sale of the final housing unit in the Black Mallard Meadow Project, a single family subdivision in the City of Blackduck. The over $2.5 million, four-year, project utilized funding from a variety of local, state, and national sources, as well as home sales, to accomplish the development activities.

2006
- A new project from MN Housing, Ending Long Term Homeless Initiative Fund (ELHLIF), was funded for $302,000 by the Department of Human Services. It was funded to provide subsidized rental assistance for 60 households in the Bi-CAP service area (Beltrami and Cass counties).
- A new project, Cass Scattered Transitional Housing, was funded in the amount of $128,268 to provide: three families and four single individuals with transitional housing rental subsidies and case management services.
- New funding was received for Long Term Homeless (LTH) families and individuals for $350,000 from the Department of Human Services. Six counties were involved: Cass, Beltrami, Hubbard, Becker, Mahnomen, and Polk. This grant enabled Bi-CAP to hire three additional case managers.

2007
- The Food Support Outreach Project was implemented, with funding from the Minnesota Department of Human Services, to provide information to the public about the Food Support program.
- Bi-CAP and the City of Cass Lake received a Small Cities Rehab Grant from the Department of Employment and Economic Development to rehab 18 owner-occupied houses.
- Bi-CAP and the City of Bemidji received a Small Cities Rehab Grant from the Department of Employment and Economic Development to rehab 20 rental units and 18 commercial buildings.
- Bi-CAP received a Minnesota Department of Education funding award, in the amount of $578,856, to increase enrollment of 40 Head Start and 22 Early Head Start children in the Bi-CAP service area.
- Bi-CAP held a pig roast fundraiser. 452 dinners were served, with gross receipts of $3,824.
- Bi-CAP, First National Bank, and Habitat for Humanity staff and board members provided the Annual Spaghetti Fundraiser Dinner. A total of $1,962 was raised for Habitat for Humanity.
- Bi-CAP became a recognized provider of Mortgage Foreclosure Prevention Counseling through the Minnesota Homeownership Counseling program and received funding for the Foreclosure Prevention and Assistance Program (FPAP). Bi-CAP added one full-time equivalent staff person for loss mitigation counseling regarding mortgage foreclosure, through a national Neighbor Works Pass grant from Minnesota Housing and the Minnesota Homeownership Center.
- YouthBuild helped organize and attended the first Minnesota and Wisconsin YouthBuild Peer to Peer Training held in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.
- Bi-CAP hosted an input meeting in the NW Region for the 10-year plan to end homelessness.
- Bi-CAP provided a breakfast for members of the Legislative Commission to End Poverty. Twenty low-income residents and 12 other concerned citizens attended it. The commission members spent two hours at the Bi-CAP office visiting with those in attendance.
- Executive Director Lucille Moe retired from Bi-CAP, after serving the agency for 42 years. Lucille was honored with a Retirement Open House on December 5, 2007.
2008
- In January, Deb Allison began her service as Bi-CAP’s executive director.
- Bi-CAP Head Start and Stellher Human Services received a Promising Practice Award for “The Family Toybox Program” at the 2007 Minnesota Community Action Awards event, held on February 12, 2008 in St. Paul. The recognition came from the University of Minnesota’s College of Education and Human Development, Minnesota Department of Human Services’ Office of Economic Opportunity, and the Minnesota Community Action Partnership. Bi-CAP received front page publicity for this award in the March 12, 2008 Bemidji Pioneer.
- Bi-CAP became a member of the Bemidji Public Access Dental Clinic Planning Committee to establish a Public Access Dental Clinic that will provide dental care to underserved populations. The clinic was to be closely linked with Northwest Technical College Dental Assisting Program and to receive the support of the Beltrami County Board, Beltrami Area Service Collaborative, Bemidji Area Schools, Merit Care Clinic and other community leaders.
- With funding assistance from USDA Rural Development, Bi-CAP’s corporate office was relocated to 6603 Bemidji Avenue North.

2012
- Bi-CAP received the Northwest Region Homeownership Advisor Network’s Service Award for mortgage foreclosure prevention activities.
- With funding assistance from USDA Rural Development, the Bemidji administrative office space at 1601 Conifer Avenue NW was converted into Head Start/Early Head Start programming space. An open house was held on August 23, to showcase the new Head Start/Early Head Start center in Bemidji.
- With funding assistance from USDA Rural Development, Bi-CAP’s corporate office was relocated to 6603 Bemidji Avenue North.

2013
- Conifer Estates, a 20-unit supportive housing development project in Bemidji, for which Bi-CAP is the primary service provider, received the prestigious 2013 Commissioner’s Circle of Excellence Award by the Minnesota Department of Human Services. This award recognizes excellence among human service providers, county advocacy groups and other organizations that work in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Human Services to help people meet their basic needs so they can live in dignity and achieve their highest potential. Specifically, Conifer Estates received this award for its unique collaboration between Bi-CAP, the Headwaters Regional Development Commission, the Red Lake Reservation Housing Authority, and Leech Lake Housing Authority, in addressing racial disparities, ending homelessness, and providing culturally competent services.
On the 50th anniversary of Community Action Agencies, Community Action Duluth (CAD) is proud and honored to be part of a nationwide program so committed to ensuring social equality and building healthy communities. Committed to ending poverty and eradicating racism for the last five decades, CAD’s programming has included: direct services, advocacy, grassroots policy and community organizing. As its mission states: Community Action Duluth is dedicated to using innovative strategies that mobilize low-income people and the broader community to build assets that prevent poverty, create equality, and strengthen social fabric.

Created in response to Lyndon B. Johnson’s War on Poverty, Community Action started in Duluth in 1965 as a public agency which was operated through the City of Duluth. During its first years of operation, the agency emphasized direct services to people with low incomes. Among the programs administered were Head Start, remedial reading, child development centers, and Neighborhood Youth Corps.

Duluth Community Action Program (DCAP) became an independent nonprofit organization in 1982. As a leader in direct service work, the agency focused on energy assistance, weatherization, and fair housing access. In addition, DCAP provided funding to other community organizations through the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG). In this funding role, DCAP developed a reputation of being a strong partner to other community programs, as a way to continue the empowerment of people with low incomes and strengthen the Duluth community.

Success Story

By Miranda Whirlwindsoldier

My name is Miranda Whirlwindsoldier. In 2013, I enrolled in Bi-CAP’s YouthBuild program. I was hoping to learn about carpentry and catch up on some school credits, but I ended up learning a whole lot more. I was falling every class in school and had given up on school. I didn’t know what to do with my life and I sure didn’t know how to make anything in my life better.

Then one day, I went to the YouthBuild orientation. Later, I got a call saying that I had been selected to participate in the program. From then on, my life began to change. The first week I was shy, quiet and very nervous. I had lived in the area for a while but I didn’t have any friends. Then, I realized I had a whole year in YouthBuild and I’ve made lots of friends. I am thriving in this school, get good grades, and am smart enough.

I never had any money before the program, and now I have money to spend on myself or my family or to save for something important. I earned it, and I can make choices with it. I bought Christmas presents for my little brothers and sisters this year and it felt so good. I also have some new clothes that I bought with my money.

I’m certified in CPR, NCCER Construction Certification, and Pre-Apprenticeship Certificate Training (PACT). Through YouthBuild I got my DMV Learners Permit, so I’m closer to getting a driver’s license.

YouthBuild gave me a chance to get a diploma, and I wouldn’t have tried for one without YouthBuild. In the past few months, I’ve gained the confidence to go to college, get a job, and manage my life. I’ve gained a sense of responsibility and I have grown up a lot. My choices are far better for me and my future than they would have been without the program. YouthBuild has had a huge impact on my life. I started pretty low, but now I am on my way up as high as I can dream. I would recommend this program for anyone that wants to turn their life around.
Under Steve Chadwick’s strong and dedicated leadership, Duluth Community Action Program was known for being an instrumental part of many community organizing efforts. Projects such as Low-Income People Organizing for Power provided individuals with low incomes the opportunity to advocate and organize on their own behalf, a practice the agency still utilizes through its Big View Forums. Also among these early programs were: affordable housing, American Indian housing, as well as Senior Coalition and Tenant Rights organizing efforts. Steve Chadwick’s untimely death in 1995, at the age of 40, exacerbated some issues at DCAP which led to the closing of the agency in 1997.

After this brief closing, the agency reopened its doors in 1999 with a new name - Community Action Duluth, and a renewed focus on ending poverty in the Duluth community. Under the guided leadership of executive director Stan Kaitfors and an energized and dedicated re-founding board, Community Action Duluth stayed committed to ensuring the needs of Duluth’s most vulnerable and underserved people. This positive and insightful leadership provided a bridge that connected the “old” Duluth Community Action Program to the “new” Community Action Duluth; paving the way for innovative programing and the continued commitment to social justice that the agency had always been known for.

Community Action Duluth immediately supported grassroots organizing projects that addressed racism and poverty head-on. The new agency’s needs assessment was done by low-income people interviewing other low-income people in a process called Low Income Voices. This project was a pivotal piece of CAD’s history that led the way for their anti-poverty and anti-racism strategic priorities; priorities that still guide the agency almost 20 years later.

CAD has always been unique in its focus on grassroots efforts not championed by mainstream funding sources, but rather by the community itself. As one example, Community Action Duluth hosted a walk/run for several years to honor Steve Chadwick’s legacy by raising funds for the energy assistance program (now administered by Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency) and other nonprofits that Steve cared for deeply.

Community Action Duluth has always had a reputation for using leading-edge strategies to address poverty and racism. In 2001, CAD brought together community leaders to reignite efforts to commemorate an annual Juneteenth celebration in the Central Hillside Neighborhood. The agency raised funds and hosted organizing meetings that led to this commemoration and ultimately a memorial to honor the lives of three men publicly slain in Duluth in 1920 - Isaac Mcghie, Elmer Jackson and Elias Clayton. This day was not to be forgotten by many people in the community, as the celebration included local musicians, locally prepared food, honorees such one of the famed Tuskegee Airmen, and family-centered events.

In addition to important and meaningful community organizing efforts, CAD took the lead on new and innovative financial stability and family advocacy programming. There are many examples of this innovation, including the following programs.

Family Assets for Independence in Minnesota (FAIM) became a way for individuals and families with low incomes to build assets through 3:1 matched savings accounts, increase their financial knowledge through free financial literacy classes, and take control over their finances with one-on-one financial counseling and debt management. A volunteer-led free tax site expanded CAD’s financial programming; bringing one of the best anti-poverty tools to the low income community free of cost.

In 2007, the Blue Print to End Poverty convened hundreds of community leaders and low income people to identify and prioritize the needs of the low income community. A direct result of this planning process was the development of CAD’s car purchase program, JumpStart, in order to better address the identified barrier of transportation.

Family Advocates from the newly-acquired Circles of Support and HOPE programs worked with families to obtain self-sufficiency by decreasing systemic and personal barriers towards transitioning out of poverty. Families are matched with caring community volunteers who are dedicated to building relationships across race and class lines. All of these programs are still integral to Community Action Duluth today, anchoring its programing with a solid base in advocacy, education and the opportunity for continual social support.

Under the new direction of Angie Miller in 2008, CAD began the process of revising the organization’s strategic priorities. In 2009, with community involvement, these new priorities were implemented within all of CAD’s programming. Anti-racism, public policy and community engagement priorities became a vision and guiding value of the agency’s work, creating ideals that would unite staff and participants in an overarching goal of a community without poverty, without racism, and with a fair policy environment that would in turn foster equality and healthy families for generations to come.

Under Angie Miller’s leadership, Community Action Duluth began another innovation journey - this time expanding services and outreach to the area of fair food access and neighborhood revitalization with Seeds of Success, stream and lake restoration with Duluth Stream Corp, and transitional employment with a “green jobs” focus. Not only do these programs provide an important service to the natural environment and bring healthy produce to low-income people; they also employ individuals, particularly those with criminal backgrounds or non-existent work histories, and help them get back on-track to full-time and more sustainable employment.

Adding to the list of newly-developed programing is an employment-based county partnership called Bridge to Employment. This program directly addresses the issue of race disparity in employment-based outcomes for those families of color receiving the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP). These families can now obtain MFIP county services at Community Action Duluth, as well as integrate additional Community Action’s financial and social support coaching within these services. All of these new programs provided a strong base for the implementation of a new holistic service model for Community Action Duluth, the Financial Opportunity Center model.
In April 2011, with support and funding from the Duluth Local Initiative Support Corporation, the Financial Opportunity Center model became a cornerstone of CAD’s program implementation. A new focus on bundling services replaced the social service standard of stand-alone advocacy and gave participants the option of not only receiving one area of supportive services, but several. This insured not only a more holistic and goal-centered approach to family stability, but provided an increased positive support network focused on every aspect of the individuals or family’s needs. Bundled services under this new model include: employment and financial coaching, benefit outreach and health coaching, community classes, free tax preparation, asset building opportunities, a car loan program, and numerous opportunities to become involved in the greater community by engaging in community forums and leadership groups. CAD’s Community Engagement Division was strengthened under this new model and now has a solid track record of providing leadership development classes for people with low incomes, as well as opportunities for identifying and actively addressing community systems that keep poverty in place.

In 2013, CAD began to address health disparities as an issue facing the low-income community. Health and Wellness Coaching, paired with the Benefit Outreach Program, provides free, confidential access to a registered public health nurse, as well as access to MNSure Navigators with information about available public health insurance options. In Duluth and across the state, neighborhoods with the lowest incomes have the highest mortality rate and lowest age expectancy; CAD will continually work to address this disparity, to give all people the same access to a healthy and meaningful life.

In addition to Health and Wellness Coaching, CAD is now a GED test preparation site, bringing together the Adult Learning Center with dedicated and committed tutors to help individuals prepare for their GED test in a supportive environment, at no cost.

With numerous programming, volunteer opportunities and community events, Community Action Duluth continues to push the envelope with innovative programming that assists individuals in building assets to help leverage their transition out of poverty. Assets of financial wealth, social support, and education continue to assist those in our community towards achieving a life without poverty. Our strategic priorities continue to steer our work toward the bigger picture of a fair and equitable society. Our community partners continually remind us that working together gives us the support and encouragement we need to continue our work. We all do better, when we all do better. Here’s to the next 50 years!

Unfortunately, many Americans live on the outskirts of hope—some because of their poverty, and some because of their color, and all too many because of both. Our task is to help replace their despair with opportunity.

—Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty Speech

Success Stories

Gabe’s Story: From Homelessness to Crew Leader
“Working for the Duluth Stream Corps has been the greatest experience of my life (besides my kids). I was homeless and looking for a place to live when I got the call that I’d been hired. I’ve learned so many things — about the environment, about nonprofits, about grant writing and graphic design, about GIS mapping and planning and most importantly about our community, all while developing leadership skills that will help me for years to come. The income has provided a roof over my head, maintained my car and allowed me to pay child support to the people most important in my life. Without this help, I don’t know where I’d be. I’d like to thank Community Action for giving me hope when I needed it the most. This job literally changed my life.” - Gabe

A Place to Call Home
“Three years ago we were financially clueless. We spent carelessly, charged too much to our credit cards and had very little in savings. We wanted to buy a house but had no idea where to start. In just two years, we’ve paid off two car loans, a student loan and our credit cards. On April 26, we officially became first time homebuyers! Because of the help and guidance we received from a Community Action Duluth financial coach, our kids have a backyard to play in, bedrooms to sleep in and a place to grow up and call home.” - Kourtney and Calen

From Tax Site Client to Tax Site Champion
“$300 for tax preparation was just too much – I hated paying it. Imagining what I could do for my family with an extra $300 led me to Community Action’s free tax site over seven years ago. Every year since, I gratefully watched as a volunteer took time away from their family to help mine. Last year, I took the plunge and completed over 20 hours of training to become what I’d been so grateful for – a volunteer tax preparer! I love being able to do for others what past volunteers did for me!” - Tesh

Volunteering reignited Tesh’s passion for accounting. With support and guidance from a personalized employment coach and a reliable vehicle through our JumpStart car purchase program, she’s gone back to school to complete her BA in accounting.
The Path to Self-Sufficiency

Struggling to make ends meet on public assistance and wanting to get back into the workforce, Kobreina knew she was ready for a change. Scared and alone, she was dedicated to carving out a better path for her two young children. Kobreina was paired with an employment coach, a caring volunteer, and connected to a supportive network of single moms in similar situations through our Circles@Work program. She completed numerous classes, workshops and onsite training opportunities and in time, landed a full-time job with benefits.

With a steady source of income, Kobreina began working on the daunting task of tackling several years’ worth of debt. Now eligible for the earned income tax credit and free tax prep at Community Action Duluth, she was able to maximize her refund and today is debt free! She is also the proud new owner of a 2011 Chevrolet HHR made possible with the assistance of our affordable car purchase program. We’re so proud of all you’ve accomplished! - Congratulations Kobreina!

The Long Journey

Alone and uncertain, Ashlee found us. Struggling with homelessness, her initial goals of securing safe housing, maintaining sobriety and reuniting with her two young children were just the beginning of the long journey ahead. Ashlee was quickly connected with Circles@Work which pairs caring volunteers with specialized employment coaching tailored to the needs of single moms.

She was also selected for a paid position with our Seeds of Success urban farming program and enrolled in our Getting Ahead leadership development class. With increased confidence, support, work experience and references, Ashlee excelled to tackle one other largest goals – becoming a full-time student working towards her degree in social work.

Today, Ashlee has her own apartment, is sober and reunited with her children, she volunteers with us and looks forward to the day she can dedicate herself to giving back the support she’s received. We can’t wait to see the rest of her journey unfold!

A New Job – A New Life

Sara didn’t know anyone in town but knew she needed a hand building the skills that could help her find new work and start a new life – a life with her kids away from the domestic violence they’d known for all too long. Desperate for a fresh start, Sara was eager to move ahead and quickly completed our Common Cents money management and Getting Ahead leadership classes.

With the help of our individualized employment coaching, Sara excelled, enrolling at Lake Superior College and being selected for a paid position in our Seeds of Success urban farming program.

Pairing her newfound confidence and work history, Sara found full-time employment just months later with a Duluth hotel where she continues to shine. We’re so proud of you, Sara, and can’t wait to see what lies ahead!
Community Action of Minneapolis began in 1976 under the governance of the Minneapolis City Council. The organization, known as the Minneapolis Community Action Agency (MCAA), worked as part of the city to create and support programs to eliminate poverty in Minneapolis. Initial programming and services were offered in the areas of Weatherization, Energy Assistance, Self-Sufficiency, Clothing Support and Commodities Distribution.

In 1982, the agency reorganized itself under a tri-partite board, bringing together representatives from the low-income community, private sector and public arena to make joint decisions concerning the actions and policies of the Minneapolis Community Action Agency.

In the mid-1980’s, the organization experienced rapid growth and development, including the conversion to computerization of several agency processes, moving out of cramped quarters in City Hall, the implementation of promising practices in staff development, continuous summer employment of Energy Assistance Program (EAP) staff who formerly were laid off during the summer months, and the creation of new, innovative programs such as The Young Explorers and Project Bundle-Up.

In October, 1990, William J. Davis was selected to become the fifth and current President/CEO of the Minneapolis Community Action Agency.

As former board members’ terms of office were ending, an entirely new cadre of board members was selected from the citizen, public and private sectors. Committees were revitalized with the selection of new members, and the Governing Board composition was changed with the election of new council members.

With new staff, committees and boards, the Minneapolis Community Action Agency was poised to meet the continuing challenges of the 1990’s, including the instability in federal funding, coping with growing levels of poverty in Minneapolis, the prioritization of funding community programs versus Minneapolis Community Action Agency programs, and many technological advances and changes in service delivery.

On January 1, 1994, the Minneapolis Community Action Agency became Community Action of Minneapolis, a private non-profit agency. The first day of business as Community Action of Minneapolis was January 3, 1994.

The agency is recognized as an innovator that uses technology, creative problem solving, and knowledgeable leadership to ensure delivery of quality, caring, holistic and culturally responsive programs and services to low-income residents of Minneapolis. Community Action of Minneapolis staff are leaders in promoting open and ongoing dialogues about poverty and its impact on communities, while engaging community action agencies, public officials, schools, faith-based organizations, the business community and people who live in poverty.

Today, Community Action of Minneapolis offers a robust menu of programs and services that move communities out of poverty, including the Energy Assistance Program, Home Electric Savings Program, Weatherization and Home Energy Conservation Services, Civic Engagement & Community Leadership programming, and Children & Family Development programming which includes the GROW Self-Sufficiency Program, Financial Literacy Services, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Outreach & Application Assistance Services, and Power Workshops designed to meet the ever-changing needs of the diverse city served by Community Action of Minneapolis.

Budget cuts in poverty programs continue, but community action agencies still provide a “hand up, not a hand out.” The philosophy of eliminating “the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty” remains the key concept that motivates community action agencies today.
Community Action Minneapolis

Success Stories

Gay, Children & family Development Participant

A school counselor referred Gary to Community Action of Minneapolis early in his sophomore year of high school. Although he struggled in school, suffered from moderate Cerebral Palsy and had very little family support, Gary had high aspirations! He not only wanted to go to college but wanted to attend Howard University in Washington D.C. Gary’s high school counselor advised him that since he was already in the tenth grade and only reading at a fourth grade reading level, he may want to think twice about setting his sights on attending college.

But for Gary, not going to college was not an option. Gary knew if he was going to achieve his goal of attending college, he needed help – help he found at Community Action of Minneapolis. Gary attended programming during the summer months of his sophomore and junior years, and returned again to the organization in 2013 for additional assistance during his senior year.

Upon enrolling in Self-Sufficiency Programming, Gary took full advantage of the program’s full range of services including Work Readiness, Life Skills, Health & Wellness Programming, and Young Men’s Group. But the component he found particularly helpful was college access programming; he was surrounded by caring staff and other youths who had life challenges which, if left unaddressed, could prevent them from finishing high school and benefiting from post-secondary education/training altogether.

With assistance, guidance and encouragement from the staff, Gary received the help he needed, both in school and via tutoring/homework services provided through the agency’s dedicated volunteer cohort. Over time, Gary made impressive academic gains and his college vision was soon within reach. Through holistic, thought-provoking programming and unwavering support, Gary weighed his post-secondary school options, decided where he would apply for admission, and completed the flurry of application and financial aid forms.

When he learned that he had been accepted to a university in Texas, Gary was overjoyed. However, he still faced some challenges including his inability to pay the required dormitory fees and the challenge of having no money to travel to Texas to start school. Again, Gary sought help from Community Action of Minneapolis. This time, staff helped him secure subsidized employment, which allowed him to earn enough to cover his school-related fees, travel expenses and a bit leftover to start a small savings account. Today, Gary continues to do well in college. He remains focused and is on track to graduate with his certification as a physical therapist. He plans to work with youth who suffer from Cerebral Palsy. Gary recently visited Community Action of Minneapolis and shared his story with new self-sufficiency program participants with the hope that he could motivate other young people who have trouble seeing life beyond their immediate circumstances.

DeElante, Children & Family Development Program Participant

Equipped with the talent and spirit to go far, DeElante lacked the support he needed to realize his potential and pursue his goals. At Community Action of Minneapolis, he found a team of people who lifted him up and helped him to pursue a positive path and take steps toward achieving his life goals.

As a participant in the Self-Sufficiency program and the agency’s Minnesota College Goal activities, DeElante found programming that empowered him to plan for his future, developed his leadership skills, helped him identify a career path and built a competitive résumé. Recently, he put his leadership skills to work at a local Minneapolis Public Schools Afterschool Enrichment Program. Working part-time through subsidized work experience, he helped lead social skills and leadership-focused enrichment activities and offered homework assistance to low-income students in grades K-3.

Community Action of Minneapolis helped DeElante develop the skills and acquire the encouragement that he needed to graduate from high school on time and pursue his post-secondary aspirations. Holistic programming and unwavering support positioned him to take advantage of programming that exposed him to his dream careers of personal training and sports medicine. Through real-world supported work experiences, job shadowing and a behind-the-scenes look into fitness and nutrition programming offered at a local college, DeElante began planning for his post-secondary journey and beyond.

“Community Action of Minneapolis has helped me become a strong young man, stay on the right track and actually want to do something with myself,” he explained. This fall, DeElante will finish his final credits for high school and begin attending Inver Hills Community College. After completing his generals, he hopes to pursue a degree in mechanical engineering.
History

Community Action Partnership of Ramsey & Washington Counties’ history starts with the American civil rights movement in the 1950s. The postwar American economy was thriving. Returning troops – and the resulting baby boom – created the need for more housing, more products, more construction jobs, more of everything. A television in every living room was added to post-depression promises of chickens in pots and cars in garages.

But what benefited some in this new era of prosperity negatively affected others. Urban renewal projects, including the building of the I-94 corridor through Saint Paul’s historic African-American Rondo neighborhood, often displaced lower-income citizens. And some workers who filled roles when brave men went to war often lost jobs when those soldiers returned. Many African-American soldiers came home to find discrimination when looking for post-war work.

As the communications media expanded their scope across the United States via television, the American public became more aware of the problems of the aged, the effects of segregation, of poor education, of health problems caused by malnutrition and hunger, of the need to educate people so they might work, and of the growing difficulties of the low-income population.
After the assassination of President Kennedy in November 1963, President Lyndon Baines Johnson expanded the policy ideas initiated in the Kennedy Administration. “Let us carry forward the plans and programs of John F. Kennedy,” Johnson said. “Not because of our sorrow or sympathy, but because they are right... This Administration today, here and now, declares an unconditional War On Poverty in America.”

In 1964, The Economic Opportunity Act (EOA) was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson. The EOA was the centerpiece of the War on Poverty and paved the way for the establishment of local Community Action Agencies (CAA) around the country.

Shortly after the act was passed, St. Paul Mayor George Vavouli and United Way Planner William Hoffman went to the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) headquarters in Washington D.C. to request funds to create the first Community Action Agency in Minnesota.

Funds were approved by Congress, and Bill Hoffman became the first executive director of the new agency. “The philosophy of the Agency should be to consider every human being worthwhile,” he said. “Not only in the eyes of his or her creator, but even more so in the eyes of his fellow being. We continue to believe that everyone’s life can be improved.”

The St. Paul OEO designee became a funding source that reviewed proposals submitted by a dozen or so community groups, and in 1965, was renamed the Ramsey County Citizens Committee on Economic Opportunity (RCCCEO). Many of the first proposals funded by the RCCCEO pointed the way for other worthwhile programs. Individuals who were low-income citizens operated many of them.

That same year, the RCCCEO started offering the newly-created Head Start program, which initially was designed to be an eight-week program to prepare disadvantaged preschool children for elementary school. It has since become a comprehensive child development, health, and social service program for low-income families. By 1971, there were 11 year-round centers serving 340 children.

In the midst of this, the RCCCEO was consistently cited as one of the best organized and most efficiently run local OEO offices. With this track record, the RCCCEO was recommended for administering manpower programs in Washington and Dakota counties.

In 1970, RCCCEO changed its name to Ramsey Action Programs, Inc. (RAP) to emphasize the agency’s role in being a community catalyst for change - and the change was well-suited to the times. RAP was at the center of action against funding cuts and utility hikes, while developing new service programs in much needed areas such as community-based health care and senior nutrition. Programs from the 1970s were spun off as independent nonprofits during this period, including: Helping Hand Clinic, West Side Voice, and Keep Older Persons Employed.

One of the longest and ongoing organizing projects during this time was “Operation Get ‘Em There,” a campaign to gain transportation reimbursement for secondary school students living more than two miles from school. Children of low-income families were affected most by the 1969 public transportation strike. The campaign eventually gained support from the welfare department, school board, and state legislators. In 1973, Governor Wendell Anderson signed the bill which provided free transportation for all secondary school students living more than two miles from school.

In 1974, RAP began offering energy assistance grants by administering the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program to help households maintain affordable and safe home energy. And the following year, RAP launched the Energy Conservation program, funding weatherization improvements to conserve energy, maintain temperature, and provide a safe living environment.

In September 1981, Congress voted that all CAAs designated and recognized by the Community Services Administration, were eligible to be funded under the 90 percent pass-through requirement of the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG).

President Ronald Reagan’s Administration began a strong movement to substantially reduce the federal government’s support for domestic social programs. They proposed to reduce the total amount of funding by 25 percent and to delegate the responsibility for administering CSBG to the states.

CSBG stipulated that CAAs be governed by a community-selected board consisting of one-third elected public officials and at least one-third representatives of the low-income community, with the balance drawn from businesses, faith-based groups, charities, and civic organizations. This arrangement brought diverse people with varied skillsets together to solve local problems, and it empowered those with direct experience of the impediments to economic security to participate directly in the development of effective alternatives.

In the early 1990s, the Department of Health and Human Services realized that ages birth to three were critical child development years, and, in 1994, RAP began offering Early Head Start programs for these younger children.

In 1996, Ramsey Action Program purchased the Bigelow building in Saint Paul in order to create a one-stop shop for social services for low-income people. This building still houses Community Action’s headquarters today.

At the end of 2004, Ramsey Action Programs, Inc., signaled a refocused agency strategy as a community catalyst for change and became Community Action Partnership of Ramsey & Washington Counties (Community Action). The new name identified both Ramsey and Washington counties as its service areas, and it joined other Community Action Agencies around the country in using a consistent naming convention.
In 2005, under the direction of Executive Director Jim Scheibel, Community Action began a project called The Community Blueprint to End Poverty. The concept engaged the community in developing high-impact strategies and involving low-income individuals as leaders in the process. Mr. Scheibel, also a former St. Paul Mayor, recalled these “Blueprint Fellows”: “Unemployed and homeless people from the community went through leadership training, and they helped facilitate meetings. One woman from the program, Rena Moran, is now a State Representative. She had the ability and leadership, and the Blueprint Fellows gave her that opportunity.”

Sandie, communications coordinator, has seen many changes over the years, but one thing remains the same: “We’ve been THE PLACE for people to go,” she says. “We’ve worked hard to revamp and be creative. We’ve done a great job in creating partners and relationships in the community, including with the St. Paul Foundation, Greater Twin Cities United Way, Otto Bremer Foundation, Comcast, and the Minnesota Zoo.”

In July 2008, the agency’s current executive director, Clarence Hightower, joined Community Action. Under his guidance, Community Action has grown stronger, become technologically savvy, weathered budget cuts, and serves 67,000 people each year.

In an effort to promote civic engagement by citizens and program participants, Community Action launched You Be the Change in 2009. This advocacy and leadership development program for low-income community members allows participants to play an active role in civic decision-making and build grassroots support to address issues related to poverty. The program has created opportunities for low-income citizens to meet representatives and work to bring issues of poverty to the forefront.

By 2010, more than one in ten Minnesotans live in poverty. The poverty rate is 17.2% in Ramsey County and 5.7% in Washington County. About $44,000 Minnesotans now live in poverty, a sharp increase since 2000. Statistics also show that average household income is $54,785 – the lowest level in 15 years.

In January 2011, in his State of the Union speech, President Obama introduced his proposal to freeze some domestic spending for five years to help close the nation’s mushrooming budget deficit. He singled out one, and only one, social program. “I’ve proposed cuts to things I care deeply about, like Community Action programs.” And later that year, Community Action started to feel the effects, with the federal budget impasse, and eventual budget sequestration (automatic spending cuts) that went into place in January 2013.

Mr. Hightower addressed the sequestration. “Community Action has recently felt the impact of sequestration in three departments,” he wrote in a 2013 newsletter. He noted that Energy Assistance, Head Start/Early Head Start, and Community Engagement programs were reduced. “We are taking a prudent approach to these budget cuts and assuming they will be permanent,” he continued. Eventually, when the budget was finally approved, some of the funds were restored.

In 2014, Community Engagement started a Volunteer Taxpayer Assistance program, helping participants complete their taxes and claim credits and reimbursements. Also, in that year, a small transitional housing program for single women without children was launched. Both programs were started in response to the needs cited in the Community Needs Assessment.

Over the years, staff has found that its participants need Community Action’s help more and more, and on all fronts. “Things are getting more difficult because the bills are getting higher and the money just isn’t there,” says Treena from Energy Assistance. “Seniors are trying to decide between energy payments or their medications. But we find a way to help them.”

Today, our purpose is the same and we find different, more efficient ways to do things: We have learned to use high-impact strategies, we build our case through data and documentation, we build alliances and partnerships, and we educate funders and policy makers. We use our energy and passion to implement change in a more positive way and we use technology to aid our work. Five decades after our ambitious beginning, we are still working at our task; the War on Poverty is not yet won. Community Action Partnership of Ramsey & Washington Counties continues to voice the issues of the low-income sector and to provide avenues out of poverty.

Executive Directors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1964-1965</td>
<td>William Hoffman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965-1967</td>
<td>William Carter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967-1970</td>
<td>James Ware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>W. Gary Winget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-1972</td>
<td>Charles Poe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Elizabeth Puges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972-1973</td>
<td>William Grace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973-1978</td>
<td>Edith Lallier</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interim Team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1982-1988</td>
<td>Jim Brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983-1986</td>
<td>Jim Greathouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987-1990</td>
<td>Dr. Sandra Meicher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-2002</td>
<td>Dale Anderson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-2006</td>
<td>Jim Scheibel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-2008</td>
<td>Kirk Hayes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clarence Hightower

Board of Directors Chair

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Lyle Fisher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965-1966</td>
<td>Irving Clark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967-1968</td>
<td>Ross Sweum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-1972</td>
<td>Will Dodge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Fr. Charles Strack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973-1975</td>
<td>Patricia Bellanger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>William Mahlum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Katie Barron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Mary E. Castor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Katie Barron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Erik Paul Salmen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Scott Metcalf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Barbara Robinson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>James Miller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Judy Messin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Robert Hickman 1985

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Paul Gilliland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987-1988</td>
<td>Jerry Turnquist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989-1991</td>
<td>Joan Hickman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992-1995</td>
<td>Stephan Schmidt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-1998</td>
<td>Bruce Larson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2002</td>
<td>Paul Gaston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Valdi Stefanson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Patrick Miller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Alycia K. Xiong-Hang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-2007</td>
<td>Lori Hosley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Patrick Miller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Jan Parker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2010</td>
<td>Abukar Ali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2012</td>
<td>Toni Carter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-2013</td>
<td>Dennis Hegberg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-present</td>
<td>Kevin Myren</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Success Stories

Anthony and his children.

Growing up with little parental stability, Anthony had no idea what it meant to be a real father. Though adopted into a loving family when he was 11 years old, Anthony experimented with drugs and alcohol as a teen, and struggled with work and school. He eventually got married and had children. However, after separating from his wife, he felt a sense of hopelessness and turned again to drugs and alcohol. At his lowest point, he found himself homeless, sleeping on park benches and living in tents.

After surviving in this bleak situation for nearly a year, he decided he had enough. He wanted to reconnect with his four children, to protect and provide for them, but he knew that if he didn’t seek help he’d have no chance to really be a father. He made a commitment to become involved in his children’s lives.

When Anthony was meeting with one of his children’s teachers, he met Rich, a Community Action Head Start Family Advocate. In this capacity, Rich visits Head Start centers and child care partner sites in Ramsey County, telling parents about Community Action’s Parent Connection program and groups available to parents. He also assists Head Start parents, helping them to locate community resources for emergency needs, such as domestic abuse and housing crises.

Rich introduced Anthony to the Parent Connection Fathers Group and didn’t take Anthony long to realize this group was what he needed to help him with his commitment to his kids. Each weekly Parent Connection meeting allows dads to connect with other dads. They discuss everything from anger management to job counseling to child-custody issues — plus, the dads share ideas for family activities and how to stay deeply involved in their children’s lives. Anthony has been a devoted Fathers Group member for two years. Through his participation, he has discovered other ways to get involved in the community: he volunteers with the young dads’ group at the Employment Action Center in St. Paul; he participates on the resident council at Model Cities’ family sober living facility; and, he volunteers in the classroom and as a field-trip chaperone at his children’s school. He is also proud that he has maintained his sobriety for four years; he has earned his GED; and he has received a scholarship to attend Minneapolis Community & Technical College, as he dreams of someday becoming a music producer.

Anthony says his biggest accomplishment, however, is gaining full custody of — and creating a stable and nurturing environment for — his four children. His kids agree: Based on an essay from his daughter, he was chosen as the 2007 Minnesota Twins Father of the Year.

Julie and her children.

Imagine being 16-years-old and pregnant with your first child. Julie had struggled all of her young life, and knew she wanted more for her son. Determined to make a better life, she was able to get off welfare by working for the State of Minnesota. However by her early twenties, health issues forced her to leave work. To further complicate matters, she was pregnant again.

Julie worked hard to make ends meet for her two children. She recalls feeling like she never had enough energy and focus during her daughter’s first few years. However, things began to change when she enrolled her daughter in Community Action’s Head Start program. Her daughter performed extremely well in Head Start and was soon ready for kindergarten. The experience motivated Julie to...
Community Action Partnership of Suburban Hennepin

History

Community Action Partnership of Suburban Hennepin (CAPSH) was created in 1985 amidst a growing awareness that poverty in Hennepin County was not confined to the city of Minneapolis. Poverty was growing in the suburbs and the aging of its population compounded the problems. CAPSH joined over 1,000 other Community Action Agencies nationwide to serve the underrepresented, and to mitigate or eliminate the causes and effects of poverty.

CAPSH is served by a tri-partite, 18-person board of directors. Representation on the board is split evenly between members from the community, public and private sectors. The CAPSH Board of Directors prides itself on its diversity and responsiveness to community needs. The board’s composition reflects the community’s diversity in gender, age, race, ethnicity and income. The organization believes this board diversity translates into increased community collaboration and effectiveness of programming.

Suburban Hennepin County is comprised of 44 communities and spans a geographic area of approximately 550 square miles, which includes urban, suburban, exurban and rural communities. The 2012 population estimate for Hennepin County is 1,184,576. About two-thirds of Hennepin County’s total population resides in its suburbs. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that 12.3% of Hennepin County residents are at or below the federal poverty guidelines; 8% are seniors (65 years and older); and 30.2% are children (under 18 years).
Suburban Hennepin County has become very diverse, especially in the last decade. Most school districts report over 70 different native languages being used in students’ homes. In Hennepin County, 16.4% of households report a language other than English spoken at home. CAPSH’s communities have seen a very large increase in Spanish-speaking populations, along with large Somali, Liberian and Russian immigrant communities. Twelve percent (12%) of Hennepin County residents are African American, and 6.9% are of Latino or of Hispanic origin.

Fifty years ago people viewed Hennepin County suburbs as some of the most prosperous communities in Minnesota, whose people did not need community action services. But within these affluent communities are pockets of deep poverty, and in a startling shift, suburban Hennepin County now has more poor individuals and families than the city of Minneapolis. The collapse of the housing bubble along with the Great Recession left many people trapped in low-income jobs or unemployed. Many more suburban people are now homeless or are at risk of losing their homes and becoming homeless. Those who still have a roof over their heads are struggling to afford many of the basic necessities essential to healthy family living. Some people have to choose between feeding their families and paying for utilities. Many are left with no money for unexpected emergencies and are only one illness, accident or car repair away from economic disaster.

The depth and breadth of the economic crisis has swept up suburban residents that have never had to deal with poverty issues. CAPSH and other nonprofit organizations serving Hennepin County find themselves facing dwindling resources and skyrocketing demand for services. Through this time, CAPSH has kept its focus on the mission of meeting the needs of today, while helping to build the new economy of tomorrow in which everyone is prepared to participate.

CAPSH responds to the needs of its communities with bold and substantial initiatives to help ease the economic hardships low-income households are facing. The organization provides help that will produce long-term changes in people’s circumstances. CAPSH’s vision is to be the preeminent poverty-fighting agency in suburban Hennepin County. Its mission is “to improve the quality of life in suburban Hennepin County by creating and supporting links between individuals and communities through service, education and collaboration.”

Specifically, CAPSH is:

- Helping people stay in their homes through Minnesota winters by providing heat and utility assistance;
- Helping people keep their homes by providing Foreclosure Prevention Counseling;
- Helping people be smarter homebuyers and understand the road to homeownership by offering First Time Homebuyer Workshops & Counseling;
- Helping people boost their economic power to become financially stable by providing Financial Literacy Workshops;
- Stabilizing homeless families’ living situations with Homeless & Supportive Services that provide intensive case management and emergency financial support;
- Changing the lives of and embracing new immigrants with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals application assistance;
- Improving communities by providing tax assistance services and securing over $1,000,000 in tax refunds that are flowing back into the community;
- Helping people provide nutritious food for themselves and their families through our Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; and,
- Improving communities by coordinating provider organization to develop quality services, limit service duplication, and assure service availability. In keeping with the tradition of Community Action Agencies, CAPSH focuses on creating new and strengthening current partnerships to assure that programs and direct services meet community needs.

Over recent decades, changes have swept through suburban Hennepin County, and CAPSH has changed to meet these challenges. To tackle the housing crisis, CAPSH made significant additions to programs to increase capacity to meet a rapidly growing demand for assistance and counseling. These services are offered to assist low-income people obtain and maintain safe and affordable housing. The organization has made significant inroads into its new refugee and immigrant communities, providing its newest citizens with the tools they need to prosper and succeed. As the slow economic recovery continues CAPSH is providing residents with the information, counseling and education they need to be financially stable.

And, through it all CAPSH has maintained its focus on effective and efficient service delivery so that the organization may be continually, “Helping People, Changing Lives and Improving Communities”.

132 • Community Action in Minnesota: Capturing 50 Years of History
Since its beginning, Heartland Community Action Agency, Inc. (Heartland) has been driven by the Promise of Community Action:

Community Action changes people’s lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.

Heartland is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation established under the Federal Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. The Act directs and empowers Community Action Agencies (CAAs) to address the causes and conditions of poverty at the local level. With a few shape-shifts and name changes, Heartland has been serving low- and moderate-income families in Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, and Renville counties since 1965.

The Federal Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 directed and empowered CAA’s to address the causes and conditions of poverty at the local level. In 1965, such a local agency was formed in Kandiyohi County, and was named the Little Crow CAA. Around the same time, Meeker County formed a CAA with Wright County, and Renville and McLeod counties were partnered in a CAA with Sibley County.

In 1975, a new Community Action Agency was formed between Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, and Renville counties. It was known as Region 6E CAA. In 1989, the name was changed to Heartland Community Action Agency.

Heartland is governed by an 18 member tri-partite board of directors that geographically reflects its four-county service area. One-third of the members

---

Sucess Story

In this challenging economy, many families must worry about their heat being shut off. CAPSH’s Energy Assistance Program (EAP) helps these families avoid the difficult choices between buying food and medicine or paying their heating bills. The program works to assist low-income households to maintain affordable, continuous and safe home energy.

In addition to helping people with their utility bills, EAP also keeps families safe and warm in their homes through the Energy Related Repair Program. This program helps low-income households when their heating systems fail. For example, a natural gas leak can have potentially deadly consequences, yet if related to the heating system, it can be addressed by EAP at no cost to the homeowner.

Too often in Minnesota, extreme cold temperatures can be the final straw for aging furnaces. Broken furnaces can cause life threatening carbon monoxide issues or result in such low heat distribution that household plumbing freezes up. The freeze and thaw cycle can lead to ruptured pipes and extensive water damage, maybe even forcing families to leave their homes. Repairing pipes and water damage is extremely expensive and time consuming. Getting a furnace repaired or replaced in a timely fashion is a far more cost-effective solution, and one that can keep families together in their homes. EAP provides furnace repair or replacement at no cost, usually on the same day the request is placed.

This letter shows just how much this program means to people living with heating issues:

To my dear friends at Community Action,

On your brochures it speaks of helping people and changing lives; you have changed our lives forever. I’d like to share my story with you.

My husband has had three brain surgeries over the past three years, and it has taken every bit of money we had. One day our house smelled like gas. We opened the windows and left immediately. Within a short time, the house had so much gas in it that the police and fire department had to block off everything within two blocks of our house. They said it wouldn’t have been long and all of us would have died. As a mother, I felt terrible that I had put my family in danger. In the midst of winter, and with no money, we now needed to replace our furnace and hot water heater.

A firefighter came up to me and told me about Community Action. He said they might be able to help. When I walked into the CAPSH office with my kids, still traumatized over what had happened, they took us into their arms and said everything would be okay. I’ll never forget that as long as I live. They brought portable heaters to our home, and we had a new furnace and hot water heater within only three days of the incident. Thank you ever so much Community Action: our angels on Earth. - Michelle
represent a low-income perspective, one-third are elected public officials (county commissioners), and one-third represent diverse parts of the private sector.

While programs, services and funding have fluctuated through the years, Heartland’s employees have remained dedicated to serving the organization’s mission of “building stronger communities by providing opportunities that empower people in need.”

At Heartland Community Action, we believe that we do very worthwhile work in our four counties and are proud to be leaders in social justice. At the same time, we recognize that we cannot accomplish our mission alone, and we count on hundreds of volunteers and donors to assist in our efforts. They put the “heart” into Heartland, and the “community” into Community Action.

Heartland currently has offices located in: Kandiyohi County – Corporate office; Meeker County - Administrative and Outreach offices; Renville County – Outreach office; and McLeod County – Outreach office.

Programs

Currently Heartland administers the following programs:

**Child Care Aware**: Provides help to families searching for child care by giving information and referrals for licensed family child care homes, child care centers, school-age programs, and preschools. It is a resource for child care providers that promotes professional growth and development with training, grants, and consultations.

**Crisis Assistance Funds**: Provides limited individual grants for emergencies including bus tokens, rent, mortgage and emergency shelter.

**Energy Assistance**: Helps pay a portion of winter fuels costs for low-income families, who own, or rent, and furnace repair or replacement for qualified homeowners.

**Family Based Services**: Provides home-based parenting and life skills development to families with children with the goal of strengthening or reuniting families.

**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Outreach**: Provides education and information to the community about SNAP benefits. Outreach staff are available to assist in pre-screening and filling out SNAP applications.

**Early Head Start**: Provides comprehensive child development services to infants, toddlers and pregnant women. The program promotes healthy prenatal outcomes for pregnant women and assists parents with very young children take a lead role in their child’s learning and development. The program also serves children with special needs.

**Head Start**: Provides child and family development services for children ages three through five-years-old and their families. Child development services include social and emotional development, as well as school readiness activities. The program also serves children with special needs. Family development services include assessment, resource referral and goal setting.

**Health Care Enrollment**: Provides eligibility screening for insurance assistance programs such as Medical Assistance (MA), MinnesotaCare, MNsure or Advanced Premium Tax Credits, and assistance with account creation and application.

**Helping People Get There (Transportation Donation Program)**: Receives donated vehicles from the community, reconditions them, and partners with Minnesota Jobs and Training/WorkForce Center to provide vehicles for qualified MFIP/DWP participants to get to work.

**Housing Services**: Provides a range of housing supports to assist households in having safe, secure, stable and affordable housing. Programs include emergency housing, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance and Safe Harbor.

**Kitchen Kamp**: Provides monthly sessions that focus on healthy eating and meal preparation skills.

**Outreach**: Provides personal contact with families and individuals, information and referral about agency and community services, advocacy and assistance in accessing services. Offices located in Hutchinson, Litchfield, Olivia, and Willmar.

**Parent Support Outreach Program**: Provides voluntary, in-home services to assist families in accessing resources to meet their basic needs and provide information/education in areas such as parenting and financial literacy.

**SOAR Program (SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access & Recovery)**: Assists low-income eligible families with completing an initial application, filing an appeal to a decision or representing clients at a hearing.

**Threads of Hope (Thrift Store)**: Provides gently-used and new clothing and small household items at minimal cost.

**Weatherization Assistance Program**: Provides energy conservation improvements to reduce home heating expenses, at no cost, for qualified applicants i.e.: exterior wall and attic insulation; air infiltration and bypass sealing; testing, repair and/or replace of home mechanical systems.

Throughout the years, Heartland has provided support to other community programs by being a fiscal host to many new, emerging nonprofit agencies such as Willmar Area Multi-Cultural Market and New Minnesotan Community Development.
Success Stories

“How Helping People Get There”

How do I get there? This is a question that is asked multiple times a day by rural, low-income families. Whether it is for work, medical appointments, shopping for basic needs such as groceries, or bringing children to school or child care, the absence of reliable transportation puts a solution far out of reach. The lack of a personal vehicle, the go-to resource in rural areas without readily accessible public transportation, continues to be a significant barrier to employment for low-income families served by Heartland Community Action Agency.

Helping People Get There is a grassroots program that exists through multiple partnerships and strong community building efforts. Heartland’s partners include Midas, Jergenon Auto Repair, Walt’s Car Wash, Willmar Auto Plaza, Willmar Auto Siles, United Way, Tires Plus, Otto Bremer Foundation, U.S. Bank, Harvest Bank (of Kandiyohi and Atwater), Ridgewater College, O’Reilly Auto Parts, CAR Shop of Hutchinson, Kandiyohi County Power Cooperative, Rohner’s Auto Salvage, WorkForce Centers of Kandiyohi, Renville, Meeker and McLeod counties, Willmar Area Community Foundation, WCA Foundation, and most importantly, community members who graciously donate their used vehicles to Heartland Community Action Agency.

In total, 87 families have received a vehicle since the program’s inception in 2008. Of those families, 86% report moving off county cash assistance and into self-sufficiency. These numbers reflect the promise of community action and are exemplified by families such as Nick’s.

Nick is a single father of two who had been without transportation since an automobile accident on his way to work left his family without a car. After a period of unemployment, Nick found a job locally that he was able to walk to, but he still had to walk with his children to school to shop, do things that are often taken for granted by those with reliable transportation. A quick trip to the post office in winter meant a 20-minute walk in sub-zero temperatures for all three family members. With the help of Heartland’s partners, Nick received a vehicle that allows him to increase his work hours, get to his family’s destinations, and move back into the world of self-sufficiency.

“Being able to pick my kids up from school; it may seem like nothing, but it’s everything to them.”

“Community Action Works!” A Letter from a Head Start Parent

Heartland program has done so much for our family. Heartland is a great bridge between families with a need and programs that are willing to help fulfill the need.

My family lives in an 1899 circa house that was very cold. My family learned about Heartland’s Energy Assistance Program. We are so grateful for the assistance in paying part of our winter heating bills.

Heartland staff told us about the Weatherization Program, as our furnace was almost as old as our house and was emitting carbon monoxide. We applied for Weatherization and are so glad that we did. Heartland approved putting insulation in our house wall and attic. Our 1899 house now has insulation in its walls for the first time. This has slashed our heating bills by 70%.

My teenagers pointed out that now we are helping the environment by using fewer natural resources. And the energy star rating on the new furnace is another way we are helping the environment.

Heartland has made us feel more a part of the community. Our youngest children were in the Head Start program. Through Head Start we attended parent meetings. At those meetings parents get together and discuss parenting issues, how we can get our children ready for school and how we can give back to the community. Head Start encourages volunteerism outside of the program itself. I volunteer in the community at Heartland’s Threads of Hope Thrift Store and the Food Shelf.

On a more personal level, Head Start has helped us figure out that our daughter had a sensory processing disorder. Because of the early evaluation and her teacher’s advocacy, we were able to get the needed therapy. Today she is thriving in school. When I had concerns with my other daughter’s speech, Head Start did not dismiss my concerns, is her doctor had but had her evaluated and provided us with tools to help her speech process.

Our family feels Heartland is a vital part of the community. Heartland promotes a spirit of giving and a “can do” attitude. Our children see the community’s future. Heartland is a great cause to support.

Getting a “head start” on my summer reading.
Inter-County Community Council

History

Inter-County Community Council, Inc. (ICCC) is a private, nonprofit Community Action Agency incorporated under Minnesota laws in 1965. It was organized by a group of local people to combat poverty, using guidelines provided by the Office of Economic Opportunity. The agency provides services in Pennington, Red Lake, East Polk and Clearwater counties.

Agency Leadership

The 20-member board of directors hired three staff in 1965, including Ed Bilek, the first executive director who served in that capacity until his death in July 1966. At that point, the agency began a trend of growing its leadership from within, when Roy Jorgenson was appointed as executive director and continued in the role until 1986. In that year, Bob Melby, who had been at ICCC for 10 years as assistant director, became executive director. He would go on to serve in that role for 24 years, when in May 2011 Catherine Johnson, Family Service Director for ten years, took over as executive director.

Some happenings of these early years include impressive legislative involvement showcased in annual agency reports; humanitarian awards given at annual agency meetings to which many people were bussed to participate; programming that was administered out of the second story city office building.

Throughout these services and reports and awards, it is clear that ICCC’s strength has always been found in the dedication, passion and influence of staff, board members, community organizers and partners. These qualities are demonstrated by the longevity of employees and board members. One sure example is Lloyd Wold, who served actively as board chair from 1976 to 1986. Another example is Pennington County Commissioner Skip Swanson, who joined the ICCC governing board in 1985 and is now the agency’s longest-standing board member.

Community Action Agencies, in essence, are borne out of collaboration. Over the course of its 49 years, ICCC has taken great pride in developing programs and then spinning them off. In addition, ICCC has operated several special, short-term programs that served a variety of needs.

Historical Highlights of ICCC

1971
- Three Community Action Agencies (ICCC, Northwest Community Action and Tri-Valley Opportunity Council) co-sponsored and created the NW Multi-County Housing Authority.
- Neighboring Community Action Agencies developed the Midwest MN Community Development Corporation.

1972
- NW MN Economic Development Corporation was created with six Community Action Agencies.

1973
- Presidential action came and Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) funds were impounded. OEO was ordered to be discontinued. All Community Action Agencies were directed to begin ‘Phase out’ of programs. Lawsuits sprang up across the nation and the situation was altered.

1974
- The Beef Specialist Program, created in collaboration with the University of Minnesota, was spun-off.
- The House passed a bill that would eliminate Office of Economic Opportunity and set up Community Action as a new agency in Health, Education and Welfare. HUD funds were frozen.

1975
- Executive Director Roy Jorgenson reported that “ICCC survived the attempts of a few people in Washington to put us out of business”.
- Congress signed a bill creating a new agency, Community Services Administration (CSA), ending 10 years of Office of Economic Opportunity. State legislative action appropriated $1.2 million as match funds.
- The Emergency Food Program was created. Money was given to families to purchase food stamps and was loaned to youth enrolled in college to purchase food stamps.
Families participated in canning and freezing classes, gardening seminars, food festivals and “new, use, learn and sew” programs to learn to repurpose used things into new things.

1976
- The Drug and Alcohol Program began to create awareness and one-on-one counseling. This program would continue to grow, focusing on women, youth, employers and the elderly, until it lost its funding in 1980.

1977
- The Governor, Rudy Perpich, met with all Community Action Agency directors for the first time in 12 years. Roy Jorgenson said, “Legislators have discovered that when they need a job done, they can call on Community Action Agencies to get it done. My personal feeling is that ours is the best in Minnesota.”

1982
- Administration eliminated CSA. Base funding was then provided by the State of Minnesota through CSBG. ICCC mapped out how many months it could operate and then waited for Congress/Administration. Several programs were lost during this time.

1983
- ICCC met a mandated goal, as recognized by the State of Minnesota to, “help develop the full potential of each of its citizens so that they can live in decency and dignity and so that they can contribute to the strength of the state as a whole.”

1984
- North Country Food Bank was created with area Community Action Agencies.

1965 to 1984
- ICCC helped organize 11 food shelves in its service area.

1984 to 1991
- ICCC operated the Surplus Commodity Distribution program.

1986
- Funding no longer supported full staffing at ICCC and several positions were cut, increasing workloads of remaining staff; economic conditions in the area continued to worsen.

1988
- ICCC purchased its first computer system (IBM) to help with client tracking, statistical reporting and fiscal activities.

1989 to 2010
- Northwest Minnesota Initiative Fund helped families in emergency situations with a small grant.

1993
- Legislation required use of census information for setting future funding levels, which dealt a blow to ICCC.

1996 to 1998
- Purchase and renovation of new ICCC office space, increasing and improving work conditions. Funding for this new building was made possible by a $150,000 grant from the McKnight Foundation and a $250,000 loan (with 0% interest) from Rural Utilities Service through Garden Valley Telephone Company.

1996 to 2003
- The Family Loan program through a McKnight Foundation grant enabled ICCC to help people purchase vehicles.

1997
- The Governor and Minnesota Legislature recognized the importance of the Economic Opportunity Grant as core funding for Community Action Agencies statewide.

2002
- Governor’s “unallotment” of committed funds. Without notice, the Minnesota Economic Opportunity Grant was slashed by 53% and ICCC was forced to close all satellite offices, the Senior Craft Program and four craft outlet stores (all of which had been operational for 25 years). Three staffing positions were cut and a fourth was reduced to half-time. Other program areas with large cuts were Head Start, Youth Employment & Training, and emergency funds.

2009
- ICCC received additional funding in multiple program areas through the federal economic stimulus package.

2011
- Minnesota government shuts down. Many staff experienced a three-week layoff and program services came to a halt, some for the first time in Community Action history.
- A former youth employee and a staff member are invited to the White House for President Obama’s jobs speech. ICCC believes that this youth employment worker was the first ever Community Action participant to be an invited guest of the White House.
Programs of Inter-County Community Council over the course of its operation:

In the early years, ICCC outreach workers took applications for all programs operated by the agency and spent several years offering tax and rental refund programs with area seniors. Agency outreach workers have been the arms and legs of the organization, bridging the gap between community and agency. Around 1995, the outreach program moved into program specific departments.

Youth and Senior Employment Programs

Pretty-UP was the original Senior Community Service Employment Program. Senior Employment participants started nine craft shops and two thrift shops. From 1972 through 2002, homebound seniors with disabilities could sell their crafts at these local craft shops.

In 1999, ICCC's senior employment programs were combined with youth employment programs to create the Employment and Training department. Today, ICCC works with youth and people ages 55 and older. Neighborhood Youth Corps, Comprehensive Employment Training Act, and Jobs Training Partnership Act are all predecessors to this current Youth Employment and Training Program.

In 1966, Youth Corps began to provide services in a 16-county area. Since then, youth programs in total have reached an amazing number of youth in the northwest region. The agency has worked through the entire northwest corner of Minnesota and delegated money to neighboring Community Action Agencies, including Northwest Community Action and Tri-Valley Opportunity Council. In addition, Bi-CAP delegated money to ICCC to serve Clearwater County. Today, this Youth Program focuses heavily on at-risk youth and the numbers served are considerably smaller than in the past due to funding cuts.

Homeless Programs/Family Service Department

In 1989, funding sources began to target homelessness. Additional grants and funds were developed in the mid-1990's, including: Rural Housing Assistance & Stability Program; Emergency Loan Program; and Emergency Shelter and Grant Program. In 1999, ICCC began providing foreclosure prevention counseling and continues this work today. In 2008, the agency added a transitional housing component, as well as long-term homeless services and food support outreach. The Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing grant was with ICCC for two years, as a result of the federal economic stimulus funding. In 2009, ICCC added Family Assets for Independence in Minnesota (FAIM) and in 2011, the agency received a HUD permanent support housing grant to serve homeless people. In 2013, ICCC was awarded a grant to serve homeless youth.

Emergency Food

ICCC has operated an onsite food shelf that was started in 1983; since 1984, the agency has received Emergency Food and Shelter Grants to stock and organize food shelves. Throughout the years, ICCC has administered a variety of food stamp outreach programs and taught Financial Literacy classes.

Energy Programs

From 1975 to 1976, Energy Programs was created at ICCC, with energy advisory committees established to give direction to these programs. The energy crisis program in Clearwater County, called Winterization, was formed in 1975. Over the years, there have been several pilot projects established to retrofit or replace furnaces. The Energy Assistance Program, as we know it today, was signed into law by the President in 1980; through the years, ICCC has had state and federal money to administer the program and continues to operate it today.

Weatherization

From 1975 to 1976, the Weatherization program was established at ICCC. This program enabled the agency to hire 46 people for crews and the home weatherization program used CETA youth to weatherize homes. At one point, ICCC received both state and federal funds to administer this program. In 1986, the agency elected to contract with the private sector, instead of having in-agency crews. And, in 1988, coordination began with local cities/utilities to conduct joint weatherization projects that became Energy Conservation Programs. The Weatherization program saw tremendous growth from the stimulus funding and then significant cuts after the stimulus project completion.

Housing programs

Throughout the years, ICCC has had a tremendously positive impact on housing stock within its region, with its focus to improve, develop and enhance housing stock for low-income people. To this end, the agency has received many HUD Community Development project awards and small cities development grants. In 1975, ICCC received 15 mobile homes from Pennsylvania and rented them to low-income households, eventually adding five more mobile homes to this pool.

The agency administered several Minnesota Housing Grants from 1978 to 2008 and has also participated in the MHFA rehab loan program, the Greater MN fix-up fund and the Minnesota Urban and Rural Homestead (MURAL) program. Together with Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, Northwest Community Action, Multi-County Housing, and the NW Regional Development Commission, ICCC received a grant from MHFA for new construction projects from 1999 to 2008. These projects created a partnership with the Institutional Community Works to complete the construction and a total of 18 homes were built as a result.

Home Start/Head Start

In 1974, Head Start changed to Home Start, which provided early learning opportunities and also encouraged mothers of small children to see themselves as their child’s first and most efficacious teacher. In 1996, ICCC received pilot project funding to serve two-year-old toddlers and their families, which began
their focus on serving Early Head Start children and their families. Throughout the years, centers have been set up in many local churches, and other organizations. Currently, ICCC Head Start operates three program educational options:

- Center-Based: Children attend a classroom/center four ½ days per week; families receive six visits yearly and are invited to attend monthly family events.
- Combination: Children attend a classroom two days per week; families receive two monthly home visits and are invited to attend two monthly family events.
- Home-Based: Families receive weekly 90-minute home visits and are invited to attend two family events per month.

**Summary**

In 1980, Erma St. George, Deputy Director at ICCC, wrote, “Community leaders, public officials, people from middle class backgrounds joined the poor in attacking the problems. This was Community Action.” This was a powerful definition of Community Action showing that Community Action was and still is a verb in motion; it is attacking problems with people.

In 1994, Bob Melby wrote, “What the reports are unable to do is show the major changes that have occurred in the lives of the people we have worked with.”

Further, Catherine Johnson said in 2013, “Today’s public policy marketplace is demanding more evidence of impact, efficiency, cost effectiveness, measurable outcomes and rigorous data analysis. We know and see the impact we make, now we need to show that in a much more deliberate and data focused way. I want to challenge the network to remember that our core principal is to serve people. How we treat the people that need our assistance is one of the main things that we get to maintain control over and the importance of that cannot be overstated.”

Through the years there are several evident trends. Historically, ICCC has relied on federal funds to provide 80-90% of all agency funds. In the beginning, Youth Employment was heavily funded within the agency, and then funding focus shifted to the Energy/Housing Programs. Today, Head Start carries the largest of agency funds.

One source of pride at ICCC is that many of the agency’s long-term employees began as program participants, such as working on a youth employment program or being a Head Start parent or child. In the 1996 annual report, Head Start Director Jolyn Vigen wrote, “We employed 27 highly qualified and dedicated staff in the past year, 14 of whom were former Head Start parents.”

To this day, collaborations are always being enhanced and developed, with examples woven through annual reports and board minutes. These partnerships have created long-lasting relationships through communities served by ICCC. The agency is a rural Community Action Agency with long geographic distances that have made travel expenses a large budget item; thus, the creation of partnerships has been essential to successful service delivery.

To be sure, funding has never been secure. In the 1985 annual report Roy Jorgenson, executive director said, “It has been a hectic year trying to survive”. Resourcefulness and flexibility has always been evident, as staff have written more grants, searched for more projects and shifted staff when possible during times of funding cuts. Through the years, ICCC staff has gone to heroic measures to survive as an agency, always with a resilient collective spirit.

Staff loyalty has been tremendous, even without the guarantee of a job six months from now. Employees continue to be a steadfast and dedicated group; they were during the agency’s early years and continue to be today. In 1972, Executive Director Roy Jorgenson wrote, “I feel that we could take all of the programs, the personnel, and the efforts made, and compare them with any other CAP agency in the state, or the nation for that matter, and come out at the very top.” And, Executive Director Catherine Johnson said, “I couldn’t agree more still today, forty two years later.”

Lastly, there has always been respect for the people that we serve. Without them there would be no reason to exist as an organization or any movement at all. Roy Jorgenson said in the 1980 annual report, “Finally to the residents of the area, especially the poor. It has been a pleasure to have had the opportunity to serve you over the years. Thanks for having been patient with us.

“Your rewards have been ours.”

Executive Director Catherine Johnson said, “There is a tremendous amount of respect that I have as the current executive director for those that have paved the way. The constant fight to survive and be the voice for low-income is something that we as an agency have been doing for the past 49 years. There were amazing visionaries within our communities and particularly on our board. Staff made every effort to allow people to feel seen, heard and valued without judgment throughout the years and still practice that to this day. I am honored to be part of this organization and a movement that swept the local communities 50 years ago.”
Success Story

In September 2011, a Workforce Investment Act (WIA) participant from Inter-County Community Council (ICCC) named Gracely Ibarra was invited to sit with First Lady Michelle Obama during the President’s speech on creating jobs and growing the economy. Betty Halvorson, Inter-County’s Employment and Training Director, traveled with Gracey to attend this speech. ICCC believes that Gracey’s invitation was the first time a Community Action participant has been invited to the White House.

When Gracey had initially signed up for WIA services, she was a single mother with two children who wanted more for herself and her children. She received Classroom Training funding and excelled in the classroom, securing employment before the ink was dry on her certificate. Through her classroom success and desire to give her children a stable, economically self-sufficient future, she became a role model for other Latino youth. Gracey was able to balance family, work and school; part of her recipe for success was Inter-County’s WIA Youth Program.

Staff from ICCC submitted Gracey’s amazing accomplishments to the Department of Employment and Economic Development. She was then featured as a ‘success story’ in that department’s 2009 WIA Annual Report. From there, her story was forwarded to the Department of Labor. And, from the Department of Labor, the White House heard about Gracey and then recognized this outstanding young woman by inviting her to sit with First Lady Michelle Obama as the President addressed a joint session of Congress.

This invitation from the White House was a surprise to Gracey and her family. Within a few days of receiving it, Gracey and Betty were on a plane to Washington D.C. where Gracey attended a small gathering at the White House. Michelle Obama individually addressed the attendees and congratulated them on their accomplishments. Gracey was then ushered into a vehicle and transported to the U.S. Capitol, where she sat to the right of Michelle Obama during the President’s speech. Afterwards, she was ushered to a room where she met the President. While in Washington D.C., Gracey visited staff at the National Association for State Community Services Programs and met Senator Al Franken.

Gracely’s remarkable story demonstrates that it is possible for young people and families who are struggling to achieve economic stability, with the help of Community Action. And, Gracey herself now credits Community Action Programs for supporting her on her journey.

Now, this is the story as told by Gracely Ibarra:

After arriving in D.C., Betty and I were greeted by Patricia and William (Department of Labor employees) and driven to our hotel — the Liaison near Capitol Hill. After we got checked in we went to our room to get ready for the big night ahead of us! Once Betty and I were ready we made our way down to the lobby to meet Patricia.

From the hotel we were driven to the Secretary of Labor’s office where we entered through her private garage and we got to see what vehicle she drove. We then entered and got to ride up her private elevator. Once exiting the elevator we were shown into the Secretary of Labor’s floor. We were introduced to all of her staff and then waited to meet her.

Finally, the doors opened and we were allowed in, where Hilda Solis, the Secretary of Labor introduced herself to me! I felt so honored for a lady of such importance to be so interested in what I had to say. She was an amazing lady. She told me she was happy that I was a Latina who was doing so good with my life and pursuing a nursing career even with two kids! After we talked for a few minutes we posed for pictures and said our goodbyes.

From there we were driven to the White House where we went through security. Once we entered the White House we were greeted by some of the White House staff and told to help ourselves to some appetizers and do some mingling. I met a few other people who went through the same program that I went through and now they are doing really good with their lives. We were then told to please stand along the side of the wall and the First Lady would be coming. When it was my turn I introduced myself with a big smile and Michelle Obama smiled back with a very firm handshake. We said a few words to each other and then it was the next person’s turn. I felt very good inside to have gotten the chance to meet her.

We were then shown to three black vans that took us to the Capitol for the President’s speech. We were escorted by police cars, lights flashing and everything! It was so cool, everyone was staring at us and I felt as if I was in a parade and I should be throwing out candy to those people. Once we were at the Capitol we were shown to our seats that were in the box where
Michelle Obama would be sitting... little did I know, I would be two seats away from her side!

The whole time during President Obama’s speech I kept pointing out people who I knew who they were. I thought it was a good thing I paid attention in my history classes. There was a lot of clapping and standing which I didn’t mind because President Obama had a lot of good points! After the speech we were shown to the main floor of the Capitol where we were brought to a room and one by one we took our turns to meet the President. I introduced myself and we talked a few seconds while pictures were taken and I told the President how I felt really short and while we were shaking hands he looked down at me and said, “That’s because you are, but that’s okay”. We all laughed and moved on.

We were then brought back to the White House with the same police escort. Betty and I walked to find something to eat and finally found a really good pizza place! We then got a taxi and went back to the hotel. In the morning we walked to the Capitol which was just a block from our hotel and took some pictures. That’s about all the sightseeing I got to do. We then met Jeannie Chaffin from the National Association of State Community Services Programs. We had breakfast together and shared our stories with each other then she brought us to her office. She took us to see Senator Al Franken. Wow, he was a very nice and funny man. We made each other laugh a lot! We then had to hurry back to the hotel and get our stuff so Patricia and William could bring us to the airport. We had to arrive early because of the high alert status at the airport. After dropping us off we thanked William for driving us everywhere and being so great to us strangers! We gave Patricia a hug and thanked her for being patient with us. We knew how much stress it was on her to make sure we got everywhere on time. We then made our way to the plane for our trip back home.

I had such an amazing time in D.C. Everyone was so friendly to Betty and I. We wish we could have gotten time to have gone sightseeing more but maybe next time. I’m so glad I got this trip of a lifetime, and this opportunity presented to me.

KOOTASCA Community Action

KOOTASCA Community Action, like other Minnesota Community Action Agencies, strives to eliminate poverty by providing programs that assist in the well-being of children and families. Community Action funded programs are designed to improve the condition in which low-income people live, which in turn, strengthens whole communities. This funding is used for collaborative projects, including Family Development, Circles of Support, early childhood services and affordable housing. Community Action grants are key to KOOTASCA’s 15 programs that include Energy Assistance, Home Weatherization and Rehabilitation, Head Start, Crisis Nursery, Family Development, Circles of Support, Koochiching County Senior Services and other programs serving low-income families and seniors.

1965
- Koochiching-Itasca Action Council was formed through joint powers of board of Koochiching and Itasca County Commissioners. There were 14 people on the board, with seven representatives from each county. There was also one director from each commissioner district and two at large.

1968
- First Executive Director was appointed. Head Start was the first grant to be funded.

1973
- The offices of Koochiching-Itasca Action Council, Inc. moved from International Falls to Grand Rapids.
1978
- The first grant was written for Women’s Infant’s and Children’s Program (WIC).
- Upon inception of federal programming, in the late 1970s/early 1980s, KOOTASCA became the agency for the Energy Assistance Program (EAP) and Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) for both Itasca and Koochiching County residents. EAP is a federally funded program that helps low-income families with home energy needs. WAP is a program that provides help to low-income homeowners to lower heating and energy costs. Priority is given to homeowners with high fuel burden, as well as the elderly, disabled and those people with children. Work done on homes may include insulating attics, sidewalls and other areas.

1980
- In the 1980’s, Head Start applied for Innovative Head Start dollars and opened Family Resource Centers in the communities of Nashwauk, Bigfork, Deer River and Grand Rapids. The original centers provided support services for families enrolled in Head Start. By the mid-1990’s, additional partners and funding sources came together to find a way for people and agencies who provide services to do so efficiently and cost-effectively. The Itasca Resource Centers, located in Bigfork, Deer River, Grand Rapids and Nashwauk/Keewatin were designed to cut costs, eliminate duplication and streamline service provision.

1981
- Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) was funded from a federal grant to serve Aitkin, Itasca and Koochiching counties.

1983
- Second Harvest North Central Food Bank was created through Blandin Foundation funding.
- Charitable Gambling Sites were started in Grand Rapids and International Falls. RSVP was the first recipient of funds.

1990
- The agency became a Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO).

1991
- Native American Indian Cultural Program was started in International Falls.
- Family Services Center federal grant funded for Head Start families. Sites located in International Falls, Taconite, Bigfork, and Deer River.

1992
HandyHands program was started through RSVP program. Volunteers made home repairs for low-income seniors.

1993
- The agency was approached by a steering committee of the school district and asked to take on the Teenage Parenting Program (TAPP) due to declining funding with the schools.
- The agency became a member of the Northeast Minnesota Housing Partnership with St. Louis County to serve as the lead entity enabling the five-county area to receive entitlement status for new Federal HOME dollars.
- KOOTASCA utilized MHFA funds for rehabilitation of low-income owner-occupied housing in Itasca and Koochiching counties.

1994
- Completed renovation of North American Fellowship Center (NAIFC). Funding for this renovation included: Otto Bremer Foundation and McKnight Foundation, as well as state and federal funds. When NAIFC went defunct in 1995, KOOTASCA took over center management.

1995
- KOOTASCA began transitional housing and Family Homelessness Prevention Assistance Programs (FHPAP).

1997
- Talks and recommendations began with Grand Rapids Area Community Partnership facilitators and Blandin Foundation Board of Directors to invest more resources in education. This led to a 1998 conference for Children First! – where the vision was set by the large number of people in attendance. From 1999 to 2002, Action Teams developed programs, events and activities to meet the goals set to provide quality care and education to children.

1998
- Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI) program began as a 20-week course in leadership skills and legislative process. Meals and child care were provided. The course was open to people regardless of income level. Funding for the program was discontinued in 2003.

1999
- KOOTASCA created its first website, giving the community another way to research and understand available resources.
- On May 1, 1999 the Kids Campus Program began to provide child care at ICC. It was run by Maureen Rosato, who would later become the Director of Education for KOOTASCA’s Head Start program. This center was opened to address the increasing demand for affordable quality child care, especially for families in need of non-traditional hours care.
- In the late 1990’s KOOTASCA, Deer River Health Care Center, ISD 317 and the Food Shelf worked together to develop a space to house Head Start and Early Childhood classrooms, Adult Day Stay Services, the local food shelf
and a Resource Center office. The school district dropped out prior to this facility’s opening, however. The Goodall Resource Center is still maintained by KOOTASCA.

2000

- Itasca Area Crisis Nursery was started to help families in crisis, providing temporary care for children and enabling parents to address the crisis. The nursery provides care overnight, for several nights, or for a portion of a day. Crisis nursery programs help in the prevention of child abuse and neglect. KOOTASCA’s crisis nursery provides a safe and nurturing environment with licensed caregivers and is a valuable resource for parents in need. This nursery provides care for children ages birth through 12 who live throughout Itasca County; services are free of charge with no income guidelines.

- A KOOTASCA service recipient received the national Sargent Shriver Annual Achievement Award. This award was established by the Community Action Partnership in 1995 to recognize and honor achievements by individuals who, with the assistance of a Community Action Agency, have changed their lives and achieved independence. The award was named for Sargent Shriver, the first director of the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO).

- KOOTASCA used DEED Small Cities Development Program (SCDP) funds to rehab low-income owner-occupied housing for Koochiching and Itasca counties.

- KOOTASCA went through an extensive strategic planning process. The organization reviewed its current services to determine how they tied to the organization’s mission. Prior to this process, the organization had provided a wide range of services that helped people but did not necessarily meet the organization’s goals. Between 2000 and 2003, the agency spun off some programs to other agencies that were a better fit, enabling these programs to continue to thrive. Included were: RSVP went to ElderCircle; Adult Foster Care returned to the county; WIC went to public health; Family Safety Center went to Advocates for Family Peace; and Guardian Ad Litem went to the State of Minnesota.

2001

- In May 2001 Kid’s Campus Program at Itasca Community College (ICC) was discontinued due to low usage and lack of grant funding to support the non-traditional care hours. In August 2001, the center was turned over to a private operator.

- League of Parent & Youth Leadership. This program was a one-year extension of Head Start programming targeted to serve older youth in Head Start families. Activities focused on skill building, leadership, social interactions, role modeling, and service projects.

- KOOTASCA’s Senior Program partnered with Itasca County Elder Circle, provider of coordinated senior services in Itasca County, to create a new program called Senior Wheels. Senior Wheels recruits and trains volunteer drivers in the two-county area to provide door-to-door transportation to out-of-town medical appointments to seniors who are not able to transport themselves and do not have a caregiver available to transport them.

- Teenage Parent Program (TAPP) joined Early Head Start, enabling an increase in TAPP resources and services.

- Research, planning and grant writing for Circles of Support & Wheels to Work began. Circles of Support is a social capital building resource for people in poverty. The model was designed to assist people living in poverty by increasing their relationships with people who are not living in poverty. These relationships provide support for people to then move out of poverty. In addition to providing this individual assistance and community education/training to improve how the community views people who are living in poverty, the model also focuses on advocacy and the need for systemic change. The systemic focus began as a report to the community highlighting barriers to people leaving poverty; the work later evolved into Big View meetings, events and projects.

- Wheels to Work is a car donation resource that operates within the Circles of Support program. Vehicles are donated by the community and distributed to Circles of Support participants meeting eligibility criteria.

- KOOTASCA utilized Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) Small Cities Development Program funds for the rehab and energy retrofits of businesses in local communities with the service area.

2003

- On February 3, 2004, KOOTASCA received a Best Practice Award in St. Paul, on behalf of the University of Minnesota, Office of Economic Opportunity and Minnesota Community Action Association for its outstanding Senior Wheels Program. The awards ceremony was attended by legislators, community members and agency staff.

- Circles of Support and Wheels to Work began.

- Invest Early - The Itasca Area Early Childhood Initiative was launched. This led to a concept paper presented to the Blandin Board of Directors for approval to move forward with plans to develop and fund a local, community-based effort to provide high quality, early childhood development services for children and their families in Itasca County. This proposal was accepted in December
with an award to provide services for 100 children and their families at four sites throughout the county. In October 2005, the doors opened for 16 early childhood classrooms throughout Itasca County.

- In November 2004, KOOTASCA hosted its first One Night Without a Home, a sleep-out conducted to increase awareness of homelessness. This fundraising tradition continues today.

2005

- Circles of Support and Wheels to Work are launched in International Falls. (This programming was discontinued in International Falls in 2009.)
- Project Hope began through Integrated Services Project initiative (ISP). This initiative was designed to improve outcomes for hard-to-employ welfare recipients. Project Hope was developed and implemented in collaboration with AEOA, Lakes & Pines Community Action, Community Action Duluth, and Minnesota Chippewa Tribe Act (MCT). The Project Hope model merged case management service with Circles of Support programming as a means of additional support for this hard-to-serve population. KOOTASCA launched Project Hope services in Grand Rapids and International Falls. (Project Hope funding and services were discontinued at KOOTASCA in 2008.)

2006

- KOOTASCA implemented Project Read with grant monies from The Northland Foundation. Project Read is a research-based literacy program that educates community members in Itasca County on the importance of reading early to infants and young children.
- Head Start applied for and was chosen to be a sponsor site of the AmeriCorps Early Literacy Corps, which places members in Head Start centers to help children improve their emerging literacy skills and prepare for kindergarten.
- KOOTASCA purchased and renovated a house at 1117 SE 7th Street in Grand Rapids to provide transitional housing for up to five homeless men at any one time. PEER House (Perseverance, Empowerment, Encouragement, and Respect) offers single-bedrooms and shared living space, case management and community referrals. It is a self-sufficiency program with an emphasis on employment or education, volunteerism and community engagement. It offers a safe and sober environment with onsite supervision, while providing the necessary support for participants to become self-sufficient. PEER House encourages yard/home maintenance, gardening, and home improvement projects.

2008

- KOOTASCA began administering the Diversionary Work Program via contract through Itasca County Health and Human Services. DWP is a four-month work program designed to help parents go to work rather than enroll in Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) services. The contractual partnership continued for three years.

2009

- A KOOTASCA Circles of Support volunteer received the Steve Chadwick Award. Steve Chadwick is a former Executive Director of Duluth Community Action who died of cancer in 1995. Minnesota Community Action presents this award each year to someone who, through their work and life, has emulated Steve’s vision and commitment to reducing poverty.

2012

- KOOTASCA distributed 150 computers and established 119 broadband connections in Itasca and Koochiching counties through participation in the Blandin Foundation’s Minnesota Intelligent Rural Communities and Digital Inclusion initiatives. This work was a catalyst for PCs for People.

2013

- PCs for People’s storefront opens in Grand Rapids. KOOTASCA is a licensed affiliate for PCs for People and a registered Microsoft Refurbisher. Donated computer equipment is refurbished and made available to low-income people in Itasca and Koochiching counties.
- KOOTASCA trained five staff members as navigators of MNsure to assist the uninsured and underinsured in receiving and maintaining adequate health care. The agency provided access to a Health Care Promoter who was hired to work with the Leech Lake Health Care Division in connecting tribal members to affordable health care.
The first formal steps to create Lakes and Pines Community Action Council (Lakes and Pines) began with the development of formal by-laws in November 1965 and the approval of original Articles of Incorporation in April 1966. Lakes and Pines was established to serve low-income families and charged with redesigning systems and institutions that were allowing some people to prosper while holding others back.

The original service area included seven counties in East Central Minnesota: Aitkin, Carlton, Chisago, Kanabec, Isanti, Mille Lacs and Pine. The agency’s service area remains the same today.

In 1965, a 49-member board was created to represent this service area, with seven members from each of the seven counties on it. With the establishment of the tri-partite board structure in the late 1960s, Lakes and Pines’ board of directors was reorganized to be a 21-member board, including an elected official and a democratically elected low-income representative from each county. The remaining seven board seats were filled with private sector members. Since then, the agency’s board structure has remained unchanged.

Just how and who were the driving forces behind the creation of Lakes and Pines has become somewhat a part of local myth and legend - from stories of women’s groups meeting at the local beauty parlor to men’s groups meeting in church basements. What can be said for a fact is that in the early to mid-1960s, there was a ground swell within East Central Minnesota of those who saw the inequity of the
economic situation. By the time Community Action was established, the needs and initiatives had been identified and the funding that came to the area was a way to carry on what had already begun.

Lakes and Pines’ early philosophy, which still holds true in part, was to be an incubator for initiatives that help low-income individuals and families. It was then envisioned that the agency would spin programs off, most often to local government units. Some early local initiatives that began with Lakes and Pines’ help included: special education services to school-aged children, including speech therapy; psychological and social services; low-income farm programs, including dairy herd testing and farm management practices program; Family Planning programs; senior centers and transportation; a mobile clothing project that provided delivery of second-hand clothing to families at low or no cost; various manpower and employment training programs; and, the first alcoholism counseling program in the area. All of these programs are still in existence in one form or another, though currently none are delivered by Lakes and Pines.

Since its beginning, Lakes and Pines has not only been a service/program developer, but has been a go-to agency in times of crisis. In its early years, it built a dike to keep the Ripple River from over running the city of Aitkin and, more recently, it assisted communities in Carlton and Pine counties during flooding episodes. In short, Lakes and Pines has assisted with floods, fires, the propane crisis, Quick Start, ARRA, MNSure - all on a moment’s notice.

The agency’s current array of programs include: Weatherization; Low Income Energy Assistance Program; Head Start; a variety of United Way early childhood programs; Family Homeless Prevention Program, along with a variety of crisis homeless and food programs; and, a car donation program. It also administers a number of Small Cities Programs throughout its service area that address local municipal needs. For one of the latest Small Cities Programs, Lakes and Pines has partnered with a used clothing store to create a community center that will serve a large portion of East Central Minnesota.

Seven people have led Lakes and Pines over its fifty year history. Its first three leaders were designated as Program Directors and each served a single year from 1965 to 1967. The position of executive director was established in 1970, with LaVerne Kelling serving in that role from 1970 to 1978. Roger Corbin was promoted from his role of Head Start Director to take the position of executive director in 1978, where he served for 27 years. In 2005, Kathy Burski oversaw the transition time to new leadership; in 2006, Robert Benes was named as executive director.

Agency board membership over its fifty year history is long and filled with the names of people rich in talent and long on passion for the mission of the organization. This mission remains remarkably close to the ideals of those that chose to step up and help their neighbors when they were experiencing a difficult time: To build prosperous communities by serving local families and individuals in their pursuit of self-reliance.
In the following letter, Clay-Wilkin Board Member, Duane D. Swenson, recalls some of the early history:

When I was first elected to the Clay-Wilkin Opportunity Council Board in 1967 or 68 Jim Mousoff was the director. At that time a summer Head Start Program and the fledgling Out-Reach Aides Program were all that we as a board, had to concern ourselves about. Within a year Dennis was hired and there has been a steady increase in areas of concern towards the needs found amongst the people of Clay and Wilkin counties.

When Dennis first took over we had the two programs, one room in the Old Post Office Building in Moorhead, and one secretary. Soon we were involved in the National Youth Organization or Corps (NYO) program, senior citizens, Meals on Wheels, Concentrated Employment Program (CEP) and establishing kitchens at different sites in the two counties.

Then we had our annual meetings. They were big events that filled the Moorhead Armory with people. Bus loads came in from all the surrounding towns. Bob Bergland was guest speaker two different times. There were many door prizes donated by businesses throughout the two counties. It helped to make people aware of Clay-Wilkin and what it stood for.

Besides helping the poor and needy with their immediate needs, Dennis and I were involved in getting the Northwest Development Corporation started in cooperation with the Tri-County OEO.

Our OEO at this time had fifty-six thousand dollars federal money and funding then, as now, was a worry. Dennis was a leader in getting funds. His leadership in high esteem by the other opportunity council directors and he is a leader among them (as I found out when I traveled to the state meetings with him when I was chairman.)

Due to Dennis’ leadership and efforts over these past years, programs have been expanded while many more have been added until we are the size we are today. But an increase in size alone isn’t what makes me so proud to have served on the Clay-Wilkin OEO board it is the many lives we have touched and the opportunities our programs have provided for people in need.

Sincerely,

Duane D. Swenson

---

History

Note: A flood in the 1980’s destroyed virtually all the organization’s written documents so much of this history is from the memory of Dennis R. Heitkamp, who was the organization’s executive director from 1969 to 1999. Joe Pederson, current executive director, has added some additional information from 2000 to present.

On August 3, 1965, Clay Wilkin Opportunity Council (CWOC) was officially created, when on this day the organization’s Articles of Incorporation were approved by the State of Minnesota Secretary of State’s office. Two of the organization’s original board directors are still alive! They are Russell McDougall of Hitterdal, Minnesota and E.M. (Lefty) Johnson of Hawley, Minnesota.

In 1966 Clay-Wilkin received an Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) grant and James Mousoff was hired as executive director to initiate activities. Offices were established in two small rooms of the Old Post Office Building at 521 Main Avenue in Moorhead, Minnesota. This building is currently the Rourke Ark Gallery.
1967
- A summer Head Start program was started. Howard Murray, principal at Probstfield Elementary School in Moorhead, directed the program. Sessions were held in kindergarten classrooms. Who would have known that today, 47 years later, there would still be Head Start classrooms in the Probstfield Early Learning Center!

1968
- Outreach workers were hired to “help identify the poor,” Head Start was operated as a summer program funded at $47,000. The Neighborhood Youth Program (a predecessor to Rural MN CEP), which employed low-income youth during the school year and summer, also came into existence. An alcoholism counseling and referral program was the first OEO project. Clay-Wilkin staff consisted of the executive director, a bookkeeper, a secretary, one outreach worker and a husband/wife team of alcoholism counselors in Clay County. In June 1968, Dennis Heitkamp was hired as the assistant director. In the fall, three more outreach workers were hired to survey the needs of the area’s low-income population.

1969
- James Moulsoff resigned as executive director and Dennis Heitkamp was named to the position. The Alcohol Counseling Program expanded to Breckenridge in Wilkin County. Work began to create the senior citizens programs in Clay and Wilkin counties. CWOC became involved in the National Youth Corps program.

1970
- Dennis Heitkamp assumed the additional responsibility of Head Start Director. Senior Citizen Programs in Clay County was established; this included completely furnishing the senior centers with commercial stoves, refrigerators, tables, chairs, etc. and funding the establishment of each center as its own 501(c)(3). Congregate Dining and Meals on Wheels Programs were started in the 1970’s. Advocacy work was done to bring the Food Stamp Program to Clay and Wilkin counties. CWOC wrote a grant to expand the Lakes Agassiz Regional Library System to the rural areas.

1971
- The Home Base component of Head Start came into existence. Out of school National Youth Corps program was started through a grant with the Department of Labor.

1975
- A grant was received for a special project to help migrant and seasonal farm workers leave the area due to a summer flood. CWOC wrote the application to the Legal Services Corporation for funding for Legal Services of Northwest Minnesota. This funding was for all of Northwest Minnesota.

1978
- The organization’s total budget was $838,642. CWOC started the following programs: Community Education Programs in Barnsville and Glyndon; WIC (women infants and children) in Clay and Wilkin counties; a VITA tax program (which completed 231 returns); and Wilkin County Seniors.

1979
- Wilkin County Family Planning was started. That year Clay-Wilkin also had 79 staff members and its first million dollar budget.

1980
- The Campbell meals site was opened and the Educational Brokerage Program was initiated. The organization transferred the Department of Labor programs to the CETA grantee for the area Rural Minnesota CEP and spun off the Alcoholism Referral Program to another agency. Low-Income Energy Assistance and Weatherization Assistance Programs were started and the organization’s operating budget reached $2.6 million.

1981 to 1984
- The Wilkin County Seniors Program and Family Planning were spun off to Wilkin County Public Health. LIHEAP and Weatherization Programs were spun off to West Central Minnesota Communities Action.

1985
- CWOC’s Head Start enrollment reached 100 children. The organization operated charitable gaming sites in much of northwestern Minnesota, with locations such as Kris’ Bar, The Galaxy, The Spot and Riverside, and, Diamond Jims.

1987
- Rothsay Meals Program was started.

1989
- Child Care Resource & Referral (Child Care Aware) was started.

1993
- CWOC started Cornerstone, the predecessor to the Clay County Family Services Collaborative.

1994
- CWOC moved to the Family Service Center of Clay County.

1995
- CWOC started Daily Discoveries (child care center) at the Family Service Center of Clay County.

1996
- Rainbow Bridge safe exchange and visitation center was started.
2001
• Housing and Self-Sufficiency Programs were reestablished.

2003
• The organization’s name changed to Lakes & Prairies Community Action Partnership, Inc. to better reflect its growing service area and to participate in the national branding campaign.

2005
• The organization was again functioning as a VITA Tax Site. Since that time, this programming has refunded more than eight million dollars to low- and moderate-income individuals and families. EITC funding and outreach began with two years of funding by the National Tax Coalition based in Chicago, with additional funding from the United Way and matching funds from West Central Initiative.

• Following this initial outreach effort, a collaborative of four community action agencies has used local funding, as well as grant support from West Central Initiative, to fund a family economic success project. This project was built, in part, on the work of Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Rural Family Economic Success (RUFES).

• Lakes & Prairies coordinated the first public gathering, an advocacy event, on the new Veteran’s Memorial Bridge between Fargo and Moorhead. Advocacy for a “Living Wage” included a march on the bridge. Another gathering of community members followed the next year, to include events on the Veterans Memorial Bridge and the bridge between Breckenridge (Wilkin County, Minnesota and Wahpeton, North Dakota).

• Growing facility concerns resulted in negotiations and a 10-year contract with Clay County Social Services through 2016. Related results included a $275,000 facilities grant for Clay County to refurbish and upgrade Head Start and Rainbow Bridge service areas on the first floor. This further resulted in refurbishing and some renovation of the fourth floor offices through an Otto Bremer Foundation grant.

2007
• Lakes & Prairies received its first USDA grant to encourage awareness and application assistance for the Food Support program, formerly known as Food Stamps. The grant, administered by the Minnesota Department of Human Service’s OEO and Minnesota Community Action, resulted in more than doubling the number of people accessing this benefit in Clay and Wilkin counties. Today, this work continues with a new name for the program - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

• Lakes & Prairie’s first Group Cares home repair work camp was held in Barnesville, Minnesota and served families in Clay and Wilkin counties. Approximately 50 homeowners benefited from this project that involved more than 400 volunteers and 12,000 volunteer hours. Since that time, three more work camps have brought that total to 175 homes and projects.

• Child Care Resource & Referral launched an internet retail outlet for children’s furnishings called Playkota. Playkota was a collaborative venture with Rough Rider Industries, the workforce training program of the North Dakota Department of Correction and Rehabilitation, to provide high quality, reasonably priced children’s furniture and playthings to the child care industry. Word of this effort expanded Playkota outreach to include schools, churches, libraries, organizations and businesses. Eventually the project ended and efforts moved to serving a growing unmet need – helping build and grow child care capacity in the areas served.

2009
• The Housing/Self-Sufficiency program was renamed Lakes & Prairies Family & Community Services. From then to this 50th year, the program has expanded to include food support programs, financial literacy classes, HUD housing grant-funded homeless assistance and other homelessness prevention efforts. Lakes & Prairies’ Family & Community Services Division has been a leader in implementing a single point of entry to streamline application and referral services for those who are homeless or seeking help to prevent homelessness.

2004 through 2014
• Child Care Aware (formerly Child Care Resource & Referral) has greatly expanded its programs and services to include expanded child care provider education, quality improvement grants, family referrals, community engagement, advocacy, capacity building and more. Lakes & Prairies Child Care Aware serves 21 counties in Minnesota and 24 counties in eastern North Dakota. Beginning in 2012, these efforts have grown to include taking on Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) services for a growing number of County Social Service agencies in Minnesota’s Region IV. ChildCare Aware is working to expand the new Parent Aware Star Ratings to help parents find early childhood programs confirmed as going above and beyond to prepare children for school and life. This program now administers the Early Learning Scholarship program in Minnesota’s Region IV to provide financial assistance for eligible families to enroll in these rated programs.

The Lakes & Prairies Community Action Partnership mission – Eliminate poverty. Empower families. Engage communities. is alive and well and remains true to the community action goals and concerns going back to its founding. Priorities in early childhood education, health-wellness, homelessness prevention, family economic stability, serving vulnerable populations, a growing senior population and strengthening communities, have been the constant that speaks to what could be called our Community Action DNA.
Success Story

“In 2004, I was a young, single mom with a little boy. I was going to college full-time to finish my four-year social work degree, working as many hours as I could manage between classes and on weekends, to pay the bills and barely scraping by.

That year, my son was able to attend Head Start at Lakes & Prairies Community Action Partnership. Getting him into that Head Start program changed our lives in so many ways that went beyond a preschool education for my three-year-old.

During that year, my son was having some behavioral problems both in school and at home. The Head Start teachers identified these issues and worked with me on different techniques to cope and address his behaviors.

When it became clear that it was a deeper issue than could be addressed at home and school, the teacher made some referrals for my son to have assessments done, which ultimately led to medical diagnosis and simple routine surgery that resolved his issues. If not for those educated, caring teachers at Head Start who were willing to work with me as a parent and help me find the true reason for my son’s behaviors, rather than write him off as a problem child, I can’t imagine what public school would have been like for him.

Head Start also provided consistency and routine for my son during a time of chaos in our lives. Between his father deciding to no longer be in his life, and my needing to work late shifts and weekends and rely on friends and family to take care of him quite often, having any type of stability was vital. I knew that completing college was ultimately my way out of living in poverty and what I needed to do to give my son the life I wanted for him. The Lakes & Prairies’ staff encouraged and supported me every step of the way, even when times were tough!

In addition to the educational and supportive roles that Head Start played in our lives, the family support staff that worked in the classroom also became a great advocate for me. When I completed my social work degree, she encouraged me to apply for an open position with Head Start and talked to the supervisor about me being a good fit for the position. As a result, I received my first professional job out of college working for Lakes & Prairies Head Start, as a classroom family support staff.

This staff person also recognized that I had bigger dreams for myself and family, and encouraged me to apply for Family Assets for Independence in MN (FAIM) to help me meet those goals. While on the FAIM program, I learned important financial skills that allowed me to make the best possible choices to lead me down a more financially stable road.

As a Lakes & Prairies Head Start staff, I was able to attend the Four Cornerstones of Financial Literacy train-the-trainer, which instilled in me the desire to pass these basic financial skills on to other people in need and led me to look into a graduate program for Family Financial Planning. I opened my FAIM account and saved for two years, then used it to pay for my first semester of graduate school, which allowed me to take out less in student loan debt.

Now years later, I have my master’s degree, my family is thriving. I have a supervisor position at a job that I love, working for an agency that I believe in and one that truly invests in their clients and staff to allow them to achieve goals in a meaningful way. I have worked hard to get to where I am now, and I am so thankful for the role that Lakes & Prairies staff and programs played in supporting me along the way!”
History

Mahube Community Council, Inc. has operated community action programs in Becker, Hubbard and Mahnomen counties for the past 49 years. Agency organizational meetings began on May 26, 1965, with formal incorporation as a private, nonprofit community action agency on July 27, 1965.

Agency Founders

The 12-member board of directors designated their mission to serve economically disadvantaged residents from the three counties of Mahnomen, Hubbard, and Becker, thus the name Mahube Community Council.

The original board of directors was elected from each county and included:

Mahnomen County - James Stech, Wilfred Hallstrom, Homer Bjornson, Mrs. John Johnson

Hubbard County - Roger Lundahl, Garrett Benson, Milo Mastny, Gwen Dissmore

Becker County - Carl Ingebrison, Ernest Nelson, Ralph Nelson, Mrs. Lorna Beckman

Agency Executive Directors

Emil Marotzke was the agency’s first executive director, serving in the position from 1965 to 1968. Following Mr. Marotzke’s departure to direct the newly created Employment Service Center in June 1968, Delmore Hultgren was promoted from assistant director to executive director. Mr. Hultgren continued as executive director until 1981, when Don McGillis was promoted from assistant director to executive director. Until June 2000, Mr. McGillis served as executive director. The board of directors then promoted Leah Pigatti from Head Start Director/Agency Operations Manager to executive director in June 2000.

The agency’s first funding application was submitted to the federal Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) for $48,605. The purpose of this funding was to: 1) employ staff to plan; 2) collect, analyze, and document the demographics and incidences of poverty in the three-county area; and 3) develop programs that would address causes of poverty.

The first programs operated by the agency began approximately one year after its incorporation and included:

- **Multi-County Nursing Service** provided public health services to residents of the three-county area with a first-year operating budget of $54,986.

- **Head Start** provided an eight-week summer early childhood program for four-year old children. During the summer of 1966, Head Start offered health, nutrition, and educational services to 301 children. The first-year operating budget was $51,242.

- **Neighborhood Youth Corp** provided in-school and summer youth projects to 97 youth ages 16 to 21 years.

- **Employment Service Center** was a joint project with the Minnesota State Employment Security office. The goal of this program was to provide employer/employee referral services to match the skills of underemployed people. A total of 2,933 people were assisted the first year with a funding level of $18,714.

- **Senior Citizens Social Service Centers** were established in each county as a gathering place for senior citizens to socialize and participate in educational, occupational and recreational activities. In later years, nutritional services were also offered. The initial funding level for three centers was $51,343.

- **Work Study** programs were established with Moorhead State College offering work opportunities to college students during the summer months. In 1966, 27 college students participated in the program.

- **Upward Bound** programs were operated in cooperation with Bemidji State College. Upward Bound provided educational opportunities to 10th grade students, giving them incentive to pursue higher education after high school graduation. In 1966, 12 students participated in Upward Bound.
Mahube Community Council served as a catalyst to develop programs that were important in meeting community needs. Some programs were subsequently moved away from the agency to operate within other community organizations. Examples include:

- **Multi-County Nursing Service** was started by the agency in 1966. The program expanded to serve a five-county area, with counties levying to support the nursing service. In 1968, Multi-County Nursing formed its own 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

- **Midwest Community Development Corporation (CDC)** was formed by Mahube in April 1971 to include a seven-county area of Becker, Hubbard, Mahnomen, Polk, Clearwater, Pennington, and Red Lake. The purpose of the CDC was to stimulate regional economic development. In 1972, CDC formed its own 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

- **Tamarac Job Corp** was operated from the leased Tamarac facility. This site was used for youth and job training beginning in 1972. It was also used for a Boy Scout Camp and Youth Adult Conservation Corp. Later, Tamarac was turned over to the U.S. Department of the Interior and currently operates as a wildlife refuge.

- **Rural Transportation Services** were provided in Mahnomen, Hubbard, and Becker counties beginning in December 1976. Throughout the next 20 years, the agency operated rural transportation in partnership with each county. Due to funding shifts and county priorities, each county board decided to operate their own transit program.

### American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing Programs</th>
<th>$100,000 HUD Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing. $100,000 Additional Family Homeless and Prevention funding.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weatherization</td>
<td>$2,341,903 ARRA Weatherization; $260,000 Performance funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Start</td>
<td>$94,860 Head Start expansion; $401,306 Early Head Start expansion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Care Resource &amp; Referral</td>
<td>$40,000 ARRA Child Care Resource &amp; Referral. $32,900 Kinship Navigator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Services Block Grant</td>
<td>$211,959 ARRA FAIM Employment &amp; Small Business Development. $23,448 ARRA Emergency Food &amp; Shelter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Programs</td>
<td>$44,750 Becker County Coordinator. $85,767 RSVP Expansion: Otter Tail, Wadena, Todd and Wilkin counties. $21,000 RSVP Augmentation. $99,000 Community Dev./Service Dev. Chore &amp; Home Maintenance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### A New Era

In April 2012, Mahube assumed community action programs for Otter Tail and Wadena counties from the dissolved Otter Tail-Wadena Community Action Council. As of April 1, 2012, the agency became incorporated with a new name, Mahube-Otwa Community Action Partnership, Inc. The board of directors was restructured to include members from the new counties of Otter Tail and Wadena, joining existing board members from Mahnomen, Hubbard, and Becker counties. Strategic planning was initiated with the board of directors and staff. Renewed mission, vision, and values statements were established to provide direction for the work of the organization into the future. The organization’s philosophy is centered on its Mission and Values. The redefined mission of the Agency became “To Empower People to Achieve Self-Sufficiency”.

### Current Programs Operated in 2014

Mahube-Otwa Community Action Partnership provides community action services in each of the five counties through operation of satellite offices. The agency operates 98 grant programs under the umbrella of nine major grant funding sources including:

- **Community Services Block Grant**: Provides support for self-sufficiency programs. Provides the foundation for administrative support services to programs in the entire agency. In FY2013, the agency provided services to 20,900 individuals living in 8,952 households in the five-county service area.

- **Child Care Aware (CCA) Region 2 and Region 5**: Region 2 CCA operates in Beltrami, Clearwater, Hubbard, Lake of the Woods, and Mahnomen counties. Region 5 CCA operates in Cass, Crow Wing, Morrison, Todd, and Wadena counties. Child Care Aware provides resources and training to parents and child care providers on high quality child care services. The program has taken responsibility to offer Building Quality and Parent Aware training that leads providers to attain a four-star rating qualification. CCA administers early childhood scholarships that make it possible for children, parents, and providers to access high quality child care services that are subsidized through scholarship awards.

- **Head Start and Early Head Start**: Head Start and Early Head Start programs enroll 405 preschool, infants, toddlers, and pregnant women in center base, home base, child care and combination options to meet the varied needs of families. Head Start operates sites in Mahnomen, Hubbard, and Becker counties.

- **Energy Assistance**: Energy Assistance helps low-income households pay for energy bills, emergency/crisis utility payments, and Energy Related Repairs (ERR). In FY13 the Energy Assistance program provided supplemental...
heating services to 6,912 households, crisis services to 2,253 households, and ERR services to 394 households in Mahnomen, Hubbard, Becker, Otter Tail, and Wadena counties.

- **Weatherization**: The Weatherization program helps reduce customer’s home heating costs and improve their homes comfort and safety. When a low-income home is weatherized, both its energy bill and fuel consumption are reduced each year for many years to come.

- **The agency also operates**

  **Conservation Improvement Programs** through contracts with local utility companies for their conservation improvement programs (CIP). These funds allow Mahube-Otwa to coordinate funding to weatherize the homes of low-income CIP customers, as well as the replacement of inefficient appliances and energy efficient fluorescent bulbs. CIP partners have included: MN Power, Great Plains Natural Gas, City of East Grand Forks, MinnKota Power Electric Cooperatives (Beltrami, Clearwater-Polk, Red Lake and Wild Rice), City of Perham, MERC (Peoples Natural Gas and Northern MN Utilities), Great River Electric Cooperatives (Itasca-Mantrap, Lake Region, and Todd-Wadena).

- **Family Development**: The Family Development Program assists individuals to determine if they are ready to participate in the Family Assets for Independence Minnesota (FAIM) program. FAIM helps individuals save money to purchase a home, capitalize a business, or participate in higher education. Family Development case managers help households work on goals for obtaining employment, education and meeting basic needs. Referrals are made to other community agencies to assist with medical, housing, budgeting, parenting, transportation and other needs.

- **The Fathers’ Resource Program** operates in an 11-county area in northwest and west central Minnesota including Becker, Clay, Douglas, Grant, Otter Tail, Pope, Stevens, Todd, Traverse, Wadena, and Wilkin counties. The Fathers’ Resource Program officially began services through Mahube-Otwa on September 4, 2013. Fathers’ Resource provides supportive services to parents so that children will feel secure with, loved by and connected to their parents. Some services include: legal advocacy for visitation issues, child support, custody, orders of protection, etc.; parent education; and, one-on-one support and assessment. All services are confidential and customized to individual needs.

- **Mahube-Otwa operates the only Child Passenger Safety Resource Center in the State of Minnesota, serving 34 counties in the northern half of the State.**

- **Housing/Emergency Services**: The agency operates a range of housing assistance and emergency programs to assist individuals and households in having secure, safe, stable, and affordable housing. Programs include 1) emergency housing, 2) transitional housing, 3) Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance, 4) Long Term Homeless Assistance, 5) Mortgage Foreclosure Prevention, and 6) West River Townhomes and Cornerstone Apartments case management.

- **Senior Programs**: Agency senior programs coordinate resources and referrals for senior citizens as part of the MN Board on Aging, Land of the Dancing Sky Area Agency on Aging, and is the local contact for the Senior Linkage Line. Program staff are trained advocates who network with public and non-public agencies to advance the concerns and priorities of seniors and citizens with disabilities. Programs include: Retired Senior Volunteer Services (RSVP); Home Maintenance and Chore Services; Health Insurance Counseling, including MNSure, Medicare Part D, and Medicare Counseling; Tax Assistance; Senior Exercise Groups; Appliance Repair and Replacement; and, Frail and Elderly Home Repairs.

- **Family Health**: Mahube-Otwa operates the Family Health program from sites in nine counties: Becker, Cass, Mahnomen, Otter Tail, Stevens, Todd, Traverse and Wadena. Family Health services include: Health Education and Counseling; Family Planning, including Birth Control and Contraceptives; Physical Exams; Pregnancy Testing; HIV Testing; Pap Smear; Reproductive Life Planning; and, Sexually Transmitted Infection Screenings.

Many additional projects are operated within each major program that extend beyond the five-county service areas. For example, Weatherization covers six counties; Child Care Aware covers 10 counties throughout Region 2 and Region 5; and, Child Passenger Resource Center covers a 34-county area in the northern half of Minnesota.

Each program receives funding from state, federal, local, and/or private funding sources. Programs are required to comply with all state and federal mandates that guide operations and services. In FY2013, total funding was over $17 million.

**Agency Infrastructure**

Mahube-Otwa is very proud of its infrastructure and ability to manage capital, which enables construction and office building maintenance that makes it possible for the agency to carry out its work. The board of directors believes it is important to have a physical presence in each county. Therefore, over the past 25 years, they have systematically constructed or renovated professional office space in each county seat.

The first building constructed was in Park Rapids in January 1990, with an office located at 120 N. Central Avenue. This site provides office space for all program services provided in Hubbard County.

In February 1995 the agency worked in conjunction with the Mahnomen School District to construct office space, a Head Start Center, and Alternative Learning Center located at 118 W. Madison Avenue in Mahnomen. The Mahnomen office provides a satellite location for all program services.
Recognizing the need for increased office space and Head Start centers, the board approved plans to construct a new complex located at 1125 West River Road in Detroit Lakes. This is the main office site and houses agency administrative functions, three Head Start centers, and all program services.

With the addition of Otter Tail and Wadena counties in 2012, the board reaffirmed the commitment to maintain a physical presence in each county by adding office space for program services. In August 2012 the agency moved into a newly renovated office located at 311 Jefferson Street South in Wadena. This is the first time that community action programs have been offered to Wadena County residents from an office located within their county.

In October 2012, the agency purchased office space in Fergus Falls and created a new office complex located at 128 W. Cavour Avenue. All Otter Tail County program services were moved to this location in May 2013.

In addition to constructing and owning office space, the agency has created partnerships with school districts to provide greater collaboration between Head Start and district preschool programs. As a result of these partnerships, early childhood bonding funds were applied for from the Minnesota Department of Human Services’ Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO). These funds have allowed construction or renovation of classroom space to provide Head Start and early childhood educational services in conjunction with school district preschool and early childhood special education programs. Agency/school district collaborative sites were constructed in conjunction with:

- Frazee School District: Occupied in February 1998. This was part of a major district referendum to construct a new early childhood services wing onto the existing elementary school.
- Park Rapids School District: Occupied in September 2002. This project was part of a district-wide referendum that built a new elementary and middle school, renovated the high school, and renovated the old elementary school to house district administrative offices and early childhood programs.
- Nevis School District: Occupied in September 2014. This site was part of a district referendum that added classrooms to the existing elementary school.

This story was written by Jennifer Booge, who began her relationship with Mahube Community Council in June 1999 as a Head Start parent. She has become involved nationally in child passenger safety issues and currently serves on the National Child Passenger Safety Advisory Board (NCPSAB) as Vice Chair.

What started out as a simple curiosity about car seat safety has led to a passionate commitment to child traffic safety across the country. The story began in June 1999.

As the mother of three young children, safety was a high priority and car seat safety was something that I really knew nothing about. Like most parents, I knew that my children needed to be in car seats, but really did not understand the potential dangers and risks associated with traffic crashes and car seat misuse.

While visiting with a friend, she informed me of a car seat training offered by the Minnesota Department of Public Safety. I shared the information with our Family Service Worker during a Head Start home visit, and expressed an interest in attending the training. She informed me of training dollars available for Head Start families and told me that if I wanted to attend, Mahube Head Start was willing to pay for it. Little did I know how this opportunity would be a life changing experience for me both personally and professionally!

I attended the 16-hour training filled with health care providers and law enforcement professionals. Being the only person attending as a “concerned parent” I felt a little out of my league, but I was compelled to learn as much as I could. I remember that about half way through the first day of training, I’d quickly learned how little I truly knew about car seat safety and the imminent danger I was putting my children in every... single... day.

I was convinced that I couldn’t be the ONLY parent who didn’t know this information. Upon completion of the training I asked our Family Service Worker if I could share what I had learned with other Head Start parents. The training was a success and requests for more training began to grow. The interest in training and the need for free and reduced cost car seats prompted the planning and implementation of Mahube’s nationally recognized Child Passenger Safety (CPS) education and car seat distribution program.

With the support of Mahube Community Council, I worked and trained under the direction of a Minnesota Department of Public...
Safety program coordinator to earn my Instructor status. In September 2000, I received my National Child Passenger Safety (CPS) Instructor certification and began traveling across Minnesota to instruct CPS courses to health care and law enforcement professionals.

In 2001, I was elected to the State of Minnesota Child Passenger Safety (CPS) Advisory Board. On this board, I have been involved in legislative efforts to promote and support the passage of our state’s first ever booster seat law. I have been involved with statewide standardized curriculum development and traffic safety conference planning, working closely with Minnesota Department of Public Safety officials.

In 2003, with the support and guidance of Mahube Community Council, I was hired by the Minnesota Department of Public Safety’s Office of Traffic Safety to coordinate the state’s first Child Passenger Safety Resource Center (CPS), where I currently hold the position of CPS Liaison.

The Resource Center covers 34 counties and is responsible for training and program development for agencies, as well as parent education and car seat distribution. Because of the work involved in child passenger safety, the Resource Center has reported a 69% decrease in child crash injuries and fatalities since 2003.

Over the past 12 years, I have developed a strong working relationship with several Indian Reservations across a four-state area. I have worked diligently promoting CPS efforts by providing training, program development, and car seat education. In 2004, I received an Indian Health Service Area Directors Award for Exceptional Performance for CPS efforts throughout the state.

Over the past several years, I have been invited to present at state and national conferences ranging from program development to school bus transportation. About 10 years ago, I began to research and study school bus transportation in an effort to provide concise answers to questions that I was receiving in the field. I began providing specialized training on school bus transportation and special needs restraints in Minnesota and surrounding states, as well as National Traffic Safety conferences. In 2012, I received the State Star Award for traffic safety efforts in the area of Child Passenger Safety.

In 2011, I applied for and accepted a position on the National Child Passenger Safety Advisory Board (NCPSAB). The NCPSAB provides program direction and technical guidance to states, communities, and organizations, as a means to maintain a credible, standardized child passenger training and certification program for over 34,000 certified technicians. The position was a three-year volunteer commitment and included several out-of-state meetings. While on the board, I worked closely with representatives from Automotive Alliance, Child Restraint Manufacturers, American Academy of Pediatrics, physicians, and federal traffic safety representatives, just to name a few. I was directly involved in the national curriculum review and update, and well as the development of traffic safety policy statements from a national perspective.

In 2012, I was appointed chairperson of the Quality Assurance Committee. My role as chairperson included reviewing policy and procedures of certification and recertification programs, reviewing by-laws and operating procedures of the board, and assessing the needs of CPS professionals developing resources to maintain the quality of the certification program.

In 2013, I applied for the position of vice chair of the National CPS Board. I was notified of my selection to this post in November 2013, and will begin my new role as vice chair in January 2014. After one year as vice chair, I will serve as chairperson in 2015. I am honored and excited to begin my work in that capacity!

What started out as a personal curiosity about car seat safety has developed into a passion and career beyond what I could have ever imagined. My husband and four children have supported and encouraged me along the way. Knowing that my main priority is being the best parent I can be, I have learned over the years to balance a growing career and family time.

Mahube Community Council now has a new name reflecting operations in two additional counties. Mahube-Otwa Community Action Partnership has provided me with the opportunity to pursue my vision and passion for child passenger safety. They have supported and promoted the development and implementation of a previously non-existent program and encouraged me to expand and grow along the way. Without their willingness to take a chance on an idea, it would be just that…an idea. I look forward to what the future holds and am forever grateful for having been given the opportunity to learn and grow and do!
Minnesota Valley Action Council

History

Minnesota Valley Action Council's (MVAC) roots began in 1965 when the counties of Blue Earth, Brown, Le Sueur, and Nicollet petitioned to have MVAC incorporated into a Community Action Agency. The first main office was in St. Peter. In 1970, the office moved to LeSueur and, in 1971, the office was moved to Mankato, its current corporate home. In 1974, Waseca County was added and, in 1975, Sibley County was added to the agency's service area. In 1978, MVAC’s current nine-county service area became complete, with the addition of Faribault, Martin, and Watonwan counties. Minnesota Valley Action Council, Inc. has the distinction of having the largest number of counties being served by a single CAP in Minnesota.

Over the course of MVAC’s past, the agency’s growth has been facilitated by a total of six executive directors.

This short review of history provides the basis for Community Action beliefs. From President Kennedy: The Community Action Movement addresses and eases the misery of poverty. From Harrington: The Community Action Movement makes known the plight of the poor. From President Johnson: The Community Action Movement replaces despair with opportunity. From the Economic Opportunity Act: Community Action facilitates groups working together to solve problems. From Minnesota Valley Action Council: People and communities are the focus.

These beliefs are revealed in how MVAC and the other 1,100 Community Action Agencies in the nation implement them:

MVAC addresses and eases the misery of poverty by: 1) Maintaining a structure that is accessible to low-income people. This is accomplished through the various county offices, the multiple Head Start locations and the resource rooms equipped with on-line access and reference material. 2) For well over a decade, MVAC has incorporated an entrepreneurial attitude in its development of creative, self-supporting strategies that address the barriers faced by people and communities. These strategies embrace the “triple bottom line for social change”, which incorporates the notion of sustainability into business decisions, as well as social and environmental impacts.

MVAC makes known the plight of the poor through a range of techniques, which include mass media, electronic communications and a strong advocacy voice with elected officials, business leaders and community partners. MVAC has developed a purposeful, proactive stance of involving media outlets as well as the business community to get involved with public awareness and fund raising activities.

MVAC replaces despair with opportunity by conducting programs that offer opportunities to people. The agency provides positive, appropriate support systems as an alternative to people in despair. The staff at MVAC are astute at recognizing and promoting the presence of positives in people, rather than the mere absence of negatives. Opportunities are available in the arenas of housing, employment, training, transportation, child development, job creation, economic development and community development.

MVAC facilitates groups working together to solve problems, beginning with its board of directors. The three-part board structure brings people experiencing low-income to the table as equal partners with elected officials and representatives from organizations serving local communities.

One of the founding fathers of Community Action, Sargent Shriver, a relative of President Kennedy and the first director for the Office of Economic Opportunity once provided three pieces of advice: 1) Do not prejudice people in poverty; they have a lot to teach us, if we will only listen; 2) Do not prejudge the private sector or elected officials because they have the power to listen and can help make changes; 3) Do not cry failure at the first sign of controversy.

Minnesota Valley Action Council hearkens back to these founding Community Action beliefs, always seeking to incorporate them into its work to provide people living in poverty with opportunities for economic self-sufficiency in their communities.

MVAC is proud of our past and has our sights firmly focused on the future.
Success Story

Linda had lived at her rural Kilkenny homestead since she was born. Her sister, Antoinette (Toni), had lived there since she was four-year-old. They had never had indoor plumbing and Linda spent year hauling water to the house from the well, some 60 yards away.

It was a simple life and the sisters never asked for more, but eventually the years took their toll. Toni relied on a walker, with a wheelchair looking likely in a few years. Linda’s own mobility made hauling buckets of water through mid-February snow drifts an almost insurmountable task; the outhouse seemed to be getting farther away with each passing winter.

When they met Linda and Toni, MVAC’s staff found two elderly women living in a house that was structurally unsound with multiple safety issues, including old electrical wiring. The house’s foundation was crumbling, the roof was in disrepair and the kitchen floor pitched deceptively. With doors too narrow for a wheelchair to pass through, the kitchen would become inaccessible to both. And, the labor needed to bring water into the home would soon become an insurmountable challenge.

To address this dangerous situation, MVAC staff marshaled community members and resources. By bringing in such partners as Le Sueur County HRA, Le Sueur County Community Alternatives for Disabled Individuals, We Share Food Shelf, and independent contractors (including many partners who donated materials and did no work on the property than was even required), MVAC led the effort to turn the sisters’ previously unsafe home into one that is now livable and safe.

Some changes included turning a bedroom into a bathroom with a sink, toilet, and accessible shower. Three layers of shingles were also removed and the house was weatherproofed. The hazardous electrical system on the second floor was replaced and the home upgraded to 100-amp service. A donated washer and dryer were installed in the home and a wheelchair ramp was built outside. In all, this home renovation project took 18 months, with community partners working together.

Linda thanks MVAC and all the others who helped make her home safe and livable. She says that this work has improved her and her sister’s lives and “now we can live here longer.” Their alternative could likely have been to live in a nursing home. And so, taxpayers also benefited from this home restoration project, by avoiding high expenses associated with such nursing home placements, which often fall on government funders.

Linda and Toni are very happy and safe in their new home—thanks to the work of MVAC and the remarkable partnerships the agency inspired to make this “success story” happen!
Northwest Community Action

History

Northwest Community Action (NWCA) was established in 1965 as part of America’s War on Poverty, initiated by President Johnson one year before. The agency was originally part of the federal Community Services Administration’s Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) and was charged with assisting the economically underprivileged to meet their basic needs and become more self-sufficient.

During its formative years the agency operated with a very small staff (initially four full-time employees) and a limited number of programs. The primary programs included the Senior Citizens program, Head Start, Employment Services and the Neighborhood Youth Corps. The agency was originally located in Roseau, Minnesota, at the Citizens State Bank Building (from 1965 to 1967). When office space became unavailable there, inquiries went out to local towns; Badger, Minnesota was selected as the location, having office space available and being centrally located.

The agency’s first executive director was Dwayne Otterson, a former teacher and coach in his hometown of Kennedy, Minnesota. Upon being named executive director, Mr. Otterson roomed in Badger during the week and returned home on weekends. A 15-member board of directors oversaw the agency, which was comprised of representatives from the service area (Kittson, Lake of the Woods, Marshall (the east half), and Roseau counties).

Since its establishment, the agency has grown to be a leading advocate and assistance provider for the economically underprivileged in northwestern Minnesota. A team of highly experienced case managers, planners, project administrators, fiscal managers, and outreach workers has been assembled to identify needs and develop/implement appropriate programs.

Additionally, referral relationships have been established with outreach workers, case managers, and program administrators from the aforementioned political jurisdictions, as well as other regional organizations (Northwest Regional Commission, Rural Life Outreach, Catholic Outreach, Northwest Minnesota Multi-County Housing Authority, etc.).

Northwest Community Action’s mission statement indicates that its purpose is: “To stimulate a focusing of all available resources upon the goal of enabling area low-income families and individuals of all ages to attain skills, knowledge and motivations and secure the opportunities needed for them to become self-sufficient.”

Some goals to achieve this mission are as follows:

- Developing and undertaking activities which promote education, training and strong family relationships;
- Developing and undertaking activities which focus on youth and their personal development; and,
- Developing and undertaking activities which allow elderly households to remain as self-sufficient as possible and be assured of adequate access to necessary services.

Today, Northwest Community Action offers a wide variety of programs and services that are aimed at meeting the basic needs of low-income residents in its service area, while at the same time developing and enhancing economic opportunities. Over 30 programs are currently offered, which meet a wide array of community needs. The federal, state, and privately funded programs that Northwest Community Action is now actively administering fall into several broad categories including: Community Development, Emergency Services, Self-Sufficiency Services, Youth and Educational Programs, Housing Programs, and Outreach and Referral Services. Services are provided to clients, usually at no charge. Under these programs approximately 1,500 households receive assistance each year.

The agency has developed reciprocal relationships with outreach workers, case managers, and program administrators representing virtually all of the service organizations in the service area. These relationships have resulted in the establishment of a very effective referral network, which helps assure that assistance is made available to those most in need. Each of these organizations share a common goal - to help citizens of the region (particularly the economically underprivileged) meet identified needs.

Northwest Community Action’s role relative to these other organizations has been two-fold: (1) to accept client referrals from these organizations for services provided by NWCA and (2) to refer clients to these other organizations.
for services that they provide for people. In instances where similar services are offered, there is collaboration with one another, to ensure that clients are appropriately served.

By 1996, Northwest Community Action’s programs and services had grown to a point that it was necessary to develop new office space. In a joint venture with the City of Badger, a new 7,656 square foot state-of-the-art facility was constructed – a development that could not have been more timely, as soon thereafter the agency was heavily involved with flood recovery efforts (following severe floods in 1997 and 2002). As a result of these floods, NWCA found itself constructing new houses and assisting communities in economic development efforts. These ventures were initiated as a response to critical needs related to flooding and have been continued as a result of local recognition of their overall value to the area.

Northwest Community Action observed the need for low interest loans for local businesses to start a new business, expand a new business, or purchase new equipment for those that may not be “bankable” projects. We decided to form a Community Development Corporation in 2004 as an arm of Northwest Community Action Agency to fill a gap in the lending arena. The GMCDC was idle for a few years until it was evident that businesses and lenders needed our assistance to add very low interest to the client’s loan package. Northwest wrote a grant to USDA Rural Development on behalf of the CDC to fund the loans.

These funds are then loaned out to the businesses (or entrepreneurs) at a rate of 1-3% with flexible terms. The decisions are made by an established loan committee upon meeting with the business owner. This creates a permanent local loan pool as the funds are repaid by the business. The loan pool will then continue to make new loans from the pool. The CDC has been very successful in creating/retaining businesses and jobs in the local area. The Greater Minnesota Community Development Corporation averages 6-10 loans at any one time.
Amber

In December 2011, Amber, a client of Northwest Community Action (NWCA), sent a letter to the agency referring to their employees as community servants (saints) and thanking them for everything they had done to help her get back on her feet. Amber was writing this letter on behalf of herself and her two daughters, Izzy and Ireland. The letter detailed her struggles and expressed her gratitude for the assistance that Northwest Community Action provided to her.

When Amber was 18-years-old she became addicted to crystal methamphetamine. Her ensuing years were spent using and acquiring drugs, with her life spiraling downward. Describing this time, Amber says, “to say I made poor choices as a teenager and young adult would be an understatement!”

Yet Amber’s story changed dramatically when she became sober. In her own words, “by the grace of God and the love and support of family and friends” she was able to achieve sobriety and has remained sober since May 9th, 2005. Amber has two beautiful little girls whom she loves and cherishes. Her ex-husband wasn’t able to give up the lifestyle they both led in the past, and he left Amber several years ago. He is now in prison for drug offenses.

Amber retells her story not to get sympathy, but rather to paint a picture of where her life has been, and where it is today! Getting back on her feet was a struggle for Amber and there are many instances in her life where she still has to live and deal with some of the repercussions of her bad choices. However, with all that said, Amber states, “Life is good!”

In May 2011 Amber graduated with an RN degree and is continuing on with her education to get her bachelor’s degree in nursing and perhaps beyond. She is employed part-time at a small rural hospital, while going to school at the University of North Dakota full-time. She owns her own home, and is also the proud owner of a mini-van. Amber states that owning a home and mini-van may not sound very monumental to your average American, but for her these things are huge!

Amber and her family have been recipients of several NWCA services including: Energy Assistance, Head Start, Weatherization, Housing Rehab assistance, and Family Assets for Independence in Minnesota (Palm). Through these programs NWCA has been able to partner with Amber to improve the quality of her family’s life and she says, “For that I am incredibly grateful!”

Amber goes on to say, “I never felt like I was given a handout, but rather that you were empowering me to help myself! I don’t believe that handouts work in the long run, but I am living proof that a ‘helping hand’ does. I was recently taken off of Medical Assistance. I now pay a premium and receive MNCare. I look forward to the day when I’m working full-time and carry my employer’s insurance for myself and my daughters. I also no longer receive food stamps because I’m making more money with my job! That’s just a few examples of how I’m becoming a more self-sufficient and productive member of society.”

T.H.

About 12 years ago, T.H. was facing monumental problems. Living in Bismarck, North Dakota, she and her four children, ages 3 months to five years, were trying to live a normal life with an alcoholic husband/father. Yet with her spousal relationship deteriorating, T.H. decided to leave Bismarck and return to her hometown of Badger, Minnesota. She arrived in Badger broke and without a job, moving in with her parents and attempting to get back on her feet.

T.H. enrolled her two oldest children in Head Start, giving her children and her family a foundation of sorts. She was encouraged by Head Start staff to set goals and her first goal was to find a job. She accomplished that goal soon afterwards when she was hired full time as a secretary. Shortly thereafter she was able to find a second (part-time) job. During this time, she received medical assistance and food stamps; in addition, she sought the State’s assistance to secure child support from her children’s father.

Little by little things began to fall in place. T.H. rented a house, where she would stay for about a year and a half. And, she began making preparations for bigger steps as she wanted a home of her own – another goal. With income from both jobs, along with child support, she was able to purchase a new home from Northwest Community Action through its Minnesota Urban and Rural Homesteading (MURL) program. Additionally, with the increased income from her two jobs and the child support, she was able to reduce her food support to a minimal level and pay for a good portion of her child care.

T.H.’s journey back to Badger, though difficult, has proven to be worthwhile. She became active in the community and its organizations. She is an active member of Our Redeemers Lutheran Church and was elected President of the Badger Jaycees. The Badger Community School appreciates having T.H. in the community as she has actively worked with the Jaycees to fund projects which benefit Badger students. T.H. speaks fondly of organizations such as Northwest Community Action and Head Start because they helped her set goals and gave her children an educational foundation.

In December 2005, T.H. was recognized at the National Head Start Conference in Washington D.C. as being one of eight finalists in the National Beating the Odds Awards ceremony. And, she was selected second runner-up!
The formation of Tri-County Community Action began in April 1965 when a group of 46 residents of Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, and Yellow Medicine counties organized to discuss their excitement about new federal assistance for community action groups, made possible through the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964.

This group included farmers, housewives, mail carriers, county extension agents, school superintendents, bankers, county welfare directors, restaurant owners, gas station attendants, elevator workers, attorneys, librarians, and newspaper staff. A board of 18 people (six from each county) was selected from this group and they had their first official meeting on August 9, 1965.

On October 6, 1965, the Office of Economic Opportunity notified this board that they had been awarded a Community Action Grant for $33,893 (to commence January 1966). A few days later, the Secretary of State sent notice that Western Tri-County Community Action, Inc. was incorporated, including three counties: Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, and Yellow Medicine.

In July 1975, Swift and Big Stone counties joined the agency and the name was changed to Prairie Five Community Action Council, Inc.

In May 1966, the organization launched its first program, Head Start, which received a grant for $49,000 for a ten-month program in Montevideo; the program year ran June 1966 to March 1967 and 60 children were enrolled in it. Another grant of $47,124 was received to operate a Head Start six-week summer school program and a summer migrant Head Start program serving 183 children was started in Montevideo. During the 1967-1968 school year there were six centers which served 233 children in the three-county area.

Today, Prairie Five’s Head Start program (through classrooms, child care centers, and collaborative partnerships) reaches an average of 400 low-income children each year. The program has an annual budget of $1.5 million and includes 26 classrooms. Sixty-two percent of Prairie Five’s Head Start workforce is either past students, parents, or grandparents.

During its first two years, the agency also started programs under the Nelson Amendment. This was a federal grant for small, rural communities to beautify themselves through such activities as park improvements and county/city building renovation, with work done by chronically unemployed and under-employed people. The Rural Resources Aide program trained 30 low-income individuals to be of aid to elderly and incapacitated people in the area. Other early programs included Farm Management, Veteran’s Farm Training Program, Community Development Program, Conduct and Administration, Neighborhood Youth Corps, Senior Citizens Project, Emergency Food and Medical program. Many of these early programs were spun-off, after three to five years, to other entities or as stand-alone programs/services.

Problems for area residents in 1970, as identified during the board’s planning/goal setting, were “poor job opportunities, low wages, substandard housing, high unemployment, poor job security, poor farm prices, and, need for retraining to obtain jobs.” Many of these same issues remain a concern and were identified in the agency’s 2012 Community Needs Assessment.

The Senior Nutrition Program began in 1973 with congregate dining sites in Montevideo, Benson, Granite Falls, and Madison. Today, Prairie Five has 29 sites and offers congregate, home-delivered and frozen meals, with a budget of just under $1 million. In 2013, 2,244 unduplicated seniors (age 60 plus) received meals through the Senior Nutrition Program, with the average age of seniors receiving meals at 85-years-old. The program has been a very important conduit for Prairie Five to reach seniors and inform them about other Community Action services to assist them to remain independently in their homes.

In 1974, Hubert H. Humphrey was the guest speaker at Prairie Five’s annual meeting, with over 552 people in attendance.

In 1975, Prairie Five brought the Weatherization Program to local residents. Over the years, this program has helped residents reduce their heating costs through insulation and retrofitting of door and windows. This program continues even though there have been many struggles with funding issues, especially after the ARRA era. Prairie Five continues to work collaboratively to bring this service to area residents and to make the most out of each dollar.

In 1976, Fuel Assistance began for Prairie Five residents. This program has grown over the years to become extremely important for low-income residents who struggle to pay their heating expenses. Each of the past five years, an average of
Prairie Five Community Action Council

2,200 households has received assistance. There is much local support of the Reach Out For Warmth Program, as each of the past ten years, over $18,000 has been raised locally; this support has continued even after the state discontinued the match.

In 1990, Child Care Resource and Referral started with a $20,291.65 grant and a 25 percent match for the five counties. In 2004, Child Care Resource and Referral went through a redesign initiated by Department of Human Services. On July 1, 2004 Prairie Five became the “Scale” district for 22 counties consisting of Regions 7W, 8, 6E and 6W. As of January 1, 2013 the program had a name change and is now Child Care Aware.

In 2013, 1,936 referrals were given to parents looking for child care. There were also 2,321 child care providers who received information, assistance, etc. in the 22 counties. Over 8,000 duplicative providers, parents, and other child care professionals received training through the Professional Development department of Child Care Aware.

Prairie Five Child Care Aware is also the administrator for the Early Learning Scholarships for Regions 6E and 6W. This program continues to grow and evolve to meet the needs of children, parents and providers. What began as a small program in 1990 is now multi-faceted with many funding streams that total $1.9 million.

In 1990, Prairie Five RIDES Volunteer Transportation Program began with a $30,000 grant. In 1995 it became a regional transit system. In that same year, the agency also began its first city system in Madison. Today, Prairie Five RIDES public transit system has an annual budget of $1.6 million, 24 buses and handicap accessible vans, and operates six city systems and the regional transit system. And in total, RIDES provided just over 140,000 rides in 2013. The program continues to expand, while currently, it is looking to acquire another city system. To be sure, Prairie Five RIDES is vital to the mobility of area residents!

In 1991, Prairie Five received an Award of Excellence for its Revolving Loan Program at the annual CAP conference in St. Paul. This program gave small, no-interest and repayable loans to people to help them start small businesses and assist them to become self-sufficient.

In 1992, the Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership was established to address the housing needs in 14 counties. Four agencies that started the Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership were Prairie Five, Western Community Action, Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council, and Region 8 Regional Development Commission.

Throughout the years, Prairie Five has had many different housing programs, including: the Small Cities Grant Program; Minnesota Housing Finance Program; Transitional Housing Program; Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program; and, the Emergency Shelter Program.

Today, Prairie Five operates four food shelves. The Swift County Food Shelf has been in operation since the early 1970s and the Canby Food Shelf has been in operation since 1980. In 1991, Prairie Five took over operation of the Chippewa County Food Shelf and in 2013, the agency took over operation of the Big Stone Area County Food Shelf. Last year, 320,582 pounds of food were distributed and 2,727 unduplicated families were served by our food shelves, in part through partnerships with a local Walmart and Coborn's Grocery, which donate food daily.

In addition, Prairie Five has clothing room/selling centers in each of their five counties; all but one clothing room are located in satellite offices. These clothing rooms are the main shopping source for many low-income residents and donations from area residents and businesses keep them well-stocked. There is also a handicap equipment loan closet.

Other work of Prairie Five includes responsibility for administration of St. Martin’s Fund; a group of churches in Chippewa County receive donations for people with various needs. Prairie Five had been contacted by St. Martin’s board, as they were impressed with the agency’s services, compassionate staff and mission statement.

The agency operates many programs and services that have not been mentioned above but are very important to area residents. These include: Tax Clinics; Supplemental Nutrition and Assistance Program; Mother and Children (MAC) and Nutrition Assistance Program for Seniors (NAPS); Care and Resource Education for Caregivers (CARE); Winter Coat Drive; Summer Family Food Program; Project Christmas; Adopt a Family; FEMA, Portable Handicap Ramp Rental; Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library; Parents Forever; and, MURL (Minnesota Urban and Rural Loan program). In addition, Prairie Five is the Salvation Army contact in two of its counties.

In 1993, Prairie Five RIDES Volunteer Transportation Program began with a $30,000 grant. In 1995 it became a regional transit system. In that same year, the agency also began its first city system in Madison. Today, Prairie Five RIDES public transit system has an annual budget of $1.6 million, 24 buses and handicap accessible vans, and operates six city systems and the regional transit system. And in total, RIDES provided just over 140,000 rides in 2013. The program continues to expand, while currently, it is looking to acquire another city system. To be sure, Prairie Five RIDES is vital to the mobility of area residents!

In 1991, Prairie Five received an Award of Excellence for its Revolving Loan Program at the annual CAP conference in St. Paul. This program gave small, no-interest and repayable loans to people to help them start small businesses and assist them to become self-sufficient.

In 1992, the Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership was established to address the housing needs in 14 counties. Four agencies that started the Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership were Prairie Five, Western Community Action, Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council, and Region 8 Regional Development Commission.

Throughout the years, Prairie Five has had many different housing programs, including: the Small Cities Grant Program; Minnesota Housing Finance Program; Transitional Housing Program; Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program; and, the Emergency Shelter Program.

Today, Prairie Five is a very important agency in its service area and the largest nonprofit organization in the five counties. In 2013, 27% of Region 6W’s population were assisted or received a Prairie Five service. In 1966, Western Tri-County employed five people; today, Prairie Five employs 138 people. Donated time totaled 46,170 hours from October 1, 2012 to September 30, 2013, through the generosity of 942 volunteers. The agency’s first full-year annual budget (1966) was $133,804.65; in 2014, its annual budget is almost $8 million.

In summary, Prairie Five is very proud of the services and helping hands that we have been able to give area residents since 1965. We provide services to people of all ages, working in partnerships with state, local city and county governments, other service agencies, businesses, medical facilities, churches, schools, law enforcement, and, foundations. We have established many relationships and are respected by residents, local governments, and many partners. We strive to collaborate with many entities ensuring residents in our service area are able to meet their basic needs.

Our mission is “Working Together to Strengthen the Quality of Life In Our Communities.” And, we will continue to strive to achieve this mission until basic needs are met for all.
Success Story

Prairie Five RIDES has grown from a small volunteer transportation program, focused on service for older adults, to one of the finest regional transportation systems in Minnesota. The system now provides more than 100,000 passenger trips each year, serving city and county residents, including students. When RIDES started in 1989, it served 100 people in the first year, with a program manager and two volunteer drivers. Today, it has a fleet of 20 buses, five vans, 39 volunteer drivers, and 12 staff.

The Early Years

In 1988, Prairie Five Community Action Council met with the Region 6W Regional Development Commissioner, Area Agency on Aging, and the Rural Senior Volunteer Program, to discuss the feasibility of starting sometype of rural transportation system in the five counties of Region 6W. It was envisioned to be a volunteer-driven program that would help older adults continue to live at home in their communities while still getting where they needed to go.

A grant proposal for $27,380 was written by Prairie Five in October 1988, to request funding from the Region 6W Regional Development Commission Area Agency on Aging for Senior Volunteer Transportation Program. Prairie Five was notified in November 1988 that funding was approved for the Senior Volunteer Transportation Program.

In 1989, a program manager was hired to implement the Senior Volunteer Transportation Program – or what quickly came to be called RIDES. This staff was charged with creating goals and objectives, prior to conducting recruitment and marketing. Partnerships with faith-based organizations and community/county leaders were named, making it easier to receive community endorsement and recruit volunteer drivers. These drivers received 21 cents per mile to transport older adults through the five counties, with seniors donating whatever they could afford toward the cost of their ride.

Initially, RIDES did experience some resistance from community leaders, including concern that demand for small city bus systems would be reduced and that people would leave the community for outside goods and services. In response, RIDES made some adjustments to alleviate people’s fears, yet continued to take steps to realize its vision.

Shortly after the implementation of RIDES, the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT) had heard many positive comments about the program and approached Prairie Five with ideas for its future; MNDOT felt Prairie Five RIDES’ reach and success was only just beginning and the department went on to predict the look of its success of today.

“They Were Right” – RIDES’ Future Begins

In 1989, Prairie Five RIDES applied for a grant to serve people under the age of 60; MNDOT responded by making funds available for the expansion of transportation services to all ages. This funding was initially determined to be available on January 1, 1990. However, in December 1989, MNDOT notified Prairie Five that the funding was on hold, for possibly up to 1.5 years. In 1991, MNDOT approved a grant for $44,380 to enable RIDES to begin service to people under the age of 60. By 1992, RIDES had served 580 individuals.

Rides Will Not Be Stopped

By November 1993, four of the five counties served by RIDES had each given the program $3,300. In 1994, a meeting was held with MNDOT and the Regional Development Commission (RDC) to finalize details relating to transportation services. It was decided that Prairie Five RIDES should be the regional provider of additional transportation services. A resolution of understanding with MNDOT was finalized, with the resolution contingent upon county dollars.

Four of the five counties signed this resolution in September 1994, in support of a regional transit system, with the cost to each county determined to be $9,250. There was discussion about rider rates for...
the non-participating county, along with hopes that this fifth county would join the system. In January 1995, a MNDOT grant was approved, following by meetings, research and decisions about such issues as where busses would be “housed.” Once again, Prairie Five experienced the successful coordination, collaboration and partnerships, so evident in Region 6W.

Prior to receiving all the buses, RIDES borrowed a bus from a local nursing home. This single city system in Madison, managed by RIDES, provided 46 rides the first week. In July 1995, three buses arrived, with RIDES still relying very much on volunteer drivers. By 1997, RIDES budget had grown to $220,000 and continued to move forward and advance in growth.

In January 1998, RIDES purchased three additional new buses, to be housed in Montevideo, Clarkfield, and Ortonville (the other buses were housed in Appleton and Madison). Local match was made possible by a McKnight Welfare to Work Grant.

In March 1998, MNDOT notified RIDES that it had approved its request for a $25,000 “Access to Jobs In Greater Minnesota” grant. This funding was then used to cover marketing and to coordinate a rideshare network. In this process, RIDES once again created additional partnerships and visibility in its service area.

In January 1999, RIDES became complete, so to speak, by the fifth county joining its system, including membership on the already-existing Transit Advisory Committee (TAC).

In October 1999, RIDES continued to grow and expand, with two additional new buses arriving that month. It had been 10 years since the transportation program’s inception, and Prairie Five was proud of the expansion of valuable services provided to residents of the five counties in Region 6W. The agency wondered about the program’s continued possibilities for growth, as it reflected on how far it had already come in the growth of services.

**There Is More to Do**

When Prairie Five was asked to manage the Appleton City and Ortonville City transit systems, and did so in July 1999, it once again became the focus of expansion with new opportunity. Then, in October 1999, RIDES was asked by the Department of Public Health to participate on a panel discussion, citing the RIDES system as more comprehensive with safety, operations, maintenance, and coordination than any other existing transit program.

Next, Prairie Five RIDES identified the need for transportation into the metro area, and in January 2000, began coordinating its services with other transit systems on the way to the metro area. Once again RIDES experienced coordination and collaboration with partners. Also in January 2000, RIDES was asked to manage the City of Canby transit system, which now meant that it was managing four city bus systems in addition to its regional transportation program.

In 2001, RIDES was breaking records with an additional bus purchased, providing over 70,000 rides, and a budget of $440,000. In 2002, RIDES started a passenger assistance program and had a budget of $563,396; in 2003 the budget was $566,335 and an additional bus was purchased by the transit program. In May 2004, Prairie Five RIDES looked to save money and resources by purchasing its first handicap accessible van. The mileage rate was increasing due to the increase in gas prices. Additional vans were to follow.

Prairie Five RIDES was asked to manage the Dawson transit system in July 2012, followed by the Montevideo transit system in January 2013.

And now, Prairie Five is proud of RIDES’ six-city transit systems and Regional transportation Program, saying “We don’t forget the importance of the volunteer drivers that still remain, 25 years later, a very valuable part of this ONE-OF-A-KIND TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM.”

**And This Is Progress:**

- **RIDES’ budget in 1989 was $37,380 and mileage reimbursement rate was $.21.**
- **RIDES’ budget in 2013 was $1.6 million and mileage reimbursement rate is $.565.**

**25 Years Later**

Prairie Five RIDES is constantly working for our communities, implementing innovative programs and campaigns throughout the year to make travel easier for residents of all ages and all incomes. The RIDES program has focused on enhancing the quality of life in our community by providing safe, courteous, equitable, and reliable transportation.

RIDES has flourished in both size and achievement. RIDES is always striving toward a better public transit experience for residents, students and visitors. Prairie Five is very proud of what we have accomplished throughout the past 25 years, making a difference in the lives of people—thank you Prairie Five RIDES!
Since its beginning years, Scott Carver Dakota CAP Agency (the CAP Agency) has been an integral part of the community - bringing neighbors together; meeting the needs of thousands; and helping shape an environment that enables many people to reach self-sufficiency. The agency assists and empowers people to achieve social and economic well-being by providing services in partnership with our communities.

In 1965, the first Executive Director of the then called Scott- Carver Economic Council was Theresa Erickson. She put together a formidable team of caring and sometimes daring professionals, who among other things, supported women in their desire to join the workforce and supported senior citizens as they started breaking with tradition and no longer shared a home with relatives. Co-op farming was a more welcomed program as it called on the expertise of many in the community. Head Start was brought to Scott and Carver counties in 1965 and to Dakota County in 1985; to this date, the CAP Agency is the only entity running Head Start programs in this tri-county area.

Among the many people who supported the CAP Agency’s mission was an amazing woman, Mary Sullivan. Mary joined the staff in 1970 as a child care center coordinator and she fondly reminisces: “We were maybe 10 to 12 staff operating out of the Carver County courthouse trying to deploy four programs on a budget of just over $100,000. The Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) grant was called the ‘Mobilization of Resources’ grant. Our goal was to try and raise three times that amount in community support ... dedicated to the work of the CAP Agency. In 1981, after the retirement of Judson Kenyon, Mary was appointed executive director, a position she held until her retirement in 2010. That year, current President and CEO Carolina Bradpiece joined the organization.

For more information, please visit the Scott Carver Dakota CAP Agency website: http://www.carverdakota.org/
Success Story

Terry Hasson

The dedication to the Scott Carver Dakota CAP Agency (the CAP Agency), as exemplified by former Executive Director Mary Sullivan, can be seen in many others who have been part of the CAP family for years. One such person is Terry Hasson.

About 30 years ago, Terry was beaming as she held her newborn daughter, Emahn, when a WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) representative from the CAP Agency visited her home. Terry’s husband was an immigrant with a minimum wage job that made it difficult for them to make ends meet, so Terry gladly incorporated WIC services into her family’s life.

When Emahn was ready to start school, Terry enrolled her in the Head Start program and Emahn now says that Head Start “molded and greatly influenced who I am today.” Terry’s daughter went on to graduate from high school with honors, completed her college and graduate degrees, and is now a successful pharmacist.

Terry’s relationship with the CAP Agency also grew, beginning with her work as a volunteer. In Emahn’s second year of Head Start, Terry was offered a part-time job at the agency. Both mother and daughter volunteered for the food shelf, the school supplies project, and the Holiday Project. Says Emahn,

“It was so nice to see how happy the children were when they knew they had a present to open on Christmas!”

Emahn continued to volunteer with the SHIP and CHORE programs, and Terry says that her daughter has benefited from the networking opportunities at the CAP Agency as well. She was able to make professional contacts that made a Shakopee Rotary Scholarship possible, as well as a Shakopee Dollars for Scholars college grant. Emahn was able to transition her CAP connections to pharmacy school internships, by being introduced to the same people that Terry came to know from Park Nicollet and Express Scripts.

After 25 years on staff, Terry has in some capacity, worked with every program, including the senior nutrition program, which has seen one of the most significant increases in demand and geographic outreach. With over 1,000 current clients and 100,000 meals served annually through 18 different sites (with expectations of demand doubling over the next decade), the CAP Agency will become a pivotal player in senior services. Terry now serves as a Community Outreach Coordinator and is a CAP ambassador.

Thousands of volunteers and almost 200 staff, just like Terry, currently support the 24 programs that make up Scott Carver Dakota CAP Agency. Our service area comprises almost 1,300 square miles and serves a population of just under 625,000. Today, our agency touches over 50,000 lives a year in transformative ways, as one of our themes is: We Are All Connected. It conveys, just like in 1965, that we are all members of a shared community, with a sense that when something affects one of us, it affects all of us. It is this comprehensive belief that guides our board, staff, volunteers, … our work and our mission.
Winona county citizens joined the war against poverty when they heard about the Economic Opportunity Act, passed by federal legislation in 1964. The Act resulted in the development of Community Action Agencies (CAAs). One year later, this group of concerned citizens created the Winona Citizens Action Council with the hope of accessing funds to help those in need.

This council was informed by state officials that serving only one county would probably not be the most cost-effective approach. As a result, the group asked Fillmore and Houston county citizens to join them in early 1966. Next, they formed the Southeastern Minnesota Citizens Action Council.

The team made diligent efforts to create a planning grant, submitted early that year. In June 1966, a telegram was received by Halvor Lacher from Senator Mondale’s office. The message was received with great anticipation; it revealed that the newly formed organization had been awarded a $30,000 grant. In addition, $14,000 was awarded for a Summer Youth Program in Winona. A new private, nonprofit organization had been funded with the help of Senator Walter Mondale.

**Board of Directors**

In 1968, there were 48 members on the board of directors, including 16 members from each county. Later, the agency grew to service seven counties and the number of board members was reduced to six per county (two private, two public and two consumer leaders). In 2012, the total number of board members was reduced to 21, including one representative from each sector of the tri-partite board. By 2012, sweeping changes had occurred at the board level, including more by-law updates and twelve-year term limits.

**1966 - 1987 | Foundation of Leadership: Halvor Lacher**

Halvor Lacher was the agency’s first long-term executive director. His tenure lasted 21 years. He was preceded by Robert Sachstchalle, who held only a six-month term. Lacher believed in social justice and is remembered for his efforts to help others. With the first grant authorized, he rolled up his sleeves and started the long road of establishing the agency and administering an array of diverse programs. The City of Rushford allowed the administrative operations to occur in the Tew Memorial Library building free-of-charge.

Mr. Lacher retired in 1987. Some of his closing remarks were, "Community Action Agencies are recognized both in the halls of Congress and in most state legislatures as legitimate organizations who know how to help…”

Community Action Agencies in Minnesota were celebrating 25 years of service in February 1990, when 27 economic and social justice awards were given to people who worked tirelessly to reduce poverty in their communities. Mr. Lacher was the recipient of the “Poverty Warrior” award for his many years of dedicated service and contributions. This award was presented by Governor Rudy Perpich.

During the year of the 35th anniversary of the agency in 2001, Halvor Lacher was awarded the first Lifetime Achievement Award. One of Community Action’s key founders, Gene Flaten, remarked, “Halvor exhibited civil courage to help low-income people”.

**Leadership Continued**

Former fiscal director, Ken Brommerick, took the helm and was executive director from 1987 to 1992. During this time services continued to grow under his leadership.

Bruce Hartert was hired by the board as executive director in 1992. His tenure would span until 2004. While Hartert was leading, an administration building was purchased, which has been home to administration ever since. He was instrumental in adding Freeborn County to the Semcac service area. He also spearheaded many policy changes and streamlined internal processes.

In 2004, Terry Erickson was hired and served as executive director until 2010. Erickson took a new direction with his leadership approach. Some of his endeavors included software enhancements, fiscal changes, restructuring reports and additional agency policies. In addition, Erickson's leadership helped the Agency withstand the tragic flood of 2007. He also helped grow the departments during the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

In 2010, the board hired Wayne D. Stenberg as the next executive director and he continues to occupy this position today. He has an astute awareness of Community Action, having worked previously for the housing and energy programs. Stenberg has embraced many changes in technological advances to increase the efficiency of agency operations and communications.
Development

The first counties served by the agency were Winona, Fillmore and Houston. In 1975, Dodge and Steele counties joined this service area; in 1985, Mower County became the sixth county to join. In 2004, Freeborn County became a part of the agency’s service area, increasing total counties served to seven.

Along with other areas of development, the agency name also evolved with time. Originally, it was the Southeastern Minnesota Citizens Action Council. In 1977, the name was changed to Semcac Inc. In 1993, the agency proposed to change the name from Semcac Inc., making the new official name Semcac. By this time, more than 30 programs were being operated and administered by agency staff.

In April 1988, a collaborative effort of self-sufficiency programs began and included five Community Action Agencies - Freeborn County Community Action Agency; Three Rivers Community Action; Minnesota Valley Action Council; Olmsted Community Action Program; and Semcac.

In August 2007, a devastating flood hit southeastern Minnesota. Semcac’s region and hometown of Rushford was hit hard. Semcac’s main office, 16 affordable rental units (along with other rental units), single-family homes and the Senior Dining kitchen site were found under water. The main administrative office moved to Winona and found itself with 6,000 sq. feet less workspace than a few weeks prior.

Under the leadership of Terry Erickson, the agency bounced back from the tragedy of the flood. Semcac had to fully remodel the Rushford administrative office. The building used for the Senior Dining service site was purchased from the City of Rushford and fully restored to include a new kitchen, dining area and fully operational food shelf. And, Semcac staff were at the forefront of helping to rebuild flooded communities in 2008.

The agency was awarded the Partners in Affordable Housing Special Achievement Award for dedication and commitment to helping the victims of the 2007 SE Minnesota Flood from the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency on February 29, 2008.

Semcac was also awarded the Charities Review Council Standards Certificate in 2010, for meeting the rigorous standards of the council. By 2011, agency annual revenue had grown to over $16,000,000.

1970 to present | Programs & Projects

Some of the first programs to be created included Summer Head Start (which served 127 children), New Careers training and transportation services (with the help of one 1967 Chevrolet bus).

Operation Mainstream was an adult employment program operating in the early 1970’s. Enrollees were employed with public or private nonprofit institutions to do the work that would otherwise not get done. Semcac also offered youth employment programs including Neighborhood Youth Corps (which later was renamed the Job Training Partnership Act), the In-School Program, and Governor’s Youth Program.

The Outreach program was developed in the early 1970’s. Semcac offered health services through the Rural Health Team. This team made referrals to doctors and performed various health screenings. Services were offered in Fillmore, Houston, and Winona counties. Provision of information and services was given to people “in an attempt to improve their social and physical health and general well-being”.

In 1972, the Community Development Corporation (CDC) was established by the board to foster the interest of underemployed persons by making jobs available to them. The CDC did so by promoting housing, community development, and other human concerns that foster economic development.

The Senior Nutrition Program began on February 1, 1973 as a pilot program funded by Minnesota’s Office of Economic Opportunity. Semcac was funded to operate a six-month “congregate” dining service for seniors. By year’s end, the program was serving 1,000 meals per week in 16 communities. The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program also received funding this same year to provide volunteer opportunities to people 55 years and older in Dodge, Fillmore, Houston, Mower, Steele, and Winona counties.

In 1975, the agency started the Emergency Energy Program, now known as the Weatherization Program. The first funding allotted for this program was $8,800.

The Community Food and Nutrition Program was administered from 1976 to 1978 in Dodge, Fillmore, Houston, Steele, and Winona counties. The project was designed to better serve the food and nutritional needs of low-income families. Later, the agency also offered a WIC program.

In 1977, Semcac became an administrative entity for the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency Home Improvement Grant (MHFA). In this same year, the Energy Assistance Program was administered, originally designed to be a temporary program to aid low-income households during the period of extremely high oil prices in the 1970’s. Also in 1977, the Family Planning Clinic opened its doors. Clinical staff welcomed patients at 157 Lafayette Street in Winona. Operations were expanded in 1978 to include the diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases. Today, this clinic helps over 1,500 patients annually, in their current Winona location on West 3rd Street. The clinic offers reproductive and sexual health services to women and men as well as community education.
In 1984, Semcac built a 12-unit senior citizen apartment building in Rushford.

In 1985, the agency started emergency food shelves in the cities of Dodge Center and Rushford, distributing food to families facing emergency situations. In 1986, food shelves in Blooming Prairie, Caledonia, and Preston were established. Then, in 1987, a senior food shelf co-op was added to the emergency food shelf services of Dodge Center.

In 1988, Semcac started administering the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) program. This money was used to provide emergency food and shelter to people in need.

In 1989, the agency received a two-year Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MHFA) grant to expand HomeShare to Winona County.

In 1993, Semcac received funding to administer the Minnesota Rural and Urban Homesteading Program (MURL). The first MURL funds were given on behalf of the City of Blooming Prairie. Using these funds, it purchased three homes, renovated and sold them to low-income, first-time homebuyer families.

In 1994, the Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program (FHPAP) was designed to decrease homelessness in southeast Minnesota. This program provided permanent housing for homeless or potentially homeless families as well as unaccompanied youth. This time, funding was received through MURL on behalf of the City of Dodge Center. The agency purchased three homes and renovated them; these homes were then sold to low-income, first-time homebuyers, just as had been done in Blooming Prairie.

In 1995, MURL funding was received on behalf of the City of Spring Valley. Once again, the agency purchased three homes, renovated and sold them.

In 2002, 12 homes in Spring Valley were developed for low- to moderate-income households. This marked new territory, ensuring that housing was available to all who were in the single-family home market. Subdivisions were created and developed in Grand Meadow, Blooming Prairie and St. Charles over a few years.

The year of 2002 also marked funding for a Senior and Caregiver Advocate program in the Fillmore and Houston counties. The service assisted older adults with identifying needs, making informed decisions, accessing health and community based services, and ongoing contact to reduce isolation.

In 2006, the Senior and Caregiver Advocate program expanded to include Steele and Dodge counties.

In 1991, Semcac spearheaded the response to the tragic flood of the agency’s service area in 2007 and 2008, administering over $10,000,000 of flood relief. These resources were disbursed as 225 disaster recovery loans, 83 Greater MN Housing loans and 471 FEMA reimbursements. This work was in addition to restoring the main office and Rushford sites to useable space.

In 2009, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) increased the amount of services provided to the area. A huge expansion was seen in the Weatherization (WX) Department. Larger funding was also awarded to the food shelves and other parts of the operation. By 2011, 1,010 homes had been weatherized since the start of ARRA funding, meaning the hiring of 14 new employees. Then, in 2012 the agency again made internal adjustments, with the conclusion of ARRA funding.

In 2011, significant projects included the opening of the Senior Dining program in nine new sites in Olmsted County, as well as the development of a six-unit structure in Rushford (replacing apartments that were destroyed in 2007).

Many program changes and updates occurred in 2012. Electronic health records became part of the Family Planning Clinic. Visions software was fully implemented. A fee-for-service venture known as Home Energy Licensed Professionals (HELP) was created by staff. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and fee-for-service catering was added to the Senior Dining program. Expansion of administration by the Bluff Country HRA was occurring within the Housing program. In addition, the Head Start program added birth to three-year-olds as part of their client-base.

In 2013, additional progress was made, including the public transportation services’ expansion into Spring Valley, along with a re-branding of the busses. The transportation system is now referred to as Rolling Hills Transit. Social media marketing was being used increasingly for agency awareness and the “Powerful Tools for Caregivers Class” began. Fiscal software conversion and processes were created to help streamline the 1,706 daily business transactions. Results Oriented Management and Accountability outcome reporting (ROMA) and the strategic plan were merged to help achieve national goals.

Conclusion

For over 48 years, Semcac has been connecting people with resources to ensure that they achieve their goals of self-reliance and independence. There have been several programs and projects, not mentioned in this narrative, that Semcac has added or administered. Examples include: Alcohol Counseling, Camp Buckskin, Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), Home Stretch-Homebuyer Education, Reach Out for Warmth, and more.

Semcac supports the citizens in a myriad of ways, especially during times of great need. We are the voice for the voiceless and we invest private, federal and public dollars into the communities to strengthen our greatest resource, the people. We believe in the individuals and families who comprise our great area of the state.
Success Story

Alvaro

Three-year-old Alvaro Lopes, Jr., joined a Semcac Head Start classroom in St. Charles in August 2011. Since then, he has made tremendous developmental progress, as manages symptoms of Williams Syndrome. With the guidance and expertise of Early Childhood Special Education, a collaborative approach provided Alvaro with a solid path to improvement and advancement.

To better understand Alvaro’s significant progress, information about Williams Syndrome should be included. This syndrome is a rare, neurodevelopmental disorder with common symptoms including mental disability, heart defects, failure to gain appropriate weight, and low muscle tone.

Through Alvaro's determination and positive attitude, he has mastered various skills, while Semcac Head Start teachers have demonstrated them for him, assisting and encouraging in his learning. Recently, Alvaro has demonstrated the ability to independently remove his winter apparel.

Physically, Alvaro has grown five inches and gained 8 pounds since beginning Head Start. He has evolved from eating a special diet to eating the same foods as his peers at Head Start meal time. Alvaro now drinks from a typical cup and is feeding himself.

When Alvaro started Head Start, he was able to walk but steadier with assistance. He was unable to step onto a stool to wash his hands, unless he had support from an adult, and climbed the jungle gym steps on all fours.

Now, Alvaro walks and runs independently, regularly demonstrating increased balance and muscle control. He pedals and steers a tricycle while laughing, and without assistance climbs the jungle gym ladder, with a big smile on his face. And, Alvaro impresses staff with his uncanny ability to dribble a ball.

Previously, Alvaro's motor skills were limited and he had difficulty using his thumb to grasp objects. He has since progressed significantly—fast—he was able to demonstrate a pincher-grip and then, was able to demonstrate refined wrist, hand, and finger movements.

Alvaro now holds small pegs on puzzle pieces, completing four-piece puzzles with very little assistance. His fine motor skills have increased, Alvaro’s exuberance is evident and he claps his hands to congratulate himself for his accomplishments. He now uses a rolling pin with ease at the Play-Doh table, interacting with friends and sharing his creations with them.

People with Williams Syndrome often have phonophobia, which resembles noise-induced hearing loss due to a malfunctioning auditory nerve. However, they also tend to demonstrate a love of music.

Alvaro hears pitch well and enjoys music and singing. He has progressed from simply joining the final chorus of familiar songs to singing his own favorite song, Old McDonald Had a Farm. Anytime instruments are added to the classroom’s musical experiences, Alvaro’s smile and enjoyment are compounded exponentially. He is always willing to demonstrate his best “moo” sounds and is teaching others in his classroom the sound that a donkey makes!

Alvaro’s progress can be attributed to his family, particularly his loving mother, Maria, and her tremendous commitment. She is devoted to learning everything that she can about Williams Syndrome and continuously advocates for Alvaro. Semcac Head Start staff works to empower parents and families of students; Alvaro’s mother is a wonderful example of an empowered parent. His mother is the primary decision maker for Alvaro and Head Start staff supports their healthy relationship.

Head Start helped Alvaro develop an excitement for learning. Yet, it is through his tremendous spirit and engaging personality that we learn from Alvaro, as he is an inspiration to all who meet him.
Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council

**History**

**Incorporation Date:** July 9, 1965

**Location:** Pipestone County, MN

**Corporate Offices:**
- Pipestone 1965 – 1969
- Slayton 1969 – 1970
- Worthington 1970 – Present

**Incorporators:**
- Milo Fadness
- Roy Satter
- H. R. Cleland
- Annie Ebbinga
- Robert L. March
- Walter Silvernale

**Executive Directors:**
- Gerald Melcher 1965 – 1968
- Donald Johnson 1970 – 1970
- Donald Shannon 1971 – 1985
- Neal W. Steffl 1994 – present

**Programs/Funding:**

- **Head Start** – First implemented at SMOC in 1966 as a summer preschool program. It was later expanded into a center-based eight-month-long program. In 1975, it was modified by adding a home-based component that emphasized the family as a major influence in early childhood development.

- **Senior Citizen Centers** – Developed and established centers to support activities for seniors.

- **Neighborhood Youth Corps** – Provided youth ages 14-21 with on-the-job training.

- **In-School Program** – Senior high school students were given work experience in their schools.

- **New Careers** – Provided for two-year college or technical school training, education and work experience. This was a statewide program with a staff counselor assigned to each of the Minnesota state universities.

- **Mainstream Program** – A work experience and income program.

- **Farm Program** – Program to assist low-income farm families.

- **Family Planning** – Program was established in 1970. One important feature of the program is patient education, including information on available contraceptive methods. Originally covered nine counties. Now expanded to cover 15 counties.

- **Fuel Assistance** – Program began in 1973. Original grant was $2,000 ($500 for each of agency’s four counties). Clients were encouraged to repay the assistance funds they received.

- **Weatherization Program** – Program began in 1974. Started out providing plastic and lath to cover windows during the winter. Local Jaycees and other groups would assist with installation.

- **Minnesota Housing Finance Agency** – Program established to assist in basic and necessary repair of low-income family homes, with an emphasis on the elderly.

- **Garden Seed Program** – Provided seeds and garden tools so gardens could be planted to supplement a family’s food needs. Canning and cold-packing workshops were also included with the program.

- **Handicap Rehabilitation Program** – Provided on-the-job training and income for handicapped persons.
Retired Senior Volunteer Program – Developed to serve the four-county service area. Later delegated to the Nobles County Welfare Office to provide the needed services to the community and low-income families by using senior citizen volunteers.

Transportation Program – Started the Nobles County Bus and Transportation program with funds provided by Nobles County. This was later funded by Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT), as was the Rock County Transit program, originally run by SMOC, but later spun off to Rock County. Also started volunteer driver programs in Pipestone and Murray counties. Eventually both counties developed their own programs funded by MNDOT.

Youth Conservation Corps Improvement Program – Provided home repair services for low-income and elderly people, utilizing unemployed youth experiencing problems in school or with law enforcement.

Senior Community Services Employment Program – Provides job training and placement in a six-county area for income-eligible workers age 55 and older.

Child Care Resource & Referral – Provides referral services for families seeking child care, and technical assistance to child care providers in an eight-county area (currently renamed Child Care Aware).

Food Commodity Program – Provided for the distribution of surplus USDA commodities to area low-income families.

Emergency Food and Shelter Program – Provides emergency assistance to people in need of food and shelter, including rent assistance, one-time food purchase assistance and referral to food banks.

Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership – Organization developed and funded in a partnership with SMOC, Prairie Five CAA, Western CAA and the Region 8 Development Commission. Provides housing development and rehabilitation services in Minnesota, Iowa and South Dakota.

Rural Housing Assistance and Stabilization Program – Program provides supportive services such as case management, financial counseling and financial aid in order to help families obtain and maintain safe, adequate and affordable housing.

Transitional Housing Program – Provides housing assistance and stabilization for families who are homeless.

Foreclosure Prevention Assistance Program – Program assists families facing mortgage foreclosure by providing case management, mortgage payment assistance and other financial assistance.

Home Stretch Program – Program provides education and counseling to families interested in home purchase and ownership.

Family Loan Program – Program designed to provide loans to families to help them pay expenses so they can keep their employment or stay in school. Most loans are used to purchase cars.

Family Assets for Independence in Minnesota - Program was designed to help low-income working families build assets and develop financial skills to achieve long-term sufficiency. Participants save money which is matched 3:1. Savings can be used for home or car purchase, and education.

Family Services Collaboratives – SMOC partners with public and private entities in Nobles, Rock and Pipestone counties to utilize funding from the state and federal government for locally-designed projects that prevent out-of-home placement for troubled and disadvantaged youth.

Homemaker Program – SMOC employs staff trained to provide housekeeping and chore services in the homes of elderly and vulnerable populations. This service prevents or delays more expensive nursing home or out-of-home placement.

Even Start – A collaboration between SMOC and Worthington School District’s ECFE, ABE and School Readiness programs. Provided comprehensive family, childhood and literacy education to families.

Cultural Dynamics Education Project - In response to licensing statutes in the 1990’s, the organization provided training and support services to child care and early childhood programs in 38 counties of southern Minnesota from 1994-2004. Service Development Grants and Technical Assistance Awards Program provided funding to child care centers, family child care providers, preschool programs, and child care associations. SMOC awarded grants to early childhood programs throughout the nine counties in Region 8 from 1991-2004.

The Early Learning Scholarship Program – Program began in 2013. It provides scholarships for children ages birth to five to attend early childhood programs participating in the Parent Aware Quality Rating and Improvement System. Scholarships are currently available in Lincoln, Lyon, and Nobles counties.

Historical Funding: Since its incorporation in 1965, SMOC has received over $200 million in funding from federal, state, local, and private sources. The organization has utilized these funds to provide 30 locally-designed programs that address the basic needs of low-income constituents.
Three Rivers Community Action was incorporated on February 25, 1966 in Zumbrota, Minnesota. Originally named the Goodhue-Rice Citizens Action Council (with Wabasha added in 1967) the agency’s primary service area was Goodhue, Rice and Wabasha counties. Over time, the agency has grown to lead many regional initiatives and programs in a 20-county area in southeastern Minnesota.

In 1993, the organization changed its name to Three Rivers Community Action, Inc. The name change removed county names, in an effort to reflect that the organization provides opportunities in a geographic region larger than its three-county name had implied. “Three rivers” gives geographic homage to large water landmarks in the core service area (Cannon, Zumbro and Mississippi rivers) but also shows that resources and partnerships flow beyond geographic borders to serve the whole region. In 2013, the agency merged with Olmsted Community Action Program, adding Olmsted County to its service area.

Community Action Agencies were an outgrowth of President Johnson’s “War on Poverty”, first funded with bi-partisan support of the Economic Opportunity Act in 1964, which stated in part: “It is therefore the policy of the United States to eliminate the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty in this nation by opening, to everyone, the opportunity for education and training, the opportunity to work, and the opportunity to live in decency and dignity.” Federal resources were passed to local groups, who were charged with identifying needs and giving “maximum feasible participation” to people living in poverty, in order to create community-based solutions to poverty.

The Citizens Action Council of Goodhue and Rice counties was the first Community Action Agency in southern Minnesota and the first citizens’ action council in the state. Early organizing efforts found resistance among local elected officials, leading grassroots organizers to turn to a citizen model rather than a governmental model. Two of the founding members, Sue Rockne and Barbara Clark, wrote a history of the early days of the agency. The following is an excerpt from that history:

“We were ashamed to admit it. We did not know the names, even, of our county commissioners. Suddenly, last October they became important to us, those forgotten men of local government. They were refusing to join the War on Poverty, refusing to appoint a Community Action Council so that the citizens of Rice and Goodhue counties could apply for money made available by the Economic Opportunity Act. ‘There is no need,’ they said, and, ‘Federal money has too many strings,’ and finally (the real nitty gritty) ‘We will have no control over a Community Action Council.’

So we decided, unaccustomed as we were, to lobby. We learned their names, visited their meetings, circulated petitions. We had help, mostly from Democrats… but a few Republicans, friends, neighbors, and busy husbands to give aid and comfort. And the County Commissioners continued to say no.

But not all our time and energy was lost. We had learned who our friends were. And when Gene Flaten, field representative for southern Minnesota (who was along with James Ware in the state office a great help to us), told us we could set up a citizens’ council, we had a nucleus of citizens who would be good council members. The Northfield Human Relations Committee, the Red Wing Ministerial Association, and the Red Wing Central Labor Council all passed resolutions asking that a citizens’ council be formed. We invited a bi-partisan, diverse, and broadly representative group; we asked farmers, businessmen, ministers, labor women. One of them is a farm wife, a mother of eleven; another has ten children; two have six. One is a member of the Dakota Sioux tribe, a resident of the Prairie Island reservation. By February 1966 we were properly incorporated as the Goodhue-Rice Citizens Action Council. In April, Governor Rolvaag told us that we were officially ‘funded’ as the first citizens council in the state.”

Early programs at the agency included three Head Start programs; one Neighborhood Youth Corps project; a Foster Grandparent program for children; and an expansion of the Day Activity Center in Faribault enabling them to enroll disabled children from low-income families. In addition, the Citizens’ Action Council launched housing projects at the Prairie Island reservation. Community Action official and historian Gene Flaten wrote about the early housing work of the agency. The following is an excerpt of his recollection of the Prairie Island Housing Program:
“The GRW-CAC was still in the formative stages when several Board members expressed concern and dismay with respect to the general housing conditions at Prairie Island Reservation. Most of the homes were dilapidated, poorly insulated, without sewer and water and were generally located on or near the flood plain. These conditions led to a rapid set of Board/Community activities that became known as the Community Emergency Housing Program. Materials were gathered, manpower arranged and transportation requirements met so that the effort could proceed. Reservation residents were apprised of the program and encouraged to add their own efforts to this rehab program.

The key person in this initial housing effort at Prairie Island was Howard Bailey, Zumbrota community and Republican Party activist and an employee of Northern States Power Company (NSP). He worked long and hard to facilitate the program. In addition to the housing situation, he chose to improve other aspects of community life, including school bus service, clothing and personal grooming for children. The Sheldahl Company of Northfield provided extensive repair materials. Cory Huffman and Sons, NSP and Jerry Strandemo provided truck transportation. St. Olaf and Carleton Colleges provided a bus to transport students to the Island for volunteer work. Several businesses donated small amounts of money and additional volunteers came forth to add to the array of support. Special note should be made of the assistance provided by Prairie Island leader, Amos Owens, in obtaining the support of the residents.

This early effort not only provided appropriate services on Prairie Island, but served as a valuable experiential process for the soon-to-be formalized GRW Citizens Action Council Board of Directors and staff. This housing activity led directly to a more provocative and ambitious project—the building of ten new homes on Prairie Island, along with significant renovation of approximately eighteen existing dwellings. Each of the ten new homes cost just under $10,000 when completed in 1967.”

The early success of the Goodhue-Rice-Wabasha Citizens Action Council launched a long tradition of the agency working in collaboration with private industry, churches, educational institutions, individual community leaders, other nonprofit organizations, state and local government and local residents to address the needs in the community. Three Rivers Community Action has learned that needs change over time and that no problem can be solved alone.

Throughout its history, the agency has been committed to being responsive to the needs of the local community. It has worked in partnership with many cities, counties, partners and funding agencies to launch hundreds of programs and initiatives that address the needs of those in poverty and strengthen the local community. While many programs are or were housed within the agency, programs like Section 8 rental assistance, sexual assault support services, and WIC (Women, Infants and Children) that were started at Three Rivers were spun off as separate organizations or moved to other agencies.

Many of the core programs that were housed at the early Citizens Action Council remain as core programs of Three Rivers Community Action.

Head Start has been supporting families and educating children in Rice, Goodhue and Wabasha counties since 1966. The program first operated as a home-based initiative across the three counties, but programming began moving to centers in 1992. By 1993, all children were served in center-based classrooms, giving families and children better access to the wide array of programs and services that Three Rivers provides. Over time the Head Start program has done creative programming, including launching an intensive fatherhood initiative, offering a classroom that provides the program in Spanish (the native language of many of the children), and, using innovation funds to pilot a birth-to-three initiative. The program is currently planning the launch of a summer program for three- and four-year-olds with new Pathways II scholarship funds from the State of Minnesota.

The Head Start program at Three Rivers currently serves almost 200 children annually, and the strong diversity within the program (currently 46% of the children are racial or ethnic minorities) is reflective of the changing demographics of southeastern Minnesota. The Head Start program at Three Rivers has had immense success in educating children and empowering their parents. Head Start parents are active in the governance at Three Rivers, developing leadership skills on the policy council and board of directors. Additionally, many parents have pursued higher education; purchased homes; and become teachers, leaders and advocates in their communities.

Housing has been a primary focus of the agency since its inception. The early work on the Prairie Island Reservation created expertise at the agency that led to Weatherization and Rehabilitation programs that began in the 1970s and continue today. In the late 1990s, Three Rivers expanded its housing activities to become a nonprofit developer of affordable housing. Working in partnership with local communities and many funding partners, Three Rivers has developed over 570 units of affordable rental and single family housing in the past 12 years, bringing over $63 million in investment to the region. These developments not only provide permanent affordable housing opportunities to local families, but they also act as economic development for the communities they serve, bringing construction jobs and an ongoing increase to the tax base. In the mid-2000s, Three Rivers expanded its housing role with a focus on providing homeownership services to underserved households, particularly households of color, by providing pre-purchase counseling, financial literacy, homebuyer education, and down payment assistance to first-time buyers.

Three Rivers has been providing transportation to the region’s residents since 1976, including bussing for Head Start children. Transportation services also include programming through Hiawathaland Transit, which links volunteers with sick and elderly people who need rides to medical appointments and provides a source of public transportation. Originally serving rural communities with dial-a-ride services, Hiawathaland Transit has actively expanded its services, going from just one bus in one community in 1995, to 40 buses in 19 communities today. Three Rivers has added a modernized regional dispatch system, deviated route services and a regional route linking rural communities together.
Services to individuals and families are at the core of Three Rivers’ work. Meeting families where they are has resulted in the development and administration of hundreds of programs over the years, everything from energy assistance to training programs. The agency is committed to serving our region’s most vulnerable populations. Today the Family Advocacy Services at Three Rivers provides 12 programs in southeastern Minnesota, with a focus on homeless prevention, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, and senior services. Additionally, Three Rivers is a partner in helping to provide outreach and application assistance for state and federal programs such as the Affordable Care Act (MNsure) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

In 1966, two of Three Rivers Community Action’s founders wrote about people in poverty, “They want a chance to help themselves and they will take that chance if they can get it.”

The founders saw that government tended to take a “paternalistic” attitude toward people living poverty and they dreamt of something different. They wanted an organization that would be a partner to those in need, providing them with opportunities to help themselves out of poverty. The people we serve continue to come to us 50 years later because, as an independent, community-based organization, we do not threaten, patronize or judge—Three Rivers is on their side. Thousands of staff members, volunteers and board members have worked tirelessly during the past 50 years to provide people in the community with those opportunities our founders wanted for the community.

Founders
Gene Flaten  
Sue Rockne  
Howard Bailey  
Ken Tri  
Edward Constantine  
Barbara Clark  
Mrs. Ronald Soderquist  
Rev. A. B. Walfrid  
Elmer Dietz  
Mrs. Kermit Bottke  
Marie Otto

Executive Directors
Wally Christensen  
Richard Harris  
Edith Lallier  
Walter Betcher  
Michael Thorsteinson

Programs that have been or are administered by Three Rivers Community Action
• Battered Women Services  
• Camp Buckskin  
• Caregiver Program  
• CETA (Comprehensive Employment and Training Act)  
• Community Development  
• Continuum of Care  
• Crisis Program  
• Downpayment & Closing Cost Assistance  
• Emergency Loan Program  
• Emergency Solutions Grant  
• Energy Assistance Program  
• Energy Related Repair  
• FAIM (Family Assets for Independence in Minnesota)  
• Family Development Program  
• Family Services Collaborative Funds  
• Fence Mending  
• Financial Counseling  
• Financial Literacy  
• Governor’s Youth Program  
• Head Start  
• Helpline  
• Hiawathaland Public Transit  
• Home Delivered Meals  
• Home Energy Loan Programs  
• Home Improvement Loan Programs  
• Home Inspection Program  
• Home Ownership Pre-Purchase Counseling  
• Home Ownership Training Program  
• Home Stretch – Homebuyer Education  
• Homeless Prevention & Rapid Re-housing  
• Homeless Prevention Project  
• Hospitality Host  
• Housing Development  
• Housing Redevelopment Authorities (Goodhue, Wabasha and Rice Counties)  
• Housing Rehabilitation  
• JTPA (Job Training Partnership Act)  
• MEED (Minnesota Employment and Economic Development)  
• MHFA MURL Program  
• MHFA Revolving and Deferred Loans  
• MinnesotaCare Outreach Program  
• MNsure Outreach and Application Assistance  
• NSP - Community Investment Projects
• Nurturing Program
• Planned Parenthood
• Pohlad Camp Scholarships
• Project Friendship
• Quickstart Disaster Recovery
• Reach Out for Warmth Fuel Fund
• Rehabilitation Loan Program
• RHASP (Rural Housing Assistance Stability Program)
• Rocking Horse (Head Start)
• SE MN Migrant/Affordable Housing Coalition
• SE MN Regional Continuum of Care Network
• Section 8 Housing
• Self Help Program
• Senior Community Services Employment Program
• Sexual Assault Counseling
• SNAP Outreach & Application Assistance
• Southeastern Minnesota Housing Network
• Southern Minnesota Action and Resource Team
• Southern Minnesota Housing Academy
• SSI/SOAR Advocacy
• USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) Commodities
• Technical Assistance for Housing and Community Development
• The McKnight Family Loan Program
• Transitional Housing Program
• VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America)
• Volunteer Transportation
• Weatherization
• Whole Village Child Care
• WIC (Womens, Infant and Childrens Program)

Success Story

Margarita’s Homeownership Story

Margarita is a single mom living with her two children and one grandchild.

My name is Margarita and I would like to share my home buying experience with you. Like many other families, it was my dream to own my own house, little, big, new, or old, but mine. As in any family, the dream of owning your home is huge!

We rented for many years while my children were young, and finally about five years ago we decided to buy a home on a Contract for Deed basis, but that didn’t work out. Because my knowledge about housing was very limited, we quickly learned all the headaches that come with it. In the house we were renting, there were so many maintenance problems, like the bad mold in the basement, or the fact that we had to make announcements to take showers, so nobody else would run the water, otherwise there would be no water to shower. So the dream of owning our own safe and pretty home was very important to us! I know it was important for me to provide a safe roof over my children’s heads and I was committed to do it.

In the beginning it was very difficult to clear my credit. I took the Home Stretch class at Three Rivers Community Action and the teacher gave me hope. In Home Stretch, I was able to learn many things about how to buy a house, types of mortgages, interest, inspections, credit and many others facts in related to purchasing a house. I discovered that we needed to work on fixing the credit no matter what, so I started to work on it, and little by little I was able to fix it! I went and got a secured credit card that helped my credit a lot. It was 588 when I started, and in 7 months it was 625, so that was very encouraging to see. After that, I went to see a lender and I couldn’t believe it when they approved my loan, it was so exciting. I was able to use the Three Rivers’ down payment assistance program to purchase my home, which was a huge help. It was amazing to have received this assistance when we needed it the most. Buying this home meant so much for me and my family; it is a great investment plus a perfect place to live! We just love it and we are very proud of it. It really made us feel part of the community and we are working hard to make sure our home looks beautiful.

The first thing we did when we moved into our home was to enjoy nice long baths/showers without taking turns to run the water since that was pretty much impossible in the house we were renting. Our home has a nice kitchen, family room and a great room with a pool table in the basement plus four comfortable bedrooms, two full bathrooms, plus a really nice backyard with lots of large trees! I have been working on landscaping and putting in a fence. I have been building the fence by myself; I actually cut and measured every board. It’s a great feeling owning your own home and investing in it.
Tri-County Action Program (Tri-CAP) is the federally designated Community Action Program (CAP) serving primarily Benton, Sherburne and Stearns counties in central Minnesota.

The agency was incorporated on January 12, 1965, as the first CAP agency started in non-metro Minnesota. The agency’s creation was due to the efforts of St. Cloud mayor, Ed Henry, who called together a group that included representation from all three counties and worked hard to cajole and convince others that having this agency would be beneficial to area residents.

The agency started with no staff and a $10,000 budget to “research problems relevant to the anti-poverty program.” From that point, the agency grew as programs/services developed. The first year of operation, the organization had total revenues of $16,480.25. By comparison, the agency’s most recent fiscal audit showed total revenues of $5,826,069 directly received by Tri-CAP and $4,168,602 additional funding brought into the community as a result of the work within the agency’s programs. The additional funding consists of payments to heating vendors totaling $4,042,402; matching funds for the FAIM program totaling $96,300; and payments to landlords totaling $29,900.

The mission of Tri-CAP is to expand opportunities for the economic and social well-being of area residents and the development of communities in the service area. The vision of Tri-CAP is to provide opportunities that empower area residents towards self-sufficiency.

Program History

The first funded program began in 1965 and was called Neighborhood Youth Corp (NYC). It was followed by Head Start in 1966. About 10 years later, the agency permitted Head Start to spin off and become its own nonprofit, ReachUp/Head Start, which still operates today.

By the end of 1967, the agency was known as an advocate for low-income people and had added Farm Counseling Service, Foster Grandparent Program, Operation Mainstream, Out-of-School NYC Program and Summer Head Start. In 1968, Senior Outreach Program was added.

One of the more controversial programs ever taken on by the agency was the opening of a Family Planning Center, which was operated from 1971 until 2001, when it spun off to another entity.

In 1973, the agency began outreach services that provided in-home visiting throughout the service area to educate households about services available through the agency and elsewhere. During these visits, staff assisted with the completion of applications, as needed. This service ran for 25 years before being discontinued due to limited funds.

In 1975, Senior Transportation Program began with three vans (one for each county) designated to helping seniors access necessary services. Eventually, the program received funding to expand the service to all ages and the vans were replaced by busses. In addition, Youth Employment Program was funded and the first Weatherization funding came to the agency.

In July 1977, the first funding for heating assistance (Special Crisis Intervention Program) was received by the agency, prompted by the previous harsh winter; the agency was out of these funds in five weeks. In 1978, a similar program followed in the first quarter, which eventually led to the current Low Income Energy Assistance Program.

Also in 1978, a Solar Project built solar panels and installed them on homes of low-income households. The agency also began operating the Women, Infants & Children (WIC) program to provide a nutritional supplement to families with infants. WIC was operated for 18 years before the counties had the option to run the program and decided to do so. In this same year, a Handicap Services Program became available to assist individuals with advocacy and information. This program sponsored an annual St. Cloud city-wide effort whereby city officials, business people, and others were provided with wheelchairs and crutches to use and in so doing experience the day of a disabled person. This led to increased awareness of what needed to be done in the area to make it easier for people with disabilities.

In 1984, Displaced Homemaker Program was funded and federal commodities became available through the Temporary Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). This began as a temporary program with two distributions the first year. It grew to a monthly distribution with 22 sites in the three-county area and over...
11,000 households registered. It brought a huge core of volunteers to the agency with volunteer recognition dinners serving 300+ people. Eventually, the word “temporary” was dropped from the program title. The service ended the general distributions after 12 years and channeled the food through food shelves.

In the late 1990’s, Tri-CAP began new home construction for first-time homebuyers, using agency crews. Before ending this home construction due to economic conditions, the agency had built and sold over 130 homes throughout its service area. Tri-CAP also purchased older homes, rehabbed them and sold them to eligible households on a contract for deed at zero interest; it still holds contracts on 21 area homes.

Tri-CAP is active with the Family Service and Children’s Mental Health Collaboratives that started in the late 1990’s. In 2002, Tri-CAP took responsibility for administrative staffing, in collaboration with Benton and Stearns counties, who took responsibility for fiscal activities.

Tri-CAP encourages staff to participate on boards and committees of organizations that impact the lives of people served by the agency. Staff are active on state and national committees. This involvement has included: being at the table for the creation of St. Cloud Area Legal Services, Housing Coalition, Domus Transitional Housing, and more.

Since its inception, Tri-CAP has started and operated food shelves in St. Cloud, Paynesville, Sauk Centre, Albany, Belgrade/Broten and Cold Spring (as well as assisted with start-ups in Elk River and Foley). The operation of these food shelves was eventually taken over by each community.

The agency has also provided advocacy services, including staffing for welfare appeals and organizing a welfare rights group. And, for two years, Tri-CAP ran an Information and Referral (I & R) service. Controversy surrounding Tri-CAP’s operation of the Family Planning Center resulted in the Handicap Service Program and the I & R Program to separate from the agency, in order to become eligible for United Way funding. Then, for 13 years the agency diligently applied for funding to create a Self-Sufficiency Program. After United Way changed its funding to include both agency funding and also individual program funding, they agreed to fund the new program. The agency has received United Way funding since then.

General Information

Lori Raiber, Tri-CAP’s tenth executive director, began her leadership in January 2013. The board of directors includes 18 members, including six public official representatives; six public-at-large representatives; and six agency client representatives. Agency funding currently comes from a variety of sources, with each program having its own funding stream. Federal and state funds with flexibility assist all programs to expand or maintain services.

When staff members have speaking engagements, they make certain to describe all agency services, ensuring that the general public is informed about available programs. There can be discrepancies in public understanding, such as households that erroneously believe they are ineligible for all Tri-CAP programs, if they have been turned down for one program. Therefore, the agency makes every effort to educate the public so that they are accurately informed about the important programs offered by the agency.

Current Programs

Energy Programs: The agency operates the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) in Benton, Stearns, Sherburne and Morrison counties. Weatherization services are provided for eligible residents of Benton, Stearns and Sherburne counties.

Home Ownership and Other Housing Programs: Tri-CAP offers home ownership opportunities in programs such as MURL (Minnesota Urban and Rural Homesteading Program) and New Construction and Acquisition Rehabilitation.

The agency provides a lead testing service on all its rehabbed homes, as well as to the general public for a fee-for-service.

The Rehab Loan Program is offered for households with homes in need of repairs, with funding becoming a mortgage or lien against their property.

The Family Homeless Prevention & Assistance Program (FHPAP), Transitional Housing Program and Supportive Services for Veterans Program provide housing assistance and ongoing support to individuals/families facing homelessness or eviction.

Renting 101 is a monthly class for people who homeless or living in transition, as one step in their road to self-sufficiency.

Self-Sufficiency: Family Assets for Independence in Minnesota (FAIM) is a statewide match savings program, also known as an Individual Development Account (IDA). The program assists low-income wage earners to build wealth and assets through the purchase of a home, pursuit of higher education or the launching of a small business.

Financial Fitness is a four-hour class that focuses on four core areas of financial literacy: budgeting/money management; savings; credit repair; and, working with financial institutions.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides education to individuals regarding the intent and purpose of the program and assists them with the completion of the application.

The Displaced Homemaker (WINGS) Program now serves eight counties and assists eligible individuals to develop skills needed to manage stress, establish goals, identify strengths and learn job-seeking skills.

The Tax Assistance Program, with several sites and trained volunteers, provides free income tax preparation services for low-income individuals and families.
Transportation: Tri-CAP provides transportation services in Benton, Stearns and Morrison counties. The Dial-a-Ride service picks individuals up at home and takes them where they need to go within the service area. Public bus service is also available in Sauk Centre and Little Falls, as well as some smaller towns. A fixed rural route system operates in the three-county area. For the Volunteer Driver program, volunteers provide transport for people to and from their homes; almost all riders for this service come under county contracts and meet eligibility guidelines.

Organizational Relationships
Tri-CAP works in collaboration with many organizations, businesses, and governmental entities throughout its service area and beyond, including the following:

- The agency is a member of the Minnesota Community Action Partnership, which provides support to all community action agencies in the state.
- The agency participates in three collaboratives in Benton, Sherburne and Stearns counties.
- The agency works with energy vendors who offer resources for its customers for weatherization and other energy services (some vendors use the agency to disburse funds/services to their eligible customers).
- The agency works with banks and credit unions to assist low-income customers to set up bank accounts (a requirement for various programs).
- The agency’s annual Project Homeless Connect event brings many vendors together, all of whom volunteer their time.
- The agency’s Tax Program has 100 volunteers who provide tax services.
- The agency’s Family Homeless Prevention Program exists as a collaboration of agencies that prepare the grant, take applications and distribute funds.
- A few other areas of partnership and collaboration include: the Central MN Continuum of Care; Homeless Concerns Group; Human Services Collaborative; Solidarity Table; United Way Vision Council; Catholic Charities; St. Cloud Human Services Council; St. Cloud HRA; Salvation Army and many more.

These partnerships and collaboratives are part of what makes Tri-CAP a trusted, respectful, progressive provider of services in its service communities.

Conclusion
The history of Tri-CAP gives us a broad overview of the many programs and services helping thousands of households since the agency’s inception. The early days have many colorful stories about things that happened as Tri-CAP took hold in the service area. Funding struggles have resulted in programs not continuing or being spun off, but the core agency has stayed strong since its inception. Having a Board that believes in the mission and staff dedicated to fulfilling it makes all the difference. Operating an agency that continues to have clean audits assists with bringing in new funds. Amazing work has been done in the past fifty years!
Community Action in Minnesota: Capturing 50 Years of History

Tri-County Community Action (TCC)

History

A 50-year war that is unresolved would likely not be considered a victory in most people’s book. But, for those who wage battle against poverty in the United States, the impact can be seen in ways that touch the lives of individuals and entire communities.

“When President Johnson declared the War on Poverty fifty years ago, direction was less than explicit. There were no previous examples to learn from or a rulebook to follow,” explains Tri-County Community (TCC) Action executive director of 40 years, Joe Ayers. “So, we just started with what made the most sense to us - reaching out to the community, identifying its needs and taking action.”

Take action they did. In Todd, Morrison and Crow Wing counties in the heart of Minnesota, TCC has built a staff of 100 and is guided by a leadership team that has remained intact for decades. Employee commitment to the organization (many of whom have been at the agency for 20 to 40 years) is still as genuine as it was in the beginning. There is no question that TCC’s immense success stems from its leadership’s incredible dedication to the organization. If the hours were totaled, veteran leaders would likely have spent more time working together to solve the area’s poverty issues than they spent with their friends and family. To say this staff is committed to the War on Poverty is an understatement. It is their life’s work.

Letter from FAIM Coordinator

Imagine moving to a county where you only know one person and English is not your first language. How would you manage? Would you be as successful as FAIM (Family Assets for Independence in Minnesota) participant Irina? I have had the pleasure of working with Irina over the past two years. Irina’s story starts in Kyrgyzstan, a country that boarders China, where she was born and raised until she came to the United States.

Irina began FAIM with the hope to buy a home, but quickly realized that it was more important for her to complete her education and obtain a job before investing in a home. She decided to save for education expenses. Before enrolling at the Minnesota School of Business in St. Cloud, she received her AA degree from Mesabi Community and Technical College. However, her ultimate dream was to get her bachelor’s degree in accounting.

While working towards her accounting degree Irina managed to raise her son, Alex (now nine-years-old) on her own without a family support system and while working two jobs (at a local grocery store and as a college tutor). She still also manages to find time to volunteer three hours a week during tax season as a certified IRS tax preparer at Tri-CAP’s tax preparation sites.

Irina’s graduation date was pushed back because classes she needed were not offered, but she was never discouraged. She remained positive and knew that things would work themselves out. Finally, after three years in school, on March 22, 2012, Irina walked across that stage and accepted her bachelor’s degree in accounting. It was a proud moment for me but an even prouder moment for Irina and her son Alex. Her bright smile that night was contagious and I just knew the world was hers, nothing could stop her!

Herson, Alex, has a mother that is intelligent, brave, caring, generous and humble; he is extremely lucky to have such a courageous and dedicated woman in his life. She is an inspiration by teaching him about savings, patience and reaching for your dreams - doing whatever it takes to accomplish that dream. With a little help from FAIM and a lot of perseverance, Irina has accomplished one of her lifelong dreams.

In the exit paperwork Irina has written that she was very satisfied with her experience as a participant in the FAIM program. She wrote, “It helped me believe more in myself because I always felt the ongoing support.” She also wrote, “FAIM gave me a hand up and not a hand out.” The next stage in Irina’s life consists of applying for accounting jobs, which she is so excited to do. Irina also wants to put down some roots, so with the help of FAIM she is now saving for home ownership.

I am honored to know Irina and live in the same community with her. She is a bright shining star and I cannot wait to see what the future has in store for her. She makes me proud to be a FAIM Coordinator!
Over its 50-year history, the agency has developed a remarkable ability to key-in on what its surrounding communities need. The organization prides itself on surveying local citizens on an annual basis to verify perceived needs are being addressed and strategies are being developed. “In the early years of TCC, engagement with the community was high,” says Ayers. “What resulted were senior centers being established from old store fronts around the tri-county area. These centers acted as a centralized location where seniors could receive a meal and connect with other TCC services, and many of these centers still exist in some form today. The anti-poverty programs developed during the early years of community action agencies literally moved seniors out of poverty.”

During the interim years, TCC initiated programs for food assistance, self-employment, child care and a dozen more needs. However, a constant flux of federal and government assistance to fund services is often challenging to predict. To overcome total reliance on federal and government aid, TCC utilizes community partners to help relieve some of the financial responsibility. As a result, the organization has fostered one-of-a-kind partnerships throughout the tri-county area.

“We established a partnership with The McKnight Foundation in the mid-90s,” explains TCC Director of Operations, Larry Ketchum. “The Foundation was looking to revamp and expand a transportation service north of Minneapolis/Saint Paul. It chose our agency to be the lead agency, due to our track record of success with our Small Business Loan Program.”

The transportation program, designed for families with children under 18 years of age, provided vehicle loans to low-income individuals to get to work and school. Says Ketchum, “We administered funds and compensated three nearby community action agencies for closing loans in their service areas. We saw great success with the program, and when the Foundation discontinued funding for it, we chose to continue it in our tri-county area. Eventually, we expanded it into two additional programs.”

TCC used The McKnight Foundation Welfare Reform funding to establish a Transloan program for families transitioning from public assistance (Minnesota Family Investment Program) to work. The agency also created the Linkloan program to serve individuals without minor children who needed vehicles to maintain employment. This program enabled people to travel to medical appointments, rehabilitation and part-time jobs.

TCC has also partnered with the Minnesota Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (MOFAS). With the assistance of MOFAS, TCC is able to offer an annual community baby shower and expo. The expo, for expectant mothers or women interested in becoming a mother, has seen tremendous success. “Last year was our fifth expo,” explains TCC’s Family & Community Partnership Coordinator, Sandy Stavig. “This partnership gives us the opportunity to spread the message of 049 (zero alcohol for nine months of pregnancy).” MOFAS also provides TCC with a speaker for the event who explains myths and facts surrounding alcohol during pregnancy, and local pediatricians and lactation nurses participate in a Q&A with attendees. “Through surveys, we’ve found that alcohol and substance abuse is a major problem in our area,” says Ketchum. “We’ve developed several different strategies to combat this issue, and this expo is one way to do it, while also providing maternal advice.”

By working in conjunction with the communities it serves, TCC has developed a strong web of referrals to help power its success. At its annual baby expo, TCC gathers referrals for its Early Head Start and Head Start programs. Additional referrals come from offering new services to the community. For example, through the agency’s new Tax Application Service, TCC is able to meet with an audience that is fairly unfamiliar with the organization. “We saw an opportunity to provide a tax service as a way to help an individual garner Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC),” explains Ketchum. “The hope is that the EITC would be enough to lift him or her out of poverty.”

One anonymous participant, a native to the Morrison County area, speaks highly of the service. “Through their tax service, I was able to collect enough credit to pay off several outstanding bills. I would definitely recommend TCC to my friends.” This participant’s daughters also attend the Head Start program, which was where he learned of the free tax service. These strategic initiatives to collect referrals and close collaboration with community partners has pushed TCC to be a top-of-mind resource to the area’s low-income families and ultimately reduce the amount of people who are living below the poverty line in Todd, Morrison and Crow Wing counties.

“The overall impression of poverty in Minnesota is that nothing has changed,” says Ayers. “It’s unfortunate that most people don’t know the hard numbers…the counties we serve have seen a great improvement.” In the 1960s, Todd County, historically one of Minnesota’s poorest counties, had 46% of its residents living below the poverty line. Today, Todd County has improved to having only 15.9% of residents considered in poverty - a 30% decrease. Fifty years ago, over 38.9% of Morrison County residents were below the poverty line; only 13.2% of its residents are considered in poverty today. Finally, the population considered in poverty in Crow Wing County has decreased from 23% to 13.4% (U.S. Census Data). “These numbers strongly represent the positive changes that have occurred over the past 50 years,” states Ayers.

While poverty percentages in Todd, Morrison and Crow Wing counties are falling, the numbers that are rising are equally important. TCC’s 2013 Annual Report shows the organization taught 220 individuals the skills of budgeting and financial management last year - nearly quadrupling that of a decade ago. The Weatherization program helped 692 people improve the energy efficiency of their homes in 2013. Ten years ago, 245 people were served through the Weatherization program. In 2004, TCC’s programs served 2,213 people in the tri-county area. In 2013, the agency served more than five times that total, or 11,983 people. On a national level, poverty rates have declined from 26% in 1967 to 16% in 2012. Without the safety net of programs that TCC and other community action agencies have established around the county, poverty was projected to have hit 29% by WNPR News.
“No, I don’t believe it (War on Poverty) was a failure. I do believe our local progress is something to be proud of,” says Ayers. “But, as we look to the future, we know much more needs to be done. In 1964, the War on Poverty was a movement. It had momentum. I strongly believe it needs to be a movement again if we want to see poverty end in this country. The direct services we provide are important, but they won’t end poverty. We need to continue to engage the community and help people understand poverty in order to motivate them to change it. At the end of the day, it’s the community who has to own the issue for permanent change to occur.”

While many elements of the War on Poverty remain out of TCC’s control, the agency excels at focusing on what it can influence - the tri-county area it serves. Through strategic initiatives to collect referrals and close collaboration with community partners, TCC has directly impacted thousands of people in Todd, Morrison and Crow Wing counties. As a result, close-knit communities in central Minnesota have become even closer. Spirits are a little bit higher. Futures are a little bit brighter. The towns the organization serves may be small, but it is clear the hearts of the staff at TCC are not.

Founders
Glen Smith, Brainerd
Gordon Ose, Crosby
Wayne Larson, Brainerd

Executive Directors
Don Holmstrom - 1965 to 1973
Joe Ayers - 1973 to present

50 Years of Defining Moments
1965 – Tri-County Community Action Program, Inc. Incorporated
1967 – Head Start Program and Organization of Community Centers
1971 – Summer Youth Employment Program
1972 – Senior Nutrition Program
1973 – Big Brother and Big Sister Program
1975 – Weatherization/Energy Assistance and Housing Rehabilitation Programs
1982 – Commodities Distribution and Organization of Food Shelves
1983 – Emergency Shelter Program
1987 – Horticulture Development Project
1988 – Self Employment Program
1991 – TCC Offices and Early Childhood Centers
1994 – Auto Loan Program
1997 – Crow Wing County Transportation
1999 – Matched Savings, Transloan, Linkloan and Childcare Loan Programs
2000 – Early Head Start Program
2006 – Earned Income Credit Tax Preparation
2007 – Partnership with Legislative Commission to End Poverty
2009 – Circles of Support Program
2010 – Recession Recovery Funding Expands Services and Employment Opportunities
2011 – Emergency Loans and Grants

Success Story

Partnerships with local organizations are the essence of Tri-County Community Action (TCC). Without them, this agency serving Todd, Morrison and Crow Wing counties in central Minnesota, would be limited in every service it provides; in fact, TCC would not have been able to start many of its “niche” services, had it not been for key relationships with local partners.

“Our goal and mission was always to be integrated into the community,” says TCC Director of Operations, Larry Ketchum. “We’re happy to say we’re more connected with our community today than we were 30 or 40 years ago.” On a national level, funding for community action agencies is reflected in a spiral pattern, but, even when money is cut, expectations are not. Therefore, TCC has to find methods to keep the organization firing on all cylinders with less financial support from state or federal sources. Forming local partnerships is the answer.

“One unique partnership our agency formed was out of a need for children in our Head Start program to receive a dental exam and cleaning,” explains Ketchum. “It’s a requirement of the program, but out of reach, financially, for many families.”

As a response to the issue, TCC partnered with Central Lakes Community Dental Clinic at Central Lakes College (CLC) in Brainerd, funded by the Minnesota Department of Human Services. “We got involved because many of these kids do not have dental clinics,” explains LeAnn Schoenen, Dental Assisting Instructor at CLC. “This allows the kids who are on state insurance or have no insurance to get out of pain, if they have decay, or get the referral they need to stay healthy.”

Initially, the TCC/CLC relationship entailed two Registered Dental Hygienists from CLC going into Head Start classrooms in Todd, Morrison and Crow Wing counties to provide annual dental assessments and recommendations.

Continued on next page
“To make follow-up appointments more accessible and expand services beyond Head Start children, TCC turned unused space in their Morrison County office into a dental room, making it possible for more qualified patients to receive services. “The staff at CLC were instrumental in helping us set up our own dental room and acquiring donated equipment for the space,” explains TCC Health Services Specialist, Tina Roach.

A partnership was also established with Dr. Kendall L. Dammeier, DDS, and his staff at Northland Smiles in Deerwood, to provide a full range of dental services to patients at TCC’s dental room. In addition, Morrison County Public Health works in conjunction with TCC to notify clients who are uninsured, on Medical Assistance or MinnesotaCare, and are due for a dental exam.

The agency provides residents in Todd County with dental services by bringing in a mobile unit with the help of Children’s Dental Services from the Twin Cities. In Crow Wing County, patients can still be seen at CLC’s clinic. With the help of community partners, TCC has been able to provide dental services to hundreds of children and adults across the tri-county area. “Our long term goal is to get people a dental clinic on an ongoing basis,” states Ketchum.

But, will a dental exam end the War on Poverty? The answer is simple. No, it won’t. However, it does provide an individual with an important health service that he or she would not otherwise be able to afford. To one person, a routine dental exam is a chance. A chance to smile. A chance to better himself or herself. A chance to feel worthy. And, a chance to stay connected with TCC.

By staying connected with TCC, he or she can utilize more services and take more steps to become self-sufficient. Ending poverty in Todd, Morrison and Crow Wing counties is far from finished, but TCC understands its strengths as an agency and will leverage them – one dental exam at a time - for another 50, 100 or 200 years, if needed.
Since its incorporation Tri-Valley Opportunity Council has gone through five distinct developmental periods: The Formative Years (1965-70); Geographic and Programmatic Growth and Expansion Years (1970-1980); Change, Cuts, and Stabilization Years (1980-1990); Expansion, Flood Impact and Community Partnership Years (1990-2000); and Change, Cuts and Insecurity Years (2000-Present). All of these development periods shaped Tri-Valley into a leading nonprofit Community Action Agency, focused on its current mission: “To Provide Opportunities to Improve the Quality of Life for People and Communities”.

The Formative Years were defined as those of foundation building. During this period, a mission was developed (“People Helping People”, which stood until the late 1980’s); a board of directors was elected; a staff was hired; and, programs were launched, all in an effort to identify, prevent and/or reduce the effects of poverty in the service area of west Polk, west Marshall and Norman counties.

The board of directors was comprised of people representing the public sector, low-income sector, and private sector. These leaders hired Henry (Hank) Johnson as the first executive director, who immediately found an office in the old Crookston National Bank building. There, working with one secretary and a few ideas, he submitted a grant for agency funding.

After the office and operational system were in place came the first evidence of where this new corporation was moving with two early program grants. The first was an effort to organize a Homemaker Home-Aide Service program to train underemployed or unemployed women to provide in-home care to convalescents, physically handicapped persons, or the aged in need of homemaking help. Today, we might call this a combination of Chore Services, Valley Housekeeping Services, Home Health Services, Displaced Workers Services, and Job Training.

During this time period, another program became the hiring of social workers to work for Catholic Charities of the Crookston Diocese and to be placed in each of the local school districts. These social workers then provided social services to children and families who needed help in school and in their families. Today, we might call this a combination of School and County Social Workers assigned to schools, along with the home visits of Public Health and Head Start.

Several other programs were created in the first year of the corporation’s operation, including: Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC), Senior Citizens Day Center, Operation Valley Beautification, and Alcohol Referral Center.

Neighborhood Youth Corps provided low-income youth with soft skills training, making it possible for them to obtain long-term employment. This program evolved into the Youth Employment Program.

Senior Citizens Day Center was created in response to seniors’ need to remain active and out of nursing homes. This program evolved into Senior Citizen Centers, Meals on Wheels, and the Senior Meals Program.

Operation Valley Beautification was developed to meet the needs of senior men who were retired but needed to remain useful, active and supplement fixed incomes. This program gave senior men jobs to work in local communities to maintain parks, gardens, and the general community. Operation Valley Beautification eventually became the Mainstream Program and then Green Thumb and Senior Employment.

Alcohol Referral Center was created to address the rising incidence of alcoholism. Today, both Northwest Mental Health Center and Riverview Recovery Center exist side-by-side to address such community needs.

The Geographic and Programmatic Growth and Expansion Years were defined by an increase in the service area and the addition of several programs, including Migrant Head Start. During these years, this program saw massive expansion through Minnesota, North Dakota, Montana, and Michigan, with William Brummer as Tri-Valley’s executive director and Marion (Olson) Houfek as board chair.

Susan Abbott was hired in the mid-1970’s as the Director of the Senior Meals and Activities Director. Under her superb leadership Tri-Valley also garnered funding for numerous Senior Citizens Centers, Senior Transportation (later Heartland Public Transit), Retired Senior Volunteer Program, and Chore Services (later Valley Housekeeping).

During this time, Tri-Valley increased its service area to 27 counties and oversaw the development of programs including: a four-state Migrant Head Start and Day Care program; Northwest Economic Development, Inc. (an economic opportunity corporation, directed by Jim Shortridge, to assist homebound persons become self-sufficient by producing and selling locally developed crafts); Retired Senior Volunteer Program; Women, Infant and Children (WIC); Senior Meals; Senior Companion; Foster Grandparent; Senior Employment; Nursing Home Ombudsman Program; Chore Services; Valley Housekeeping; Low-Income Housing and Energy Assistance Program; Weatherization Program; Alternative Energy (solar panels, windmills, and agricultural by-product fuel pelletization) programs; Senior Health Insurance Advocacy Program; Senior Rural Transit and Rural Transit; Child Care Resource and Referral; Outreach Services; and many more programs.

Dennis DeMers directed the Head Start and Day Care programs at Tri-Valley from 1972-1997 and was successfully building a significant early childhood presence not only in Minnesota but throughout the country. He served on a plethora of local, state, regional and national early childhood education bodies that led to the development of this field of endeavor.

The Change, Cuts, and Stabilization Years were defined by the loss of huge sums of resources at federal and state levels of government, yet also were the time of the mission’s development: To Provide Opportunities to Improve the Quality of Life for People and Communities”. While many Community Action Agencies decreased their coverage and services during this period, Tri-Valley broadened its base and grew despite many funding cuts.
Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) was added to the program roster, along with the Child Care Resource and Referral Program, which is now Child Care Aware. Senior service programs were expanded by initiating or expanding services in Valley Housekeeping program, Senior Companion and Senior Employment Programs, and Foster Grandparent Program. Tri-Valley worked to secure the Minnesota Economic Opportunity Act to support the loss of federal funding, and was a leading voice and force in the development of the first Minnesota Head Start Act, which has become a national model for state Head Start funding. Tri-Valley also became the first rural Child Care Resource and Referral grantee in northern Minnesota during this time.

The Expansion, Flood Impact, and Community Partnership Years were defined by the Migrant Head Start/Day Care Program and the Flood of 1997. The Migrant Head Start/Day Care Program expanded through all of Minnesota, North Dakota, and into Montana. Tri-Valley also began to develop housing for low- and moderate-income families and for migrant and seasonal farmworkers. This development in turn has created millions of dollars of housing and jobs in local communities.

The Flood of 1997 brought Tri-Valley to the forefront as an active community partner. The agency recognized its choice to be a delivery tool for services to people living in poverty or to become a partner to the entire community. The agency and its board chose to do the latter, deciding that such a choice most aptly fit their agency’s current mission. Tri-Valley also recognized its capacity to accomplish things that subdivisions of government and other agencies could not. It had a competent and committed staff, access to resources, as well as the capacity to serve and lead simultaneously.

When water overcame the city of Ada and burst through dikes in East Grand Forks, Tri-Valley was there. The agency was, for the first time in its existence, called upon to participate in every planning meeting by every level of government and every agency in the area. Tri-Valley garnered the necessary resources to disperse to trapped populations who did not have the capacity to relocate because they had lost everything— including cash, check books, credit cards, and identities. The agency was asked to plan for mental health services for young children and families who were in shock and to completely rebuild the child care system throughout the region. Head Start was turned into community child care and shelter was provided for the homeless and food for the hungry.

This experience of being a key partner in community recovery led Tri-Valley to a new corporate sense of self and to a growth in services. Housing development was led by Jan Delage during this period. Under her leadership Tri-Valley restored, purchased, built and managed numerous housing units for low- and moderate-income people including housing for migrant and seasonal farmworkers. The Tri-Valley Foster Grandparent and Valley Housekeeping Programs blossomed in size and scope as new service areas were added through northwestern Minnesota. The First Call for Help System was added and Tri-Valley initiated and participated in local Children’s Mental Health and Family Services Collaboratives.

The Change, Cuts, and Insecurity Years have been defined by federal/state funding reductions and a political climate that precipitated a reassessment of Tri-Valley’s mission, values, and work plans.

Tri-Valley has been affected by a political climate that intends to reduce taxes and subsequent services; due to cuts, nearly 70% of flexible funding has been lost to the agency. Even as services are continued, they are now provided in an environment of fear, anxiety, and competition. Still, Tri-Valley remains confident in its stewardship of local, state, and federal resources, is effective in identifying needed services, and in garnering the resources necessary to provide the opportunities forwarded in its mission.

In the context of these changes and cuts, with general insecurity, Tri-Valley saw the need to realign its organizational structure to meet changing challenges. Thus, the agency embarked on a reassessment of its mission, values, and work plans. It began by “going out to the community” to determine local perceptions of: Who is the agency? What do we do? Does the community want us to exist? This strategic planning process moved Tri-Valley away from the focus of “People Helping People” and toward “Providing Opportunities to Improve the Quality of Life for People and Communities”. It expanded Tri-Valley’s role to empower and provide opportunities for communities as well as people.

Within the last three years Tri-Valley (with the assistance of the Minnesota Office of Economic Opportunity) was afforded the opportunity to analyze deeply our history, vision, mission, management and effectiveness. This process (referred to as Pathways to Excellence) helped us recognize our strengths and our weaknesses and launched us on a pathway to improvement. During the process we also discovered that long-term tracking of six Quality of Life Indicators will, over time, provide empirical evidence of the outcomes we expect from the services and opportunities we provide.

It is now time to act upon our strengths and weaknesses as communities and to find ways to reward success and reduce failure. It is time to sell and reward Community Action’s positive community accomplishments, to increase incomes in the region, and to continue working together in ways that prevent the onslaught of individual and community weaknesses. And, although ever vigilant to the prospects of declining financial resources, Tri-Valley keeps its focus on new partnerships that may bring opportunities to people and communities in the service area, and is buoyed by continued declines in poverty rates.

Today, Tri-Valley Opportunity Council has programs and services in 84 counties in Minnesota and North Dakota and administrative offices in Crookston and Apple Valley. The agency operates 14 Head Start/Early Head Start and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start centers in Minnesota and North Dakota as well as transportation offices in Crookston and Thief River Falls. It employs nearly 800 staff each year and in addition to full-time, part-time, and seasonal staff, Tri-Valley works with hundreds of volunteers who provide over 100,000 hours of service annually to communities in the service area.
Success Story

For nearly half a century, Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, Inc. has kept its eyes and ears peeled to the needs of the community and the available resources. The best example of this focus is the evolution of services to children of migrant and seasonal farmworkers in Minnesota and North Dakota.

In 1969, the sole grantee for all services to migrant and seasonal farmworkers in Minnesota (Migrants, Inc.) was forced into bankruptcy. Services stopped, venders went unpaid, and distrust of migrants was everywhere. In preparation for the summer of 1970, arrangements were made at the highest levels of state government to provide services to people in need; however, these planners could not find any agency or organization that was willing to serve four and five-year-old children. Thus, the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) made a request to all Minnesota Community Action Agencies to determine their capacity and interest in serving this population. The only agency that responded affirmatively was Tri-Valley Opportunity Council in Crookston.

With a small grant from the Region V Head Start Office, Tri-Valley embarked upon a long journey as an advocate and provider of services to young migrant and seasonal farmworker children and their families. During the first years, service was provided to 360 children in 12 sites located from the Canadian border to the Iowa border. In addition, Tri-Valley created the Minnesota Migrant Child Development Program Steering Committee, which continues to this day as the Minnesota Migrant Consortium. This body has and continues to share information, plans cooperatively, and piggy-backs on training and evaluations.

Along with getting the Migrant Head Start program up and running, Tri-Valley needed to repair the trust in relationships with vendors and partners who had suffered the consequences of the bankruptcy experienced by Migrants, Inc. Instead of trying to soothe these relationships from afar, Tri-Valley decided to visit each and every vendor and partner through Minnesota to make assurances of payments going forward and to buy back necessary materials lost to the bankruptcy court. This personalized endeavor, along with guarantees of payments within 30 days and subsequent follow-through, endeared Tri-Valley to vendors and partners, which in turn created an environment of trust that continues to this day.

In 1973, these trusting relationships were the foundation to again place Tri-Valley in the right place at the right time with the right message. A federal audit had disclosed that the Minnesota Department of Education had misspent significant funds over the previous three years in providing services to migrant children from birth through age three. Thus, a vacuum was created for an organization to provide services to this age group for the upcoming summer. Due to Tri-Valley’s success over the previous three years in providing migrant services, the Department of Education and Department of Human Service invited Tri-Valley to serve children from birth through three years of age, as well as those ages four and five. In 1973, with the help of the Region V Head Start Office, the Minnesota Department of Human Services and a legislative line-item to garner match funding, a funding package was developed to serve the intended population and much of this package remains in operation today.

Still, with the passage of the Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981, Tri-Valley experienced a 50% cut in funding from the Minnesota Department of Human Service which forecast disaster for migrant services for the summer of 1981. Instead of seeing this as a fiscal calamity, Tri-Valley used these cuts to: 1) argue for increased state funding for migrant children, and 2) approach the national Indian and Migrant Program Division of Head Start to convert migrant child care funding into Migrant Head Start funding.

After numerous meetings and advocates’ intercession, Tri-Valley was able to both increase its funding from the state legislature and to convert child care slots funded by Title XX of the Social Security Act to Head Start funded slots. The net result of turning this perceived disaster into an opportunity allowed Tri-Valley to continue to serve the existing number of children and also afford to provide comprehensive services in all areas but southern Minnesota.

Changes continued, when in the winter of 1991 the Michigan Migrant Head Start grantee was defunded. The federal Office of Head Start contacted Tri-Valley to inquire if it had the capacity and willingness to operate the migrant Head Start program in Michigan, until a new grantee was developed. Tri-Valley agreed, with the stipulation that the organization be considered for expansion funding in southern Minnesota and all of North Dakota. Thus, in 1991 and 1992, Tri-Valley provided migrant Head Start and Day Care services throughout all of Michigan, while continuing its services in Minnesota. Upon completion of this endeavor, Tri-Valley applied for and received migrant Head Start funding for the southern Minnesota, all of North Dakota, and an area of Montana.

Today, Tri-Valley is the sole provider of Migrant Head Start and Day Care in Minnesota and North Dakota. Due to continued success, the Minnesota Department of Education and the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction contract with Tri-Valley for Title I ESEA services for school-aged migrant children and in need of services, while providing added administrative, recruitment, training, and health services to this population.

Over a 43-year history, Tri-Valley worked collaboratively with parents, staff, partners and advocates to meet the mission, “to cultivate life-long learning in children and families,” to a targeted migrant and seasonal population, while incorporating their culture into every aspect of planning and operation.
The first information meeting concerning the development of a Community Action Program in West Central Minnesota took place in Glenwood, Minnesota. County commissioners, city officials and county welfare agents attended this meeting and established a planning board.

Their first task was to form a service area and to establish representation. One of the original requirements by the Economic Opportunity Act was a minimum population of 40,000 people. Through consultation with various county government staff and interested citizens, representatives began to establish a corporation. In August 1965, West Central Minnesota Communities Action (WCMCA) was incorporated.

A board of directors was established and included the following people: Lyle Petersen (President), Thomas Stahler (First Vice-President), James Jung (Second Vice-President), Dr. Richard Kastner (Secretary), Mr. Miller (Treasurer), Fred Wulff, Frank Moberg, Peter Bilben, Ordean Synstelien, Delmer Voss, Arthur Sand, Ed Novotny, J.E. Rustad, J.L. Benson, Mrs. Shirley Torgusen, and Dwight Miller. The WCMCA board at one point consisted of 32 members; in 1987 it was reduced to 15 members, where it stands now.

It was determined that WCMCA would have three offices - one in Elbow Lake (main office), Graceville, and Alexandria. The board hired Dwayne Ahrens as the agency’s first executive director, where he served until 1969. Succeeding executive directors included: William Cox (1969-1973), Joyce Pesch (1973-1985), Audrey Kolnes (1985-1998), and current Executive Director Stephen Nagle.

WCMCA’s first proposed budget was $43,405. Some of its programs included: Medi-Care Alert Program, Mainstream, Neighborhood Youth Group, Head Start, and Home Improvement projects. While a few of the initial programs have remained the same, WCMCA has implemented many different programs over the years.

All financial records were kept separately for each of the programs that were operated and each program had to have a separate bank account. All program expenses, revenues, and vendor payments were manually tracked through ledger books.

Programs currently offered at WCMCA include: Food Support Outreach, Individual Development Assets, Transportation, Foreclosure Prevention Assistance, Energy Assistance, Weatherization, Conservation Improvement, Earned Income Tax Credit, Lead testing, RSVP, Head Start, Frail & Elderly, MURL, Plus Kids, Housing Rehab, Affordable Housing, Transitional Housing, Long and Short-Term Housing, and Housing Counseling. These programs are funded with the following monies: federal, state, local, public/private foundations, and donations.

The City of Elbow Lake worked hard to host the headquarters in their community. The city provided space in the city hall in early years and later helped the agency purchase a building downtown. By 1996, the agency had outgrown this space, and with the assistance of the City of Elbow Lake, built a new building on Industrial Park Boulevard where they contributed $1,000 per month for 15 years. In 2013, WCMCA paid off the building. This relationship is not only remarkable but unique.

The agency’s philosophy in addressing poverty is reflected in its mission statement: “West Central Minnesota Communities Action, Inc. is a resource agency dedicated to reducing the effects of poverty and helping people to achieve self-sufficiency, and improving the quality of rural life.” This mission has not changed over time, though the agency’s clients have changed in the past few years as a result of the Great Recession.

The 1970’s brought the federal RSVP (Retired & Senior Volunteer Program) to Elbow Lake and the surrounding five core counties of Grant, Pope, Douglas, Traverse and Stevens. This program now has 49 approved sites, coupled with 432 volunteers aged 55+ serving with a desire to leave a lasting impact in their local communities. Last year, RSVP volunteer hours totaled 94,500.

In 1987, WCMCA converted the agency’s manual accounting records, upon purchase of an IBM Baby 36 system. To operate this accounting system, WCMCA utilized the ORION software system, a fund accounting system designed for nonprofits that allowed WCMCA to track accounting records for each program separately and to have a single bank account. Reports for funding sources, the board, and others could be generated automatically, thus saving time and money for the agency.
In 1988, WCMCA also began to address home ownership for people who could not receive normal financing. Since that year, WCMCA has acquired, rehabbed and sold 49 homes through its work with Minnesota Housing. These homes have been sold for the appraised market value with no down payment and no interest. Nine of these homes have been paid off, with several more getting close to final payment. House payments have been based on 25% of gross monthly income, in most situations resulting in a lower house payment than rent, in turn supplying stability and asset building to families. Other positive side effects have included: keeping homes from disrepair, adding students to schools, and contributing to the tax base of communities.

In 1992, WCMCA received the programs of Weatherization and Energy Assistance for both Clay and Wilkin counties from Clay and Wilkin Opportunity Council (WCMCA initially served the counties of Douglas, Grant, Pope, Stevens and Traverse).

Also in 1992, WCMCA began other housing programs in Clay and Wilkin counties such as MHFA Loan Programs and Small Cities projects, while working with collaborative partners on housing issues. The Flood of 1997 was a devastating time for those counties – WCMCA completed a great deal of work on houses, helping with rehabilitation, new furnaces, etc.

In 1995, Head Start Parent and Family Engagement was strengthened when all Family Education Specialists (teachers) attained their Family Service Credential and attended Family Literacy training. During this time, WCMCA moved from primarily a home-based program to entirely center-based. WCMCA Head Start eventually moved most classrooms into school buildings, with renovation and spaces in new construction planned jointly by Head Start and local school districts.

WCMCA experienced three floods: the “big flood” of 1997, Browns Valley Flood in 2007, and the Red River Valley Flood in 2009. Following these floods, WCMCA was approached by Minnesota Housing as well as Department of Employment and Economic Development to help flood victims with funds and repairs to their homes.

In 1998, WCMCA partnered with the Department of Corrections to build affordable homes. The Department of Corrections provides low-risk inmates and a crew leader for construction of new homes. The crew leader trains the crew on general construction techniques from framing to finish work. There are two benefits gained from this program. One is that it supplies safe/affordable housing to home buyers in the area who are able to obtain normal financing. The second benefit is the training received by the crew allows them to find employment once they are released. There have been a number of success stories, including one member of a crew becoming a general contractor and, in 2013, receiving the award for Outstanding Businessman in Alexandria. Since its inception, WCMCA has built 116 new homes through this program.

In 1999, the first big event in the approaching new century was the completion of the Head Start center in Browns Valley. This was the first stand-alone building owned by WCMCA and served as a hub of services including Public Health, Social Services and the Food Shelf until 2012.

In 2000, WCMCA focused on the population that owns a home but are struggling with the high cost of upkeep. WCMCA has been involved with 25 small cities housing rehab projects (with a total of 583 homes completed), through the Department of Employment and Economic Development. This program helps with repairs to existing homes (up to $22,000 for a single home). Health and safety items are on the top of the list, with shingles, siding, windows, heating, and accessibility issues being just a few of the items addressed by this program. The loans are forgiven 10% each year and totally forgiven at the end of 10 years. This program allows a large senior citizen population in the area to stay in their homes. And, not only does it benefit home owners, but the $10 million plus spent on rehab has been a large economic boost for local contractors who have paid employees, lumber yards, and other trades, in turn trickling monies down through service counties.

Continuing in 2000, along with increased accountability for child outcomes, the teacher and supervisor qualifications were increased; to this end, WCMCA Head Start supported many staff to increase their formal education during this time and Head Start supervisors also received advanced degrees during these years.

In 2002, WCMCA renovated a wing of the Morris Area Child Care Center, co-locating with MACCC (Morris Area Child Care Center) for families to participate more fully in Head Start and child care programs. Increased accountability for child outcomes spurred partnerships with both AmeriCorps and Words4Work! to strengthen literacy outcomes. The assessment process and techniques learned were incorporated into daily classroom activities and have strengthened the entire program. Child outcomes were developed for the program and online assessment using first Creative Curriculum.net and later Teaching Strategies Gold was implemented in it.

The Group Cares Camp program was established in the early 2000’s and has since been hosted in each of the five core counties of the WCMCA service area. This program is done in tandem with partners from Loveland, Colorado; senior high youth and adults from across the United States come to help people in poverty paint their houses, build wheel chair ramps, do porch/deck or step repairs and other minor home improvement projects. To date, this program has helped approximately 250 homeowners with projects. Community synergy has come in the form of local volunteers helping with site writing, logistics, and baking snacks. In addition, local contributions have helped purchase the bulk of the building materials that are then bought locally.

The Free Tax Preparation program began in 2003. This program has provided taxpayers with the opportunity to have their federal, state and property taxes prepared and filed free-of-charge. The program started in partnership with the West Central Initiative in 2013 and together with IRS certified volunteers has netted over $1.2 million dollars in refunds for 494 low-income taxpayers at two locations.
In 2009, the ORION software company was no longer going to provide system support to the AS/400. Thusly, WCMCA converted the agency’s accounting records to Blackbaud’s Financial Edge Accounting system. This new system brought many new features of reporting, electronic purchase orders, and the ability to save all accounting records electronically. This accounting system also allowed for real-time reporting and accessibility for program directors to manage their programs effectively.

In July 2009 WCMCA received a four-year contract from the Minnesota Department of Energy for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to weatherize income-eligible households in its seven-county service area. Through the Weatherization Program, auditors determine necessary improvements through testing whereby a blower door shows the location of air leakage in a home. In addition, furnaces and water heaters are tested for health and safety. And, client education is provided to help the household understand and reduce their energy consumption.

This aforementioned ARRA funding was released with a two-part goal; one goal was to assist a large number of households that had been waiting for services for an extended number of years and the second goal was to help boost the economy by providing jobs for individuals and dispersing funding into our communities in hopes of stimulating the U.S. economy. Through this funding, WCMCA was able to provide weatherization services to 757 families in its service area and brought $5,523,358.22 to local communities and vendors.

WCMCA’s local Family Assets for Independence in Minnesota (FAIM) has offered the FAIM program since its inception in Minnesota 15 years ago, with strong support for the program. A partnership with the West Central Initiative provided funding for the housing component of FAIM, which in turn led to the first FAIM Saver in Minnesota, a WCMCA program participant who purchased a new home through the Affordable Housing Program. To do so, she used her FAIM savings and match for the down payment and closing costs.

To date, program participants in the WCMCA service area have saved $133,492 and received $314,153 in accompanying match funds. In total, 34 homes have been purchased, 44 businesses have been capitalized and 33 individuals have enhanced or completed post-secondary education.

In 2002, WCMCA became the fiscal agent for the statewide Family Assets for Independence in Minnesota. In this role, WCMCA staff provides oversight of the grant that serves a network of 24 partner agencies through the state. This project has been the largest network project of its kind that has centralization of services, including utilization of policies and procedures, financial literacy curriculum and financial coach training. Community Action as a whole has an emphasis on asset building and this project is an important tool in the asset building kit.

To date, $2,262,008 has been saved through all FAIM grants, securing $4,502,511 in match funds. In addition, 424 homes have been purchased, 595 small businesses have been capitalized and 726 students have received funds to assist in completion of educational programs. These funds have been, and will continue to be, viewed as economic development in the finest sense of the word across Minnesota.

It must be noted that in the 2013/14 heating season, WCMCA answered the call of the propane crisis and worked with vendors and households to meet the heating needs of customers and supplied households with federal and state Energy Assistance monies. Staff went to enormous effort and worked diligently, as 600 to 700 calls a day were directed to the department.

In the summer of 2013, West Central Head Start obtained grant funding to serve Otter Tail and Wadena counties, greatly increasing the number of children served. Many well-qualified new staff were hired from the previous grantee and integrated smoothly into West Central, which prompted the acquisition of the newest Teaching Strategies Curriculum with increased staff training.

Much has changed in these past 50 years for West Central Minnesota Communities Action. The $43,405 budget of 1965, which was tracked manually through ledgers, is now a $9,000,000 budget tracked through an efficient and effective electronic software package. As the population and trends change, West Central Minnesota Communities Action will certainly continue to move to meet the needs of families with current and new programming.
Less than a year after the passage of the Economic Opportunity Act in August 1964, an eleven-county meeting was held in southwest Minnesota, during which information about the Economic Opportunity Act and the formation of Community Action Agencies was provided to attendees. One week later, on June 22, 1965, residents of Lincoln, Lyon, and Redwood counties voted to form a nonprofit corporation.

On July 29, 1965, the original Articles of Incorporation were signed and Western Community Action was formed and committed to the war on poverty, under the authority of the board of directors: Fred Gislasen of Lamberton; Richard Froiland of Hendricks; Ralph Werner of Tracy; Arlie Svedsen of Tyler; Harry Wilcox of Redwood Falls; Catherine Hill of Garvin; Helen Berg of Wabasso; and Rev. David Olson of Arco.

At the first official meeting of the board of directors in August 1965, a budget of $35,667 was adopted to cover salaries for an executive director, assistant director, one full-time and two part-time secretaries, as well as one main and two satellite offices. Applications were reviewed and the decision was made to offer the executive director position to Conrad Rettmer at $675 per month, and the assistant director position to William Lange at $575 per month, with employment pending the commencement of funding. In January 1966, the board received a telegram indicating approval of the initial funding for the organization, with funds becoming available in March 1966.

At the March 1966 meeting, the following proposals were brought to the board of directors and given approval to be developed and submitted for funding. All were eventually funded to become the first three services provided by Western Community Action.
**Home Health Aide Training and Work Program:** This project would employ 15 low-income women in the three-county area, for purposes of providing home aide services to low-income, minority, aged, welfare recipients, and other poverty-stricken individuals.

**Job Training Conservation and Beautification under the Nelson Amendment:**
This grant later provided an agreement with Chas. Wood Associates, Inc., to study a windbreak and planting plan, design pedestrian circulation and outdoor lighting, supervise campus planting crews, and provide landscaping consultation. This job training project for groundskeepers provided the initial project and site development of the area that would later become Southwest Minnesota State University in Marshall.

**Head Start:** The six-week summer pilot project was held in Redwood Falls and involved pre-kindergarten children of American Indian, migrant workers and low-income families.

Community Action underwent restructuring in 1967-1968 when Congress passed the Green Amendment, requiring a Community Action Agency (CAA) to be designated as the official CAA by local officials, in order to operate in a community. Once Western Community Action, Inc. received that designation, the Office of Economic Opportunity designated funds for the area.

Congress also passed the Quie Amendment, requiring CAA boards of directors to be composed of one-third elected officials, one-third low-income representatives and one-third private sector residents. In July 1968 the structure of Western's board of directors was changed to comply with this legislation.

From 1966 to 1968, the first two short-term executive directors of the agency, Conrad Rettmer and Virgil Mather, had been hired and had resigned from the position. In 1968, Don Stapf was hired as executive director. He provided stability to the organization, and during his 16 years in this leadership position, developed many new programs and services for residents of the three-county service area. For example, Head Start grew from a small pilot project (summer-only classroom experience) to one that provided a home-based, weekly experience for families. In 1972, the board of directors officially authorized the beginning of home visits, using the Home-Based Head Start option with 75 families enrolled in the program.

Numerous employment programs for people of all ages were extremely successful at Western Community Action. Operation Mainstream provided employment opportunities for low-income men and, in 1968, had grown to a budget of $125,000 with 31 enrollees. The In-School Neighborhood Youth Program provided employment to youth after school and full-time during summer months. The Out-of-School Neighborhood Youth Program employed people not attending school and also encouraged and provided training and education.

In 1970, Western Community Action developed the Manpower Department, which combined all employment programs. A Summer Neighborhood Youth Corp was added and employed 150 youth during summer vacation. In June 1972, in cooperation with the Southwest Minnesota State University counseling department, 116 individuals completed the GED exam.

In 1974, as a result of the Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA), centers were created where all Manpower programs, as well as two Western Community Action staff, were spun off as a separate program.

Numerous other programs and services were developed by Western Community Action and later spun off, including:

- **In 1970, Western Community Action purchased an abandoned school for one dollar to develop and provide space for a Daytime Activity Center for people with disabilities. This project was later spun off and became a very successful organization that now provides a wide range of employment opportunities and support for people with disabilities.**

- **A Self Help Housing Project was started in the 1970s and provided families with building assistance and support to build their own homes. Over 50 homes were built in a short number of years. This project spun off and continued as an independent nonprofit providing the same housing services.**

- **The Care-A-Lot Child Care center was started by Western Community Action to address the need for child care. This was originally a day care center in a local church that moved and spun off as a nonprofit with its own board of directors and later sold to a private individual. It still operates as a child care center today.**

- **Several food shelves and clothing centers were initiated and operated by Western Community Action – some were spun off to operate independently and some are still operated by Western Community Action and have grown to provide assistance to many individuals.**

- **In 1974, Western Community Action received a Senior Nutrition Program grant to develop meal sites in a nine-county area of Region VIII. Twenty-six meal sites and home-delivered meal programs were developed and operated by Western Community Action until 2003, when the board of directors chose not to apply for funding and opted to turn the service over to another nonprofit organization.**

- **In 1976, Community Transit of Western Community Action received grant funds to purchase two vans and provide transportation for senior citizens, as well as to reimburse mileage to 16 volunteer drivers.**

- **In 1979, Western Community Action expanded from a three-county nonprofit to a five-county organization, when a neighboring Community Action Agency**
closed and two of the counties – Cottonwood and Jackson – chose to join Western Community Action. This greatly expanded the agency’s service area, as well as necessitated the formation of a branch office.

After the death of Don Stapf in 1984, Carol Moseng, a 12-year employee of the organization, was hired as executive director. She served in this position for 20 years, retiring in 2004. During her tenure, the organization continued to grow, with the agency’s budget expanding from $1 million to $7 million, enabling the provision of many new and additional services.

In 1987, the Self Sufficiency Department was created at Western Community Action. Through the years, various grants have been awarded for case managers to work with individuals and families to help them overcome barriers that prohibit them from being self-sufficient community members. The FAIM program, which began in 2002, has provided match dollars for families and individuals to better their lives.

The Big Buddies youth mentoring program was created in 1989, when a group of concerned parents and grandparents asked Western Community Action to develop a mentoring program to provide support, care and inspiration to disadvantaged and at-risk youth in Marshall. Since 1989, this program has grown to include all five counties in the Western Community Action service area. It has also expanded its service delivery methods to ensure that youth are equipped to overcome challenges and to grow into healthy, happy adults who achieve personal and vocational success. This program began with 12 youths in 1989 and now serves over 400 youth each year.

In 1990, the first transit buses hit the streets in Jackson and Lyon counties. Every ride coordinated with two or more passengers was considered a success in demonstrating the benefit and concept of central dispatch and coordination. Redwood County followed in 1997 with two public transit buses and Cottonwood County Transit was merged into operations in 2013.

In 1991, Western Community became a grantee for the new state-funded Child Care Resource and Referral program, which operated at the agency until 2003, when it was restructured into a regional program that now serves 18 counties and is part of the statewide Parent Aware system.

In 1992, Western Community Action, along with two other Community Action Agencies and the Regional Development Commission, created a partnership to meet the needs of communities in development and rehabilitation of low- to moderate-income housing. In the last 20 years, this organization has brought over $400 million of public and private investments to the region. In addition to the services of the Housing Partnership, Western Community Action’s Housing Department has expanded and provides a wide range of housing services and assistance to families and communities.

In 1997, Western Community Action started the Minnesota Urban and Rural Homesteading Program (MURL). This program purchased, rehabilitated and sold homes on a contract for deed to eligible, first-time home buyers at 0% interest. The program has thrived over the years; to date, Western Community Action has bought and resold 42 homes.

In 2007, Western Community Action started a Free Tax Assistance Program for people with low- to moderate-incomes in the Marshall area. As part of the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program, Western Community Action trained volunteers to prepare and file taxes. In 2008, a tax assistance site was opened in Jackson, and in 2013, a site was opened in Windom. In 2014, Western Community Action will open its fourth site in Redwood Falls.

Today, Western Community Action serves residents in Lyon, Lincoln, Redwood, Cottonwood and Jackson counties in southwest Minnesota. With over 3,500 square miles and a total population of 69,765 residents, it is a highly rural area with a population density of 19 people per square mile. The ethnic make-up of the residents in this five-county area is 91% White Non-Hispanic, 4% Hispanic, 2% Asian, 1% African American, 1% American Indian and 1% from two or more races.

Since July 2008, Western Community Action has been led by Executive Director John Fitzgerald, who oversees a Community Family Support Department, a Housing Department, a Transportation Department, Head Start, Early Head Start, Big Buddies and internal business offices.

The Community Family Support Department houses a variety of services and initiatives that assist individuals and families in meeting basic needs, working through financial crises, building support systems, developing goals, attaining assets and building responsive communities. The department houses a continuum of services for people experiencing or at-risk of homelessness. These include: emergency shelter, homelessness prevention, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, and case management. Western Community Action administers four food shelves, free tax preparation assistance in four locations, financial literacy education, food security outreach, Community Circles and a thrift store located in Redwood Falls.

The Housing Department assists individuals and families with a variety of programs that focus on providing warm and stable housing. The Energy Assistance Program provides home heating assistance, crisis intervention, heating system repairs, energy conservation education, emergency assistance, and referrals to other programs and services. Weatherization provides services to assist eligible households with Energy Assistance to make their homes more energy efficient, decreasing their energy costs. The Small Cities Development Program and the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency provide financial assistance for housing repairs to low- to moderate-income individuals who are residing in substandard housing.
Transportation has grown into a large agency department, with buses and volunteers providing rides to people of all ages. Additionally, Marshall, the largest community in the service area, asked Western Community Action to incorporate their bus/taxi services into the agency’s programming. In addition, Western Community Action has developed a computerized and centralized dispatching system to serve residents and agencies in the five-county area, by utilizing nearly 100 volunteer drivers and 21 buses.

Head Start provides preschool education for children in low-income families so that they enter school ready to succeed. For these families, Head Start is a lifeline to a better life and a more stable future for their children. Parents are actively involved in supporting their children’s health and education; they also receive support to enrich parenting skills and family services that help them move to greater self-sufficiency. In 2010, Head Start added Early Head Start for children ages birth to three through a year-round, home-based program.

The Big Buddies youth development program works with youth five to 18 years of age. Through community-based mentoring, the program nurtures personal growth and develops community, while supporting, guiding, and inspiring youth toward a future of unlimited opportunity. Big Buddies provides tools and opportunities in the form of mentors, academic tutors, programming – educational, vocational, social, physical, and personal – and learning activities to help disadvantaged and at-risk youth navigate the challenges of growing up healthy, safe, and prepared for success. Matched with positive and caring adult volunteers in a variety of settings, youth in the Big Buddies program are provided with support, inspiration, and guidance that helps them improve academically, avoid participating in risky behaviors and violence, and become ready for a future of unlimited opportunity. Weekly one-to-one mentoring, after-school programs, and small group learning activities focus on enhancing self-esteem, respecting all people, making appropriate decisions, helping others, and expanding horizons so that youth grow up to be healthy and safe; equipped for college, work, or military service; prepared for marriage, family, and parenting; and active participants in community service and civic engagement.

These and other proven strategies help people gain (or regain) a foothold and put themselves on a pathway out of poverty. By connecting communities to remove obstacles and provide opportunities, tools, and hope as a pathway out of poverty, Western Community Action works to create thriving communities where imagination, dreams and visions become reality.
Wright County Community Action

Wright County Community Action (WCCA) was established in August 1965 as an organization with the mission to prevent and resolve conditions of poverty, while working in partnership with the community of Wright County. To this day, it has remained focused on this very same mission.

During these five decades WCCA has established and conducted a wide range of programs and services that have made it possible for many residents to improve their lives and succeed as they cope with and resolve their conditions of poverty.

In the initial year of Community Action, WCCA served and became the focal point in Wright and Meeker counties for initiating new community anti-poverty programs, projects and activities such as Farm Education, Head Start, and Neighborhood Youth Corps. Farm Management focused on training local farmers on effective agricultural practices, animal husbandry and financial management. Head Start began as an eight-week summer program that focused largely on health, nutrition, social and educational needs of children and families. Neighborhood Youth Corps provided in–school and summer employment opportunities for high school students to work in schools and hospitals and to learn essential job skills. Mr. Russell A. Lee was the executive director from 1965 to 1966 and Mr. Vernon Hedner was hired as the second executive director in August 1966.

Throughout the 1960s, WCCA continued its original programs and also added programs including Senior Citizens Centers, Neighborhood Service Centers (in Meeker and Wright counties), and the first GED programs in the service area to be conducted by area high schools.

“When my oldest child was first enrolled in Head Start at the age of 4, I was a busy mom of four preschoolers - my other children were aged 3, 1, and newborn. My husband was an alcoholic, often unemployed, and suffered from (we later found out) bi-polar disorder. We were very poor and socially isolated, and it was not an easy life. Then Head Start came into our lives. Head Start gave me the tools to become the mom I wanted to be. It also gave this homebound family a chance to meet other people, and makelilong friends.

All of my kids are now successful Head Start alumni and I couldn’t be prouder mom. Children from dysfunctional homes often drop out of school, get in trouble with the law, and have problems with addictions and destructive relationships. My kids chose instead to improve their lives through education and hard work. They never felt sorry for themselves. They didn’t use their lot in life as an excuse not to succeed or follow their dreams.

I’d like to fast forward and tell you what my kids are doing now. My eldest son graduated as an M.D. from the University of Minnesota Medical School. He is now a Doctor of Pediatrics/Internal Medicine at a hospital in rural Minnesota. My oldest daughter graduated from the University of Minnesota in Duluth. She is now an RN in the Behavioral Health unit of another Minnesota hospital. My second daughter also earned a B.S. in Biology from the University of Mankato State. My third daughter attended the International School of Midwifery in Oregon and graduated from Presentation College in Fairmont, Minnesota as an RN. And, y youngest son graduated last spring from Amherst College in Amherst, Massachusetts with a B.A. in Psychology. He now works in the Admissions Office at Amherst College. Head Start certainly benefited my kids, and in turn, countless more people will be helped through the professions they have chosen. They are indeed, "paying it forward!"

Witnessing the tenacity of my kids all those years ago made me believe I could succeed also. Twenty-two years ago I started working at Head Start as a bus driver/teacher aide in a WCA Head Start classroom. Head Start helped me obtain my CDL and my Child Development Associate certificate- both we required for this position. Then I started plugging away at college courses one or two at a time.

It wasn’t easy working full-time, being a single parent, and finding time to go to school and do homework. Head Start gave me the support, encouragement and financial help I needed to keep going. Several years ago, I applied for and got the position of Lead Teacher in the classroom. I love my job, and I have the unique perspective of having faced many of the challenges our Head Start families have.

Finally, in September, 2011 I earned my A.S. degree in Early Childhood Education from Minnesota West Community and Technical College!”
In the early to mid-1970’s, WCCA began to focus on community organizing and outreach as a method of addressing, preventing and resolving conditions of poverty. From this focus, a number of new and innovative efforts were launched, including Crow River Craftsman Co-op, an in-home, cottage industry opportunity for residents. Others included: a community drug store that contained prescription drug costs for seniors and a Community Health Clinic.

Other initiatives included WCCA’s establishment of the first group home (Dells Place) in Wright and Meeker counties (located in Delano); its implementation of the Weatherization Program in 1975, with a focus on insulating homes of low-income residents to reduce energy costs; the establishment of consumer buying clubs for household essentials and food; and, the beginning of community garden programs, including a vegetable garden seed program.

With the implementation of these new programs in the 1970’s, the agency continued original programs including Farm Management and Education, GED, Neighborhood Youth Corps, Senior Centers and Head Start.

In the mid-to-late 1970s, WCCA concentrated its effort on providing programs and services in Wright County. During this time, the range of programs and services developed to prevent and resolve conditions of poverty were increased again. Some included: Emergency Fuel Assistance Program; Summer Youth Recreation camping experiences; a Community Canning Kitchen; a Youth Community Conservation Improvement Program; a Community Recycling Program; a Clothing and Furniture Exchange; and, a Food Shelf. During this same period, WCCA established Alternative Energy Projects that focused on solar and wind energy. And, another unique and innovative project was the development and implementation of an Aquaculture Project that introduced fish farming to local farmers.

As these many initiatives emerged in the 1970’s, WCCA continued to conduct Head Start, Weatherization, Community Garden/Seed Projects and Cottage Industry Projects. In the late 1970’s, GED activities were placed with local school districts and Senior Citizen Centers were spun off.

WCCA began the 1980’s with strong and effective local anti-poverty programs, projects and activities that continued to address the needs of local residents by preventing and resolving conditions of poverty. These included: Head Start, Weatherization, Energy Assistance, Alternative Energy Projects, Clothing and Furniture Exchange, Canning Kitchen/Nutrition Center, Garden and Seed Projects, Summer Youth Recreation, Earth care Recycling and Aqua Culture.

During this time period, WCCA concentrated on improving the effectiveness of programs and services. The agency also added programs including: WIC, MHFA Home Rehab Programs, FEMA/Emergency Food and Shelter Program, and Volunteer Tax Preparation. In addition, the agency sponsored the Surplus Commodities Distribution program.

In the mid-to-late 1980’s, the range of programs and services conducted by WCCA had changed again in response to local needs. By this point, WCCA was conducting Head Start, WIC, Weatherization, Home Repair Programs Surplus Commodity Distribution, Clothing/Furniture Exchange, Food Shelf, Emergency/Crisis Assistance, Gardening/Seed Programs and Canning Kitchen.

The Energy Assistance Program had been spun off to County Human Services and a number of programs and projects including Aqua Culture and Recycling and Energy Alternatives had ended. It was during this time period that a Family Planning and Self-Sufficiency Counseling Program and Summer Youth Employment Program were established by WCCA. In the late 1980’s, long-time Executive Director Vern Hedner retired and the current Executive Director, Mark Sexton, was hired by the agency. Also notable is that in this time period WCCA was able to expand the Head Start program service area to include western Hennepin County.

In the early 1990’s WCCA began the decade with a relocation of offices from Waverly to Maple Lake. Through the early and mid-part of the 1990’s, WCCA continued to operate an effective range of programs and services including: Head Start, WIC, Family Planning, Weatherization, Summer Youth Employment, Weatherization, Home Rehabilitation, Volunteer Tax Preparation, Clothing/ Furniture Exchange, and, Food Shelf and Surplus Commodity Distribution. During this time period WCCA also established a Family Financial Management Project, Homebuyer Training and Emergency Shelter activities. The Surplus Commodity Distribution Program ended during this time frame.

In the mid-to-late 1990’s, WCCA conducted extensive expansion and restructuring of the Head Start program. Today, the agency has a center located in nine communities. Also during this time period, WCCA began to once again operate the Energy Assistance Program. Among the many important and continuing events of the time period was significant automation and computerization in the agency.

The agency also continued Head Start, WIC, Family Planning, Energy Assistance, Weatherization, Home Rehabilitation, Volunteer Tax Preparation, Clothing/ Furniture Exchange, Food Shelf, Family Financial Management, and, Homebuyer Training and Shelter activities. Youth employment activities were spun-off during this time frame and the Family Loan Program and Foreclosure Prevention Counseling Services began.

In 2000, WCCA continued to expand its use of technology and its development of effective programs to prevent and resolve conditions of poverty at the local level. Programs included: Head Start, WIC, Family Planning, Energy Assistance, Weatherization, Home Rehabilitation, Volunteer Tax Preparation, Clothing/ Furniture Exchange, Food Shelf, Family Financial Management, Homebuyer Training, Mortgage Foreclosure Prevention Counseling and Transitional Housing.
The mid-to-late 2000’s presented a different economic look to WCCA and the country. During this time, economic growth and development were taken for granted. By the end of the decade, however, a recession was in full swing. In response to this economic downturn, WCCA expanded programs and services where possible and contended with recessionary issues on a daily basis.

Its programs included: Head Start, WIC, Family Planning, Energy Assistance, Weatherization, Home Rehabilitation, Volunteer Tax Preparation, Clothing/Furniture Exchange, Food Shelf, Family Financial Management, Homebuyer Training, Mortgage Foreclosure Prevention Counseling and Transitional Housing. No programs were added or ended during this timeframe; most programs were expanded.

From 2010 to present, we are on the door step of celebrating 50 years of Community Action. At this time, WCCA continues to conduct Head Start, WIC, Energy Assistance, Weatherization, Home Rehabilitation, Volunteer Tax Preparation, Clothing/Furniture Exchange, Food Shelf, Family Financial Management, Homebuyer Training, Mortgage Foreclosure Prevention Counseling and Transitional Housing. In 2010, Child and Teen Checkup Outreach was begun by WCCA and, in 2013, Family Planning Services were merged into the Family Health Project, which is now leading the agency in its efforts to assist low-income residents to enroll in affordable health care through MNsure.

We look forward to another 50 years of preventing and resolving conditions of poverty in Wright County.
Conclusion

For the past 50 years, Minnesota Community Action has worked efficiently and smartly to fight poverty in our state. In fact, the most recent annual statistics evidence the breadth and depth of Community Action’s work in all counties in Minnesota, with just a few FY2013 statistics here:

- 588,000 Minnesotans with low incomes were served, including 233,000 families;
- More than 2 million hours were donated to Community Action, by 20,300 volunteers (these hours are equivalent to a $14.7 million contribution, if valued at the federal minimum wage of $7.25 hour);
- 3,733 unemployed individuals obtained a job;
- 9,606 families obtained care for a child or other dependent in order to acquire or maintain employment;
- 3,063 individuals obtained safe and affordable housing in support of family stability needed to gain or retain employment; and,
- The federal Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) and state Community Action grant leveraged over $500 million in other program funding.

These impressive statistics are made possible by Community Action’s united adherence to **founding values**. Since President Johnson’s call to arms against poverty, Community Action has lifted up the importance of these values, with the foremost conviction being that the voices of people living in poverty are deeply essential to any genuine fight against poverty’s complex challenges.

The other values include importance given to: coordination of community resources; access to comprehensive, integrated services; incubation of community supports; locally-designed solutions; evaluation and accountability; and, state and national networks. Together, these values are a collection not comprehensively found in any other organization in this state or country.

We hope that by reading this book, you have gained a greater understanding of the national and state asset that is Community Action, and that you will celebrate its 50-year history of providing a hand up, not a hand out, to lift hundreds of thousands of Minnesota families out of poverty.
History of Community Action in Minnesota Bibliography
(Pages 14-30)


1986 Report of the Governor’s Commission on Poverty-Minnesota

1965 to 1985, 20 Years of Head Start in Minnesota


Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning, Office of Economic Opportunity, 1999 Economic Opportunity Report

Minnesota Community Action Association, association meeting minutes and reports from 1969 to present

Appendix

Minnesota Community Action Partnership Leadership

1969 Minnesota CAP Directors Association Board of Directors

Dwayne S. Otterson, Northwest Community Action, Roseau
Vincent Gentilini, Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency, Virginia
Dwayne Ahrens, West Central Minnesota Community Action Agency, Elbow Lake
James O. Wentzell, Tri-County Action Program, St. Cloud
Victor Jorges, Jr., Prairie Five Community Action Council, Montevideo
Wallace G. Christensen, Three Rivers Community Action Council, Zumbrota
Ted Niskanan, Scott-Carver-Dakota CAP Agency, Chaska

Minnesota Community Action Association Chairpersons

Del Hultgren 1971-1972
Dennis Heitkamp 1972-1973
Bill Brummer 1973-1974
Don McGillis 1974-1975
Fred Haverland & Joe Ayers 1975-1976
Vincent Gentilini 1976-1977
Lowell Enerson 1977-1978
D.H. Staph 1978-1979
Joyce Pesch 1979-1980
Byron Zuidema 1980-1982
Michael B. Ekre 1983-1984
William (Bill) FitzSimmons 1985-1986
Mike Thorsteinson 1987-1988

Steve Chadwick 1988-1990
Joe Ayers 1990-1992
Dale Anderson 1994-1996
Richard Holm 1996-1998
Harlan Tardy 1998-1999
Stephen Nagle 1999-2000
Eileen D. Wallace 2001-2002
Barbara C. Dorry 2003-2005
Mike Thorsteinson 2006-2007
Neil Steffl 2008-2011
Joseph P. Pederson 2012-2013
Robert Benes 2014-Present

Minnesota Community Action Association Executive Directors

Robert C. Bester 1969-1977
Steven R. Watson 1978-1987
Denise DeVaan 1988-1998
Tarryl Clark 1999-2006
Arnie Anderson 2007-Present

Minnesota Indian Affairs Council Executive Directors, Since 1980

Roger Head
Joe Day
Annamarie Hill
1964 Forming of State Office of Economic Opportunity by Governor Rolvaag

1964 Forming of State Office of Economic Opportunity by Governor Rolvaag

Attorney General

CONFIDENTIAL

Governor Karl F. Rolvaag

Joseph P. Humars


I think that we should move on to "Phase Two" of the
Minnesota Economic Opportunity effort by a series of public and
private public actions which are necessary to get the thing rolling.
I suggest here, with certain actions that I recommend be taken,
along with supporting documents indicating how these ends may
be accomplished:

I. APPOINTMENT OF STATE-WIDE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE.

It is essential to ensuring maximum consideration of our
antipoverty proposals by the Federal government that a state-wide
"community action" committee be appointed. It has been suggested
that the Governor's Commission on Children and Youth be used for
this purpose, but I feel that a new and separate committee is
warranted for three reasons: (1) This program is not
aimed only at youth; (2) The Governor's Commission already has
many other -- and competing -- responsibilities; (3) The Com-
mission was not chosen for its members' interest in the war on
poverty.

Accordingly, you should begin to consider names for member-
ship on a citizens committee, of up to 50 or 60 members, drawn
from all parts of the state and from all segments of labor,
business, and professional groups.

The appointment of a chairman for such a group is, in
my opinion, an extremely important item, since he will have a
great deal of work to do, and will be instrumental in shaping
the direction in which the antipoverty program will take in the future.

Sally and I have some thoughts on who this chairman ought
to be, and I am sure that you do also.

As will be seen from the discussion below, it is quite
likely that, under the Economic Opportunity Act, many -- if not
most -- state projects would have to be approved by this com-
nittee in order to gain Federal financing.

- 1 -

Governor Karl F. Rolvaag

9/23/64

Meeting with Commissioners.

I think that it is a matter of first importance that you,
personally, call a meeting of the commissioners and executive
heads of state departments which will be involved in the war
on poverty. This would involve about 15 departments, whose
names are set out in a memorandum attached hereto as Exhibit A.

This meeting would serve several purposes: (1) It would
be extremely valuable in establishing your personal control over
the poverty effort, and hence, discourage efforts by groups such
as the RMIB, or hostile legislators, to assume positions of
leadership. (2) It would provide an absolutely necessary forum
for impressing upon the commissioners the interdepartmental nature
of the antipoverty effort. (3) It would give both of us a chance
to lay down certain "ground rules" for the state's participation,
including such things as the necessity of departments to coordi-
nate with one another and with your office, the necessity for
immediate consideration by all departments of possible anti-
poverty projects, and the appointment of competent, interested,
"liaison officers" from each department who would have primary
responsibility for coordinating the antipoverty effort.

I am informed by Mike O'Donnell that October 1st and 2nd,
and October 16th are open dates on your schedule at present.
If you could advise me whether you wish to have such a meeting,
I will do the necessary staff work and set it up.

You might discuss with Joe Schlimme the advisability of
having such a meeting open to the press.

III.

FEDERAL FUNDING OF A STATE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY OFFICE.

The Economic Opportunity Act contains provisions under
which the State of Minnesota can obtain up to $175,000.00 annually
for financing a state coordinating office for antipoverty programs.
Based on ideas first advanced by Bob Brown, a project proposal
has been tentatively developed for submission to the office of
Economic Opportunity. I have discussed this with Sally Luther,
Ray Vezellio, and Bob Brown, and Galen Cudde has discussed it
with Morris Harrah and with the various section chiefs in the
Department of Public Welfare.

Although, because of local technicalities, the office
must be operated through the Commissioner of Public Welfare, it
is contemplated that the department be housed in the Capitol
building, and would be under your, rather than Morris Harrah's
day-to-day operational control.

- 2 -
A functional chart, together with brief explanations, is attached hereto as Exhibit B. I would like to discuss this proposal with you.

IV.

CONFERENCE OF MUNICIPAL LEADERS.

As soon as possible after the anti-poverty appropriation bill is passed, you should consider personally summoning a statewide conference of mayors, educators, and other leaders, to stimulate interest and pass out information concerning the program.

Such a conference, I would suppose, could be scheduled for late October, but it would be extremely difficult to obtain the necessary information by that time. As Exhibit C, a draft letter to Senator Shriver regarding this conference, which could be released to the press after mailing. This would, at least, "get our foot in the door so that the likelihood of succeeding would be diminished. The conference, incidentally, is Sally Luther’s idea, and I endorse it wholeheartedly.

V.

PARTICIPATION OF INDIAN TRIBES IN ANTIPOVERTY PROGRAM.

Morrie Riggs, of the U.S. Department of Labor, is setting up a conference on or about October 11th in Wausau, Wisconsin for Indian leaders from Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan. The purpose of the conference, to which educators, employment security people, and state and local officials would be invited, is to develop project proposals for Indian reservations.

I think the conference is a very good idea, and deserves our wholehearted support. One of the problems which may arise is paying the expenses of the Indians who might desire to attend. I will have to discuss this with you later as the financial requirements become more clear.

Prior to any cabinet meeting or any further public action on the poverty program, I would strongly suggest that you, Sally Luther, Steve Quigley, B. Shovel, and I sit down together for an hour or so and explore the poverty program in detail. If you concur, please let me know, and I will set up such a meeting with Mike O’Dowd.

JPS

Sally Luther
Steve Quigley
B. Shovel
Walter F. Mondale

1964 Forming of State Office of Economic Opportunity by Governor Rolvaag

As was in

 plans to implement the war on poverty in Minnesota.

I consider it a matter of first importance that you attend in person.

The agenda will include:

(1) A detailed explanation of the Act.
(2) Discussion of detailed plans to administer state-wide economic opportunity programs, including an application for a Federal planning grant.
(3) Discussion of plan to appoint departmental liaison officers to develop and coordinate interdepartmental anti-poverty programs.

Any questions concerning this meeting should be directed to Joseph F. Summers, Special Counsel, 221-3991 or 221-4098.

EXHIBIT A
1964 Forming of State Office of Economic Opportunity by Governor Rolvaag

EXPLANATION OF MINNESOTA ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY OFFICE.

It will be noted that the line of authority passes through the Commissioner of Public Welfare, this, as explained in my memorandum, is due to legal requirements, and depending upon your own personal arrangement with Horrie Horsal, may not necessarily represent the real chain of command.

The office would be advised by the Governor’s Committee on Economic Opportunity which would have to pass on any state projects sought to be funded under Title II of the Antipoverty Act, and by the program review council, which would consist of representatives of the departments involved in individual project proposals.

The Director, when hired, would replace me as Minnesota poverty program coordinator and upon his personal ability and skills would depend, in large measure, the success of the program.

The functions of the three sectional divisions of the office are as follows:

1. COMMUNITY ACTION SECTION: The Community Action Section would be responsible for organizing, stimulating, and coordinating the development of community action groups and project proposals in Minnesota’s localities. This section would, in short, help to alleviate some of the distress which is caused by lack of social and economic leadership in some Minnesota regions — notably Indian reservations.

   The Assistant Director and the two Field Representatives, it is contemplated, would be in the field most of the time, which accounts partly for the rather large travel budget for the agency.

2. PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT SECTION: The purpose of the program development section is to stimulate, coordinate, and develop state level proposals from the various departments. It is contemplated that the personnel in this section would be “program oriented” rather than “department oriented” and this would be better able to coordinate interdepartmental programs than would be the case if an individual were employed by a given department.

   This agency would also ensure that state agency projects are dovetailed into local community action projects in such cases as conflict might occur.

3. INFORMATION AND EDUCATION SECTION: The purpose of the Information and Education Section would be to collect,
272 • Community Action in Minnesota: Capturing 50 Years of History

1964 Forming of State Office of Economic Opportunity by Governor Rolvaag

1964 Forming of State Office of Economic Opportunity by Governor Rolvaag

---

Examination of Minn. Economic Opportunity Office (continued)

edit, and disseminate information regarding the antipoverty program to interested groups, community action groups, and the public.

The section would also prepare and distribute promotional material, film strips, movies, to stimulate interest in the program in local communities.

You will note that the budget for the agency is quite large. The reason for this is that it was assumed in Washington that Minnesota would be eligible for approximately $175,000.00 per year for this office. Accordingly, there is no point in not asking for the whole amount. If the amount of federal funds is scaled down, our proposal can be scaled down without difficulty.

---

DRAFT

Mr. Vargert Anderer
Office of Economic Opportunity
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Anderson:

It is my hope, as soon as possible after the passage of the appropriation, to fund the Office of Economic Opportunity, to call a state-wide conference of mayors and other civic leaders under my personal sponsorship to provide information on the Economic Opportunity program and to generate thinking about community action plans in our various regions.

I would appreciate very much being advised of your thoughts on how such a conference might be structured, what materials could be presented, and how many officials from your office would be useful at such a conference. I would also like to know how soon, in your estimation, such a conference would be feasible and useful. Finally, I would like to invite you to serve as principal speaker.

The Economic Opportunity Program is, in my estimation, one of the most challenging phases of legislation in the twentieth century, and I wish to use every available resource to ensure that its benefits accrue to the people of the State of Minnesota.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

---

Add. Robert Dumberay
Rev. James O. Wolkby
Rev. John Haasnik
Rev. Donald Greene
Rev. Joseph Kehr
Rev. Lee Olson

[Date?]
Suggested Guidelines to Develop a Community Action Program

To organize your Multi-county Community Action Program under the Economic Opportunity Act.

In order to establish a successful Community Action Program throughout the State of Minnesota, we are suggesting that Multi-county Community Action Councils be formed by counties that have homogeneous economic ties. In order to develop such Multi-county Councils we suggest the following steps:

1. Meetings composed of all county commissioners of various counties whose community interests and economic ties are similar to organize a Multi-county Community Action Council.

2. County commissioners from each county select members from their respective counties to serve on the Community Action Council. Members of Community Action Council to be a broad representative group of persons who have demonstrated an interest in the problems of poverty in such areas as welfare, employment security, education, health, agriculture, business, minority groups, local government officials, corrections, legal, clergy, and other community leaders. The Council must have in addition to the above one or more of these members from the poor, such as aid to dependent children mothers or unemployed fathers, etc.

3. It is further suggested that the membership should be approximately thirty-five (35) members.

4. The Community Action Council should organize itself into a nonprofit corporation under Minnesota laws whose board of directors or executive committee will administer the Community Action Program.

5. The Community Action Council may then apply for a Program Development Grant from the Federal Office of Economic Opportunity. This grant will pay for the employment of a director and professional staff to develop and administer community action programs.

In order to proceed smoothly, a local unit of government or private employer could provide the time of one or more qualified employees to act as temporary staff until the approval of the Program Development Grant.

6. The State of Minnesota, through the Governor's Office, provides technical assistance in developing Local Community Action Programs, under a grant from the Federal Office of Economic Opportunity.

For further information call or write: Minnesota Office of Economic Opportunity
Room 76
State Office Building
St. Paul, Minnesota
Telephone: 221-3627 or 221-3634

or contact a staff representative:
Mr. Robert Kahle
City Hall
Virginia, Minnesota
Telephone: 218-926-1636

Mr. John Flaten
722 8th Street
Mankato, Minnesota
Telephone: 207-393-5999

Mr. Richard Papeerus
1430 State Avenue
Alexandria, Minnesota
Telephone: 612-763-3356

Suggested Organization for Multi-county Community Action Program

- A Members Selected by Board
- B Members Selected by Board
- C Members Selected by Board
- D Members Selected by Board

Community Action Council, Inc.
Composed of
Members from various counties with persons who have demonstrated an interest in the problems of poverty in such areas as welfare, employment security, education, health, agriculture, business, minority groups, local government officials, corrections, legal and other community leaders. Also one or more of these members must be from the poor such as aid to dependent children mothers or unemployed fathers, etc.

Policy Making Organization

Executive Committee
Board of Directors of Community Action Council, Inc.

Small Business
Invest. Committee

Community Action Pierce County
Task Force
A Multi-county Community Action Program

Health
Education and Training
Employment and Job Opportunities

Community Action in Minnesota: Capturing 50 Years of History
### 1967 Suggested Fiscal Guidelines, Agency Level, Minnesota Office of Economic Opportunity

#### Fiscal 1967 Guidelines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Head Start</th>
<th>Million</th>
<th>All Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Southwest CAC</td>
<td>70,003</td>
<td>21,227</td>
<td>33,249</td>
<td>125,544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tri-Valley CAC</td>
<td>89,882</td>
<td>31,571</td>
<td>46,527</td>
<td>167,972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East-Central CAC (Bel-C)</td>
<td>185,006</td>
<td>37,040</td>
<td>54,579</td>
<td>256,624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee CAC</td>
<td>87,721</td>
<td>30,825</td>
<td>45,418</td>
<td>163,964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clay-Wilkin CAC</td>
<td>53,784</td>
<td>18,492</td>
<td>37,838</td>
<td>109,014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-Central CAC</td>
<td>131,772</td>
<td>39,277</td>
<td>77,973</td>
<td>248,022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tri-County (J.L.S., Mont.)</td>
<td>162,000</td>
<td>59,287</td>
<td>83,078</td>
<td>304,365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anoka-Hennepin</td>
<td>206,000</td>
<td>62,000</td>
<td>106,000</td>
<td>374,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Louis-Eagan</td>
<td>101,162</td>
<td>35,143</td>
<td>32,378</td>
<td>168,683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakes and Pines CAC</td>
<td>222,193</td>
<td>70,697</td>
<td>115,012</td>
<td>408,802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Crow CAC</td>
<td>91,299</td>
<td>24,068</td>
<td>47,250</td>
<td>162,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Central CAC</td>
<td>106,164</td>
<td>35,518</td>
<td>32,378</td>
<td>174,010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tri-County CAC (Amish, St.)</td>
<td>116,343</td>
<td>56,938</td>
<td>80,249</td>
<td>254,510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western CAC</td>
<td>75,399</td>
<td>28,090</td>
<td>43,290</td>
<td>146,739</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institute CAC</td>
<td>48,428</td>
<td>21,072</td>
<td>45,786</td>
<td>115,287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hennepin CAC</td>
<td>100,841</td>
<td>37,537</td>
<td>55,299</td>
<td>253,677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McKnight-Wright CAC</td>
<td>87,013</td>
<td>32,597</td>
<td>45,953</td>
<td>165,562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Central CAC</td>
<td>124,597</td>
<td>24,057</td>
<td>30,181</td>
<td>189,831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota Valley CAC</td>
<td>170,490</td>
<td>69,920</td>
<td>88,374</td>
<td>348,784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dodge, Stearns, Waseca CAC</td>
<td>77,109</td>
<td>32,296</td>
<td>39,022</td>
<td>148,427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodhue, Rice, Wabasha CAC</td>
<td>147,145</td>
<td>51,707</td>
<td>76,186</td>
<td>275,038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Minnesota CAC</td>
<td>129,644</td>
<td>35,444</td>
<td>86,647</td>
<td>251,735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olmsted CAC</td>
<td>70,763</td>
<td>24,899</td>
<td>35,444</td>
<td>131,106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeastern CAC</td>
<td>160,778</td>
<td>49,699</td>
<td>78,990</td>
<td>338,467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aitkin CAC</td>
<td>75,490</td>
<td>25,197</td>
<td>39,995</td>
<td>139,682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douglas-Canyon CAC</td>
<td>79,662</td>
<td>26,647</td>
<td>39,559</td>
<td>145,828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douglas CAC</td>
<td>162,000</td>
<td>39,101</td>
<td>87,582</td>
<td>288,683</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

### September 1972 First Annual Meeting Agenda, Minnesota Community Action Association

**September 1972 First Annual Meeting Agenda, Minnesota Community Action Association**

**Wednesday, September 20, 1972**

**9:00 - 9:30 - Registration**

**9:30 - 10:00 - Call to Order (Chairman Hultgren)**

1. Opening - Treasurer’s Report
2. Acceptance of proposed resolutions
3. Bylaws - Board of Directors
4. Board of Directors - Acting Executive Director
5. Mr. Phillip Wann, Assistant Regional Director, Office of Child Development
6. Mrs. Harry Miller, Branch Chief, Minnesota-Indiana Branch, Great Lakes Regional Office of Economic Opportunity
7. Mr. Richard Wenzel, Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity

**12:00 Noon - Lunch (Speaker) Mr. Gary Hultgren, Governor’s Staff Member, Camp’s Program and Legal Services**

**1:00 - 3:00 - Program Area Meetings (In accordance with Program Area Officers, 1st Annual meeting and will meet with Mrs. Hultgren)**

**6:00 - Banquet - (Speaker) Honorable Senator Hubert H. Humphrey**

**8:00 - Scheduled Social Activities**

**Thursday, September 21, 1972**

**9:00 - 10:00 - General Business Meetings**

1. Appointment of Officers
2. Election of Officers

**12:00 - Luncheon (Speaker) Jerry Christiansen, Director of Minnesota State Planning Agency**

**Adjournment**

*The future does not belong to those who are content with today... Rather, it belongs to those who can blend vision and courage in a personal commitment...* - [Robert Kennedy](https://www.robertkennedylibrary.org/quotes/tribute-to-a-american)
Selected Copies of the Minnesota Office of Economic Opportunity Newsletter

No. 49 - April 17, 1968
659 Rice St., St. Paul, Minnesota 55102

FEDERAL HOUSING OFFICIALS IN THE TWIN CITIES have set a goal of 1,000 low-cost housing units
for the poor by the end of the year. The FHA has instructed that they will request church, neighborhood, and civil rights groups to sponsor projects. The projects would include
building of new housing units, rehabilitation of old apartment houses, leasing others and
encouraging rent supplement plans by cooperative or non-profit organizations.

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT annual conference was held in Atlanta last
week. The program was altered because of the funeral of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In
addition to a special memorial service for Dr. King held as a part of the conference,
participants also were given the opportunity to attend the funeral.

A resolution was adopted by the conference asking for a tax increase specifically earmarked
for a full employment program and for other opportunities for the poor.

ON APRIL 6, GOVERNOR HAROLD LEVANDER proclaimed the month of May as Senior Citizens Month.
In addition to saying tribute to the great role our senior citizens perform in our
society, the Governor urged all citizens to recognize the need for greater interest and
knowledge of activities directed at the well-being of our senior citizens.

AN APPLICATION FOR A MODEL CITIES GRANT HAS BEEN SUBMITTED BY ST. PAUL TO HHS IN WASHINGTON.
If the application is successful, St. Paul would join Minneapolis and Duluth, which are
already funded with planning grants, in providing social rehabilitating services to the
involved neighborhoods.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR MAY 13 and 14 FOR A TWO-DAY TRAINING SESSION for Senior Citizens
Project Coordinators and others involved in Senior Citizens' programs. This session will be
held at Como's Resort in Brainerd and will be the first of its kind in the state. The
sessions will involve participation in workshops which will highlight the needs. It
is hoped that persons from each UAA that has senior citizens programs will be in
attendance. With new or new involvement, to total 50, invitations and further information on the
Government's Office of Economic Opportunity, the Governor's Council on Aging, and the
Center for Continuing Education, University of Minnesota. Any questions? Contact Dick
Pappenfus of this office.

WE ARE EXCITED TO HEAR THAT SURGERY UNDERGOES BY BAY, RENEE HANLEY WAS UNEXPECTEDLY
SUCCESSFUL. Father Mackert, who underwent surgery to correct complications resulting
from some fractures, has come through this beautifully and looking forward to resuming
his migrant activities. Father Mackert serves as Director of the Minnesota Catholic Council for the Spanish Speaking. To your good health, Father.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE DULUTH LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS who received the Office of Economic
Opportunity's Urban Service Award. Charlie Henderson, Administrator of HUD out of the
Chicago OEO office presented the award for the League's efforts to help improve the
health of its members.

YOU KNEW IT'S THE CLOSER POSTS WHO AREN'T THEIR DRAFT DATES. The younger ones need
them when they try to buy beer.

2,973 CASES OF CORN CRACKERS, a breakfast cereal made by General Foods Corporation, has been
donated through the Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity, to Head Start, Day Care
Centers, and other programs involving needy children. The total cost of this food
exceeds $21,000. Distribution is being made this Friday to CAP agencies throughout the
gate for use in their programs. Part of this supply will also be used in state
institutions. Thanks to General Foods Corporation, many youngsters in these programs
will be able to breathe again or on a bowl of corn flakes. Ellsworth Johnson of the
State OEO staff is coordinating the distribution.

MRS. MAGNUSON, A STAFF MEMBER OF HAMROSTAD COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL, is hospitalized at St.
Mary's Hospital in Rochester, where he underwent surgery for removal of a brain tumor.
It is expected he will remain at the hospital for another three weeks undergoing
further treatment. GGP people from all over Minnesota wish you well. Nurn. Hurry
back to Northwest CAP, your talents are greatly needed.

An elderly Indian was standing on the top of a hill with his son looking over a beautiful
valley below. Said the old Indian, 'Tomorrow, my son, all this land will belong to
the Indians again. Palestine all go to the moon.'
Community Action in Minnesota: Capturing 50 Years of History

Selected Copies of the Minnesota Office of Economic Opportunity Newsletter

---

Selected Copies of the Minnesota Office of Economic Opportunity Newsletter

---

The Gopher CAP Newsletter

NEWSLETTER

3rd. Office of Economic Opportunity
612 4th Street South - 550 Cedar Street
St. Paul, Minnesota 612-221-2367

Community Action Program

May, 1970

The State Economic Opportunity Office, with this issue, an expanded version of our regular weekly newsletter. Each week we will send to a larger group, a summary of some highlights of interest to Community Action Agency board members, staff, and others concerned in poverty programs. The monthly mailing list includes all OEO board members. We welcome the addition of other names for the monthly list. The weekly version will continue, but, due to limited budget, we are unable to greatly expand that mailing list. WELCOME TO OUR READERS!

The Minnesota Office of Economic Opportunity received final approval this week for the SAT (Special Technical Assistance) program component. The program involves the rural specialists in the Community Action Agencies on a long-term assignment basis. Concurrent with the approval, OEO Director Bill Beatty announced the selection of the three specialists.

1. Paul Luttrell to the Housing Specialist. Paul was with the Housing Authority of Minneapolis for the past 14 years. He was an administrative supervisor and brings to his new position a great background in management skills.

2. Donald Stapp to the Economic Development Specialist. Todd has served as the Executive Director of the Scott County Economic Council for over 20 years, and he has extensively promoted economic development programs for the area.

3. Robert Messner to the Housing Specialist. Bob will be leaving his position as the Executive Director of the Northeast Housing Authority in South Dakota to help Minnesota CAP Councils meet the housing needs of the low-income.

The assignment of one of these specialists to help a Community Action Agency develop programs or capabilities will be for a period of three months or longer. Any agency interested in obtaining the services of a SAT Specialist should submit a request to OEO Director Bill Beatty. Training for SAT will begin next week at Denver, Colorado.

President Richard Nixon’s Welfare Reform Bill is currently stalled in the Senate Finance Committee following approval by the House. The program, known as the Family Assistance Plan (FAP) would provide a minimum income and food incentive to the working poor to increase their income. The Finance Committee has rejected the FAP, but the Senate has held hearings on the subject. Congress has approved legislation providing a free or reduced-rate school lunch for every 5-year-old child in the country. This program will provide about 8 million children with a healthy, nutritious meal each day. The bill provides that a maximum of 30 million children may be served at a cost of about $1.5 billion.
Selected Copies of the Minnesota Office of Economic Opportunity Newsletter

...page 2

CAT WALTEN, the director of Lakes and Pinnebog Community Action Council, has submitted his resignation. The agency serves 7 counties in the area reaching almost from the Twin Cities to Duluth. His future plans are unknown. We wish him success and luck in his future endeavors.

SERVICE IN OLD PROGRAMS WILL NO LONGER ACCEPT DRAFT DEFERRALS, according to an announcement by Director Donald Lundsford. "We will not accept a request for deferment by any person," said the director. "For every individual deferred, someone else must serve--as an individual....." in most instances has not had access to the educational opportunities and experiences which would enable him to meet the qualifications for deferment."

MINNESOTA COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL is in the process of providing leadership training for CAP people. Community Organization Director Joe Hunt is working with St. Cloud College to set up an intensive course for staff, board members, lead start partners, and additional low-income residents. The training program will have 3 goals:

1. Supplement staff training.
2. Low-income residents will improve leadership abilities.
3. The community will be made aware of Department's involvement of low-income persons in the decision-making process.

500 SENIOR CITIZENS IN NORTHERN MINNESOTA will participate in the activities planned for Inter-Country CAP's Senior Citizen Recognition Day on May 19. The day-long program includes a display of arts and crafts, a noon lunch, and a variety show.

This event is in response to President Nixon's proclaiming May as Senior Citizen Month.

3 SENIOR STAFFERS WILL HELP WITH THE STAFF OF CHILD WELFARE. Ellsworth Johnson, field supervisor for the额, and Mrs. O'Dell and Mrs. Lofgren, field staff members, will work with the staff of the Child Welfare Division of the Department of Public Welfare on May 19.

SENSIBLE CORPORATION will be providing services to a State Legislative Interim Committee this week. Also will be providing information about programs and needs of Senior Citizens in the state and about CAP involvement in meeting those needs.

The 10-COUNTY WEI PROGRAM (Work Experience) has been extended to the rural areas of the state. WEI personnel have moved into the CAP offices, where the efforts of both program will be coordinated. Bruce Wetzel is the director of the 10-County WEI Program and will continue to serve as Director of Rural WEI-USD.

NOTE TO ATTENDANTS, VOLUNTEERS AND SPEAKERS...When you speak from an source, that's plagiarism. If you steal from many, that's research.

Two bows and I am on a first-name basis. I call him Bill and he calls me idiot!
A MANAGEMENT SEMINAR FOR CAP DIRECTORS will take place June 24-26 at St. Thomas College in St. Paul. “Management by Objectives” in the theme of the 2 1/2 day session, which will also incorporate a CAP Directors’ Association meeting the first day. The seminar is a part of the Cooperative Management Improvement Program (C-MIP) of the State OEO.

THE DATES FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CAP DIRECTORS’ ASSN are Sept 15-17. The Area will invite Regional OEO, HHW, and Labor officials and several state officials to participate in the program. The meeting site is the Holiday Inn in Alexandria.

The third-quarter session of the National OEO Labor Leadership Training Project was highly productive according to CAP people who were present. The Quemah Mountain Lodge at Hill City was the site of the training session Sunday to Tuesday of this week for Minnesota and North Dakota members of the project. SRKO Training Officer Gene Flaten participated in the program with other CAP people on hand as resource for the trainers, Vince Gentilini and Bucky Ross of the Arrowhead CAP, Roy Inness of North Dakota, K. Fitzgerald of Lakes and Pine, Bonnie Kennedy of Mankato Valley, and Sunny Sutton of Pilot City in Mpls were among those Minnesota CAP people on hand. The final-quarter session will be in October in Madison, Wisc and will include the trainers from the 6 states in the project.

EILLS ON THE WEST COAST AND NHIN ON THE EAST COAST! That’s what the travel schedule for SRKO staff indicates for next week. Eills Johnson will be visiting the San Francisco and Sacramento areas observing innovative and experimental housing programs. Mike Majestic will be on the other coast learning about housing and economic development projects in Maine. The SRKO field staff has been singing a ditty lately that goes:

“From Maine to California, We will do our very best To learn about the programs That meet the stiffest test! Now, if you can sing that to the tune of “Wabash Cannonball” you rate a big star on the forefront.

THE STATE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY OFFICE (SEO) has received 5 applications thus far for assignment of a Special Technical Assistance Program (STAP) specialist to their agency. The 5 specialists that are now on the SEO staff (Management, Economic Development, and Housing) are available for a long-term assignment. The expected period a STAP specialist will be working with a CAP agency is 3 months or more. Any CAP agency interested in using a STAP specialist should make their request quickly so that all can be considered in determining assignments. The 3 have been undergoing training and orientation during past month and will be available at an early date.

KARL TEELE, CAP DIRECTOR AT MINNESOTA VALLEY, reports that his agency has developed a training manual for CAP board members. This “Guide for Board Training” examines the role of the Community Action board and the relationship between the board and its director. Along with instructional text, the manual employs the quiz technique to inform about terminology and procedures. Karl will send a copy to any agency on request.

A SUPPLEMENTAL HEAD START TRAINING CONFERENCE will take place June 23 and 24 at the St. Paul Hotel in St. Paul. Coordinated by the Regional Training Officers (UTO), the training will be offered as a joint venture between EPI (Educational Projects, Inc) the University of Minnesota, and Mukanto State College. It is for head start staff people involved in the supplemental training project.

ESTELE CRUTCH, REGIONAL TRAINING OFFICER FOR HEAD START, underwent back surgery Tuesday of this week and is now recuperating at Valley Hospital, 2330 S 6th St in Mpls. Estelle is doing fine, we are happy to report.

ANOTHER OEO EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAM seeking to reform and improve educational opportunities for the disadvantaged, is about to be launched according to the latest issue of ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY REPORT, a private newsletter out of Washington. This program is described as an “Education Vouchers” plan that would allow parents to select schools for their children and pay their way with vouchers issued by a sponsoring agency. The newsletter said that OEO is currently looking for demonstration areas that could effectively implement the experiment by the fall of 1971. The plan would offer incentives to schools to enroll more low-income students. Because the schools would have to compete for students, they would have to strive for excellence through innovation. It is likely that 2 experimental programs will be set up—one in a rural area and the other in an urban center. Length of the experiment may run 5 to 8 years.

OEO, THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, AND THE OFFICE OF EDUCATION are cooperating in a summer employment program that includes NYC envelope making as tutors for younger children to boost their reading capability. Teaching materials will be provided by the National Commission on Resources for Youth at no cost to the sponsoring agency. The summer program is expected to reach from 80,000 to 100,000 younger children on a one-to-one basis.

LARKIS REQUEST CAP AGENCIES to tide them over until the Federal check arrives in a common and advantageous practice. It saves paying interest on loans that might be made with commercial sources. We pass along this comment, however. When your agency has a loan and that Federal check arrives, get the loan paid back pronto...quickly like a bunny...without delay. The agency lending the loan has its obligations too.

ADVICE TO THE NEO...Hard work is a sound investment. It provides a next security for your wife’s next husband, or how about this...

ADVICE TO THE WORN...If your mind should go blank, don’t forget to turn off the sound...
1965 Bureau of Indian Affairs Community Action Program Application

Honorable Karl Rolvaag,
Governor of Minnesota
St. Paul, Minnesota 55101

Dear Governor Rolvaag:

We are sending you with this letter copies of the Community Action Program applications which were submitted to the Office of Economic Opportunity in Washington.

The Indian people have asked me to convey to you their appreciation for the assistance and cooperation they have received from the various State departments and officials. One of the accomplishments of the Economic Opportunity Act to date has been to bring about a closer relationship between the Indian peoples of White Earth, Leech Lake, Mille Lacs, Mille Lacs, Grand Portage, and Fond du Lac Reservations and the government of the State of Minnesota.

As we understand it, the announcement will come from OEO today giving approval to these Community Action Programs; however, I am a little uncertain as to the route OEO will follow in this instance but I presume it will be through the delegation.

I had hoped that these applications might have been in your hands before such an announcement was made. I am particularly anxious to keep you fully informed of our work with the Indian people of Minnesota.

Sincerely yours,

Paul L. N民生
Area Director

Enclosures
Archived documents related to Community Action’s history in Minnesota are available at The Minnesota Historical Society Library. The Gale Family Library is located at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul. Archived documents can be viewed in the Weyerhaeuser Reading Room. Contact the archive employees in advance of your visit so that they can prepare the boxes you are interested in reading.

A list of a small portion of the documents available is on the following pages.

To find more documents, search the library catalog website (http://sites.mnhs.org/library/) with the phrase “Minnesota. Office of Economic Opportunity”.

There are ten collections on topics including project proposals, correspondence, meeting minutes, annual reports, and various publications, and newspaper clippings.

**Minnesota Historical Society Library**  
**Address and Contact Information**  
345 West Kellogg Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55102  
Phone (651) 259-3300  
Website: http://sites.mnhs.org/library/content/contact-us

**Library Hours**  
Tuesday: 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.  
Wednesday to Saturday: 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
Sunday: Closed  
Monday: Closed
1964-1973 Inventory of Director’s Office Records, Minnesota Office of Economic Opportunity

GOVERNOR’S MANPOWER OFFICE
Economic Opportunity Division
An Inventory of Its Director’s Office Records

OVERVIEW OF THE RECORDS
Series Title: Director’s office records.
Quantity: 5.1 cu. ft. (5 boxes, 1 partial box).
Location: See Detailed Description section for box locations.

SCOPE AND CONTENTS OF THE RECORDS
Files documenting the activities of the director’s office, including correspondence with county level community action program officials and materials documenting the federal guidelines for such programs as Head Start, food stamps, foster grandparents, Upward Bound, and VISTA, along with summary data and reports on the corresponding Minnesota programs.

INDEX TERMS
This collection is indexed under the following headings in the catalog of the Minnesota Historical Society. Researchers desiring materials about related topics, persons or places should search the catalog using these headings.

Topics:
- Community development—Minnesota.
- Economic assistance, Domestic—Minnesota.
- Economic development projects—Minnesota.
- Education, Preschool—Minnesota.
- Food stamps—Minnesota.
- Foster grandparents—Minnesota.
- Head Start programs—Minnesota.
- Legal aid—Minnesota.
- Aging. 4 folders.
- Agriculture, Department of.
- Annual meeting dates, Community Action Council, Minnesota.
- Alcohol Problems, Commission on.
- Anoka County.
- Articles of Incorporation and By-laws.
- Attorney General.
- Basic Systems, Inc.
- Becker County.
- Beltrami County.
- Benton County.
- Blue Earth County.
- Blue Cross.
- Brown County.
- Camp Bueckskin.
- Bureau of Budget circular.
- BWTP [Bureau of Work Training Programs].
- Camp programs.
- CAMPS [Cooperative Area Manpower Planning System].
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>101.D.13.4F</td>
<td>Community action programs:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Checklist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Directors association.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staff salaries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summaries, 1972.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carlton County.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carver County.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cass County.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CEP [Concentrated Employment Programs].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Checkpoint Procedure Form No. 77.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Civil Defense, Department of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Civil rights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Civil Service, Department of.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clearinghouse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CMIP [Concerted Management Improvement Project].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community Design Center.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community Planning Project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concerted services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cook County.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Corrections, Department of, War on Poverty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cottonwood County.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crow Wing County.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dayton’s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Digest, OEO.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Douglas County.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economic Opportunity Act.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economic Opportunity Act No. 207, Title 11a, Demonstration grants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education, Department of, 1970.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education, Vocational.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emergency Food and Medical Services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family planning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faribault County.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Farmers Home Administration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Farmers Union.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Field representatives, memos to.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>101.D.13.5B</td>
<td>Fillmore County.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food for Low Income Families, Food Stamp Program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foster grandparent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foundation Center.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freeborn County.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FURPO [Upland, Colorado].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General Services Administration [GSA].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Goodhue County.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Governor’s Council on Executive Reorganization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Governor’s Rural Affairs Cabinet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Governor’s Office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Green Amendment, 1967 Amendment to Economic Opportunity Act.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Green Thumb Project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guidelines, 1970. 2 folders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Half Way House, Twin Cities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Head Start:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Career development and training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Centers, full year and summer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Directors association.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Follow-through applications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Follow-through guidelines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Policy manual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regional Training Officer, Department of Public Welfare.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supplementary training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Health Department, Minnesota.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Sign, Operation 3M.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Housing, general, 1970.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Houston County.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Human Resources Development Conference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Human Rights, Department of.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indians, 1970.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interior, Department of, Washington, D.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Itasca County.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jewish Vocational Service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job Corps, 1972.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job Corps, State Women’s Center.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jobs for Veterans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kanabec County.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Location

101.D.13.6F  Kandiyohi County.
Labor, Department of, programs.
Lac qui Parle County.
Legal aid.
Legal opinions.
Legislation. 3 folders.
Le Sueur County.
Liaison Committee.
Litton Industries.
Library of Congress.
Loaned Executive Action Program [LEAP].
Mainstream, Operation.
Management Information Center.
Medicare Alert.
Meeker-Wright counties.
Meeting.
Memos to all staff.
Memos to CAA Directors, 1966-1968. 2 folders.
Metropolitan Council.
Migrant, Inc.
Migrant, miscellaneous.
Minnesota Association for Community Development.
Minnesota Nu-Frame Home.
MIS [Management Information Service], 1970.
MIS Quarterly Reports.
Model Cities.
Mower County.
Multi-county resolutions.
Murray County.
National Association for Community Development.
Neighborhood health services.
Neighborhood Youth Corps [NYC].

New careers.
Newsletters. 2 folders.
News releases.
NYC, St. Paul, Chicago, Minneapolis.
Nicollet County.

Location

101.D.13.7B  Office of Economic Opportunity [OEO]:
Arkansas.
California.
Colorado.
Florida.
Georgia.
Illinois. 3 folders.
Iowa.
Maine.
Maryland.
Massachusetts.
Michigan.
Missouri.
New Hampshire.
New Jersey.
New York.
North Carolina.
Ohio.
Oklahoma.
Tennessee.
Vermont Regional Office.
Virgin Islands.
West Virginia.
Wisconsin.
Olmsted County.
Otter Tail County.
Outreach.
Outward Bound.
Peace Corps.
Pipestone County.
Planning Grant Information.
Policy Management Systems [PMS].

101.D.13.8F  Polk County.
Pope County.
Private Foundations in Minnesota.
Public Welfare, Department of.
Publications ordered.
Ramsey County.
Redwood County.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research and demonstration grants.</td>
<td></td>
<td>State Planning Agency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resolutions.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stearns County.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Revenue sharing.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Steele County.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rice County.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stevens County.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rock County.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Swift County.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Roseau County.</td>
<td></td>
<td>U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>St. Louis County.</td>
<td></td>
<td>U.S. Senate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scott County.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Upreach, Project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Senior citizens.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Upward Bound.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Service awards.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Urban Affairs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sibley County.</td>
<td></td>
<td>VISTA Volunteer Program. 2 folders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Single county resolutions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sherburne County.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Small Business Administration [SBA], Economic Opportunity Assistance Programs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Southwest Planning Project.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Special conditions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Special summer programs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>