

NOW



Magazine

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Project NOW Celebrating 60 Years of Community Action!

A historical photograph showing President Lyndon B. Johnson seated at a desk, signing a document. He is surrounded by a large group of men in suits standing behind him. The scene is outdoors in front of a white building with columns. A crowd of people is visible in the foreground, some taking photos.

President Lyndon B. Johnson
signing the 1964 Economic
Opportunity Act.

The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 was created,
“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.” — Stephen J. Pollak





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Community
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Project NOW logos over the years.



Sixty years ago, President Lyndon B. Johnson appealed to the conscience of America to respond to the growing levels of poverty with a battery of legislation — and the War on Poverty was officially launched.

Great programs, such as community health centers, legal services, VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America), Job Corps, Peace Corps, Upward Bound, Head Start and with Community Action Programs, like Project NOW, being designated as lead agencies for the assault on poverty. In the short span of a decade, after implementing the Office of Economic Opportunity, the national poverty rate was reduced from 17.3% to 11.1%! This level of change happened because the nation declared poverty to be unacceptable! They saw poverty for what it was: a thief — stealing opportunity, a divider of the people — separating people by race and economic status. They saw poverty as the chief segregationist — vowing to keep people from the valuable resources of life itself. Poverty created barriers and cemented poor people to the floor of the America's economic basement. Ultimately, condemning them to an American caste system. Sadly, the national commitment to the War on Poverty was diluted by the parallel focus on the Vietnam Conflict — highlighting a reality, war has never been a friend of the poor.

Now 60 years later, we must again declare poverty to be unacceptable. We must gather our collective capacity to reimagine a future that lifts us above low-level thinking to solve our most pressing challenges. I believe Dr. Martin Luther King was right when he said, "We are wasting and degrading human life, clinging on to old ways of thinking. Nothing about poverty cannot be solved in our lifetime." Together, I believe

THE ARGUS, Rock Island, Ill., Saturday, November 5, 1983

Project NOW can help with utility cutoffs

Project NOW has begun accepting applications for individuals in Rock Island, Henry and Mercer Counties who have had their heating facilities disconnected.

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs has allocated \$103,655 in Illinois Energy Assistance Program funds to get utility heating reconnected in the three-county area.

IHEAP funds are designed to help individuals on low and fixed incomes to pay the cost of heating their homes. In order to qualify for the assistance, individuals must meet the maximum income guidelines.

For a household of one, the maximum income is \$1,519. The higher with a larger family, peaking at \$3,582 for a household of four.

Individuals interested in applying for assistance should present proof of household income.

THE ARGUS, Rock Island, Ill., Friday, July 15, 1983

Dislocated worker centers set up

Satellite centers for Black Hawk College's Dislocated Workers Program have been established in Rock Island, Aledo and Kewanee.

Through agreements with the Quad-City Federation of Labor and Project NOW, the Dislocated Workers Program, designed to provide a comprehensive set of employment, training, and support services for those unemployed in Rock Island, Henry and Mercer counties, will now have labor liaisons placed at these facilities.

Labor liaisons will be available at the Project Assist Office, 311½ 21st St., Rock Island, on Mondays and Thursdays from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m.

and support services.

For appointments at the project Assist Office, call either Dale Petersen or Nancy McIntire at 788-0340.

PROJECT NOW OFFICES at 205 Main St., Aledo, and 304 W. 2nd St., Kewanee, will also serve as satellite centers.

Labor liaisons will be available in the Aledo office from 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Tuesdays. For appointments, call 582-2644.

Labor liaisons will be available in the Kewanee office from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Wednesdays. For appointments, call 852-2644.

THE ARGUS, Rock Island, Ill., Friday, January 14, 1983

Project NOW launches Outreach Program

A Project NOW Outreach Program is available to help area residents from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. every Thursday at the Municipal Building. Marty Myers, Project NOW director, said, "With the help of our volunteers, we can provide a wide range of services to our community members." The program is designed to help individuals who are unemployed, underemployed, or have recently lost their jobs. Services include job training, resume writing, and job placement assistance. The program is open to all residents of Rock Island, Henry, and Mercer counties. For more information, call 788-0340.

Poverty remains a threat 25 years after war

Leaders call for more federal support for the poor.

By Nicholas Thompson
Staff writer
Illinois community leaders — Pro backed by some state and federal legislators — say the war on poverty has not been won. More support for programs for the poor.

The leaders made their case for about 100 people who have been helped by the program.

A spokesman said today that the program has helped many people. The Illinois Home Program.

we can take the current poverty level in the Quad Cities to a state of functional zero; that is when poverty is brief, rare, and non-reoccurring. This mission to end the causes of poverty and reduce it to functional zero is the work of three practical societal obligations.

First, we need more **Relationship-Based Personal Responsibility**. Yes, this work requires poor people to do as much as they can for themselves. In fact, most already are! You don't have to be lazy to be poor in America, actually the opposite is true. You can be industrious, hard-working, savvy, and committed but sandbagged with low wages, debt and exhausted with long hours. Personal responsibility is not relegated to those who live below the poverty line, it is for all of us to ask what we are doing to ensure poverty is rooted out of our society. Our collective indifference toward humanity and willful ignorance concerning poverty requires us to ask the hard question: have we lost the wealth of responsible and meaningful relationships? If so, we are poor indeed.

Next, we need a **Revival of Public Will**. Sadly, our collective voices are too quiet and our shared work of rooting out poverty is too siloed. In too many communities, we treat poverty as a harmless but unwelcomed house guest who has overstayed its welcome. Allowing poverty to reside without challenge is as unacceptable as poverty itself. Poverty is dangerous, and dare I say deadly, to the communal health of the Quad Cities.

People die daily from poverty related events and exposures. Everything from lead in water and paint, from limited healthcare to a lack of affordable rental properties, from the scarlet letter of a felony conviction to restricted opportunity,

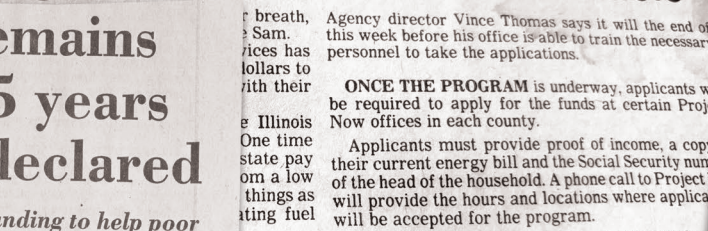
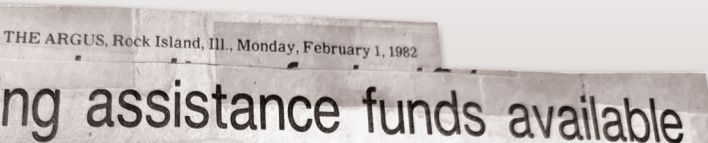
all of which drains the very life of people. This is not only hurtful to families and children in poverty but to all of us. We must revive our collective will to envision a time and place where people are no longer unsafe, unsecure, and subject to random violence because of their lack of resources.

Finally, we need more **Robust Public Policy** that creates a pathway toward new possibilities. However, it must be developed by people with lived experience and expertise. The challenges of poverty in many urban and rural communities were designed by policies with race, gender, or economic status in mind. Thus, any public policy solution requires the intentionality to include race, gender, and economic status to provide remedy.

Sixty years ago, we witnessed what relationship-based personal responsibility, a revival of public will, and a robust infusion of intentional public policy could do. Now, it's our turn to wipe the dust and debris out of our shared vision and stir our collective conscience to take action. Poverty does not have to be permanent! In a region as rich in opportunity and talent as ours, we must reaffirm in our hearts that poverty is unacceptable. Therefore, let us work until decent affordable housing becomes the anchor of all other opportunities, until education becomes the elevator of life, until healthcare becomes the basis of our humanity, until we have an economy that works for everyone and until justice is realized for all. We must work until every child born in the socio-economic basement today can reside on tomorrow's balcony of opportunity. Until we make of our promising Quad Cities Region, something new!



Dwight L. Ford
Executive Director (2020-present)
Project NOW, Inc.



energy assistance coordinator, said about 40 percent of those applications have been processed. A total of \$282,505 has been paid out for energy assistance so far and more will be expended as...

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Life Comes Full Circle for Al Carter

“This is such a good program that helps keep kids off the streets, so they do not end up like I did.”

At Project NOW we are fortunate to play a part in moving people up and out of poverty. Sometimes it is as simple as providing a down payment for a new apartment and a few months’ rent. For others, providing \$300 for a utility bill is all they need to get through a particularly challenging month in order to get back on track. There are other times we are able to step in and out of a customer’s life, become friends and cheerleaders over many years as we watch them become successful.

One such example of that is Al Carter. Mr. Carter had a short-lived college career as a wrestler; then became a mechanic and owner/manager of a fitness club before spending time in a federal prison. Because of his HVAC specialization, he worked the entire time he was in jail earning \$200 a month. Upon release, he struggled to find steady employment and to raise his newborn daughter. As a single dad, Carter relied on Project NOW “here and there” when his paychecks did not stretch far enough. Project NOW helped to weatherize his home in 2015, and years later when his furnace died, Project NOW provided a

Al Carter became a customer of Project NOW when he was a single parent. We helped him become strong and now he is helping area youth get a great start in life.

new one (which he put in himself). Over several years, Project NOW caseworkers were able to spend time with him and his daughter, and help with occasional electric and water bills.

“Al Carter and his daughter became part of our Project NOW family,” said Kris Downey, Project NOW’s Community Services Associate Director. “We stayed in touch over the years, and I was able to watch Macy grow up. Seeing the progress Al made with his career and as a dad has been so gratifying.”

Carter eventually joined the local plumbers & pipefitters union and worked on air conditioning units, furnaces, refrigerator/freezers, and ice machines. He also worked installing flooring, and rehabbing homes. His daughter Macy, now 18, witnessed his work ethic firsthand and tries to emulate him as she now works full-time at FedEx. She also grew up knowing sometimes you need a little help to get by and it is the strong person — not the weak — who asks for assistance to keep on track. “I was very grateful for the new roof, utility payments, and other help because everything was



Carter and his daughter, Macy. They started a relationship with Project NOW as customers but today we consider them life-long friends!

so expensive for dad when we were on our own,” said Macy. “You guys were there for us and that is a good thing. Everybody needs help — whether they admit it or not — because everyone struggles at one time or another.” Macy, who received her GED and a culinary arts certification, is now out on her own now, renting a home in East Moline and loving the changes. She knows if she faces challenges down the road, she will turn to Project NOW for assistance.

There is a saying about your life coming full circle. For Al Carter, now is one of those moments.

Just as Project NOW was able to help him when he needed an assist, he is now helping Project NOW fulfill one of its missions to educate and employ youth. Last September he was hired as Construction Manager of the “YouthBuild Quad Cities” program, which provides hands-on training and a stipend for twelve to 15 students from Thurgood Marshall Learning Center, Black Hawk College Adult Education, and Rock Island High School. The first home they are renovating — top to bottom — will provide a safe place for women affected by domestic violence. Carter says the youth will learn life-long skills such as carpentry, heating and air conditioning, plumbing, drywall, and landscaping. He loves this program because the students not only get to serve their community, but can build their own future. In addition to learning a trade, YouthBuild also provides a life skills program. Carter, who loves sharing his life story to students, hopes his life lessons will help students of the future avoid some of the problems he confronted early in life.

“This is such a good program that helps keep kids off the streets, so they do not end up like I did. With local trade schools and this program there are so many options out there,” he said. But as Carter says, if you ever need a hand up it is nice to know Project NOW is there doing what it does best — giving people a hand up and not a handout.” ❖

YouthBuild Quad Cities

“YouthBuild Quad Cities” is a program that allows young people to serve their community and build their own future. Every school day afternoon these young adults, in collaboration with Project NOW, refurbish homes to address this need. They are learning transferable skills, such as carpentry, heating and air conditioning, plumbing, drywall, and landscaping. This pre-apprentice program gives the participants an opportunity to look at work in the construction industry. The students are paid a stipend for their engagement, working one to three hours a day, four to five days a week. YouthBuild globally is in its 40th year of providing vocational training for youth aged 16-24, male and female.



YouthBuild Quad Cities Executive Director, Rufus Greer, Jr., says the program is a win-win for the community

— disenfranchised youth learn valuable skills while rehabbing homes for low-to-mid income families. Greer says in addition to learning a trade, YouthBuild also provides a life skills program. Our model at YouthBuild is “SUCCESS.” We define “SUCCESS” as the

progressive realization of a worthy goal. They have to start somewhere... then determine the direction they want to go... and work the plan — be goal oriented.” He says some of the students in the program nationwide have behavior problems or have been impacted by the justice system, so the life skills component of the program has been well received. School counselors recommend the students for YouthBuild. Anyone 16-24 years of age who has not completed their high school diploma or GED is a welcome applicant. Reach out to YouthBuild Quad Cities at 309.788.0899.

Project NOW’s Executive Director, Dwight Ford, is excited to partner with YouthBuild. “The students are learning essential career and life skills, both of which ensure a life with more opportunities.” ❖



When Neighborhood Outreach Work (aka Project NOW) was established in 1968, creating more affordable housing in the Quad Cities was one of several goals the young agency envisioned.



Vince Thomas

Pioneer of Project NOW's Early Push for Affordable Housing

DID YOU KNOW?

IMPORTANT DATES

1986 Project NOW acquired its first residential property.

1994 Project NOW owned 16 buildings — 37 residential units and 15,760 square feet of non-residential space — that included a coffee shop, bookstore, catering service, optical service, commercial storage, and a Mexican restaurant — valued at \$1.2 million.

2024 Project NOW currently owns 24 buildings with 91 residential units totaling 63,070 square feet. The agency has an additional 12 commercial spaces. The properties are valued at \$5,550,160.

In 1986, eighteen years after its formation, Project NOW celebrated the purchase of its first house. This purchase launched a critical victory in the field of affordable housing. The leader of Project NOW then was Vince Thomas, a familiar name that has been synonymous with Project NOW thanks to the almost 30 years during which he skippered the ship.

“We were energized by some early cheerleaders, like Rock Island business leader Peter Lardner, Congressman Tom Railsback, Deere & Co, Si Roberts of Black Hawk College, executive Jim Collins, former CEO of Project NOW. We also had support from neighborhood grassroots workers who went door-to-door to determine the needs of the residents, especially minorities, with low or no incomes,” said Thomas.



Project NOW's first house came with some luck involved thanks to a donation by the former owner. "My first task was to convince the board to both accept and rehabilitate the house, which we did," he said. "In the end, it was the goodness of some key people, such as Attorney Tom Blade, chairman of the board who helped us launch the housing initiative."

On August 13, 1969, the Rock Island County Board designated Project NOW as the official Community Action Agency for Rock Island County. The agency surveyed the community about priorities and identified affordable housing as the "most pressing challenge" facing lower-and-middle income families in the Quad Cities.

As time moved forward, Project NOW began receiving grants from the state and federal governments. Many of them aimed at housing. For instance, a December 31, 1997, Rock Island ARGUS article announced a \$600,000 grant to help open ten transitional housing units for the homeless in the Quad Cities area. At the state level, the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity assisted Project NOW with home weatherization funds and initiatives.

Thomas credits hard-working staff at Project NOW for the success with the housing program. In addition to assistance from government, Thomas also expressed appreciation to private-sector foundations like the Deere Foundation, and the Doris & Victor Day and Rausch Foundations for essential help in the early chapters.

Thomas said his persistence to create affordable housing wasn't always met with agreement from local housing staff and elected officials. "There were challenges along the way and we had a steep learning curve, but we learned a lot and utilized resources from strategic local, county, state and federal and private-sector partners," said Thomas.

Involvement with state and national housing organizations, such as Housing Action Illinois, Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLHIC) and the Illinois Association of Community Action Agencies (IACAA), Poverty & Race Research Action Council, to mention a few, all contributed to our achievements in housing senior citizens and those with low incomes, Thomas said.

Thomas recalled a phone call from a staffer with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Affairs Department in the early years. "He advised housing advocates to get in line with local elected officials because, he said, 'We can't be inside with the rebels.' Getting people on board at the Rock Island City council was a challenge in the early days," said Thomas. The city council at that time was interested in decreasing the number of low income residents, according to Thomas.

Sixty years after the launch of Project NOW, Thomas looks back with appreciation at the progress this community action agency has experienced. "The dream of a community-inspired activism to help the poor was our mission and I believe, we've made real progress," said Thomas.

But the veteran community action leader admitted he still enjoys raising the same kind of questions he asked during the early days. "Are we (city councils, county board, state legislators) spending local funds on the right priorities?"

"What motivated me then," Vince said, "and still does, is the admonition from LBJ's declaration in 1964 to Congress, when he declared a National War on Poverty; it is one of my favorite quotes: 'We must eliminate the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty.'" ❖



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Re-Entry Initiative

Launching New Lives

Thanks to a \$129,000 state grant Project NOW was able to welcome Tim Downey as its first occupant in a re-entry home for citizens being newly released from prison. The home in Rock Island will accommodate six adult males who are ready to start anew.

According to Project NOW's Community Services Director, Ron Lund, each year more than 100 people are released from the Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center and the East Moline Correction Center; but there is no re-entry home in our three-county area. He says most of these parolees do not want to go back to where they lived before and the same situation they experienced, but with their criminal history they are often denied housing, employment, and assistance programs. Lund says this house, and our newly designed program, will help our clients finish serving their sentences and become active, involved members of the community. "It has been shown that those who do not surround themselves with a support system are more likely to re-offend and cause harm to the community and themselves. This program aims to be that support system," he noted.

Each client will be required to remain compliant with their parole officer and will be subjected to all conditions of their parole. They will also meet weekly with a caseworker who will provide life skills training such as budgeting, parenting, conflict resolution, cooking,



Tim Downey enjoys his new Rock Island home. He is one of six men who will be housed in this three-bedroom house.



cleaning, relaxation, anger management and communication. Lund says there will be short- and long-term goal setting as well as monitored action steps to ensure the clients are successful.

"Services provided in this program will move participants to self-sufficiency by empowering them with skills and resources needed to maintain safe, decent, and affordable housing. Specifically, job coaching will provide the skills necessary to increase education, income, and employment which in turn will

enable participants to be financially responsible for their expenses," said Lund.

The grants are part of a state grant program, created as an element of the Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act signed by Governor Pritzker in 2019. The law requires using 25 percent of all cannabis tax revenue to support communities hurt by economic disinvestment, violence, and the severe and the disproportionate damage caused by the war on drugs. ❖

New House Receives Valuable Assist from Area Non-Profits

Project NOW's maintenance staff worked hard to make the 84-year-old house livable, but a group of volunteers with Humble Dwellings made the house a home. Humble Dwelling is a local not-for-profit, which collects gently-used donations of furniture and household goods and delivers them to people who are starting over (clients are chosen from agency referrals). As the CEO of the nonprofit, Stacy Hornbuckle says, "We love restoring dignity and hope to those in need by transforming their living space into a warm and inviting home...and it's an amazing group of volunteers who make it happen." Hornbuckle says Humble Dwellings is 100 percent volunteer driven. The volunteers meet with families, organize donations, run errands, stock rooms, clean couches, collect donations, and drive the truck (just to name a few jobs).

The day Humble Dwellings worked their magic at the Project NOW re-entry home, Hornbuckle partnered with One Eighty (another not-for-profit) that provided the muscle to unload the truck. One Eighty, based in Davenport, offers a variety of programs including a 14-month residential program for people coming out of crisis, poverty, incarceration, or addiction. Thanks to all the volunteers, the house transformation was done in less than a day. Not only was the house filled with furniture, kitchen appliances, and knick knacks, but there were meals in the freezer put together by the St. Paul Lutheran Church Youth Group. It truly does take a village and we are thankful! ❖





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Project NOW's Investments in Human Capital Creates a Circle of Help

Project NOW's driving force has always been to move people up and out of poverty. Our programming revolves around five pillars to help individuals and families achieve that — Housing, Healthcare, Economics, Justice, and Education.

For years Project NOW has been providing annual educational scholarships for those in our community who are seeking higher education or a certification. The scholarship program for low-income individuals in Rock Island, Mercer, and Henry Counties has helped dozens of students achieve their goal.

Another way Project NOW fosters the importance of education and life-long learning is baked into our Head Start policy. For more than 20 years Project NOW has been supporting and encouraging all staff to obtain additional schooling. To that end, Project NOW will pay for the tuition of any staffer who wants to pursue certification programs or academic degrees.

Project NOW's Executive Director, Dwight Ford, is proud of the dozens of staffers who took the agency up on its



offer to pay tuition costs. "The tuition assistance helped them reach their educational goals, but it also enhances performance in the classroom and service to clients," noted Ford.

Project NOW will pay for a CDA (Child Development Associate) credential issued by the Child Development Association, the Family Service Worker Credential, a two-year college



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Project NOW's Head Start teacher, Jaime Gryp, is able to get her bachelor's degree at no cost to her thanks to our tuition assistance program.

"I love my job! I love working with kids and families that need a little help. I was there and I know how they feel. It has been enjoyable watching kids grow up and being a part in their journey."

degree in Early Childhood Education, as well as bachelor's degrees. Currently there are 11 Head Start employees taking advantage of our program — working for us during the day and taking classes online, at night or on weekends. Over the years there have been dozens of employees who were able to take advantage of this financial benefit which helped not only their family, but all the Head Start students they taught.

Today, for instance Jaime Gryp is one of our Head Start teachers who is hitting the books after teaching all day in our Springbrook classroom. Like several of our Head Start employees there is a long history of being connected to Head Start in one capacity and ending up tethered years down the road in a different capacity.

Gryp was first introduced to Head Start 20 years ago when her son first entered one of our East Moline classrooms. As a new mom she volunteered in the classroom—reading books, wiping down tables, riding the bus with the kids; whatever help they needed. She says she

adored her son's teacher and wanted to help out. A few years later she became a full-time bus driver for Head Start. Project NOW paid for her CDL license, and she happily drove kids to and from school for seven years. Then she decided to go back to school so she could become a teacher. Per our policy, we paid for her associate degree from Black Hawk College. Gryp says having Project NOW pay the tuition costs "took a load" off — it was one less thing to worry about when working full-time and raising

three children. Gryp is currently enrolled at Western Illinois University working toward her BA in Early Childhood and she is on track to complete the degree in May 2026. Again, Project NOW is there.

Gryp is thankful for having Project NOW in her life for not only giving her children a great start (her 17-year-old twins also attended our Head Start program), but also helping her become who she wanted to be. "There is no way I could have paid for my education which has made me who I am today."

Gryp, who is in her 15th year as part of the Head Start family, exemplifies the Community Action promise — 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 each themselves and each other.

"Caring about the social fabric of a community requires a commitment to help people climb the rungs of the ladder of opportunity," said Ford. ❖

New Initiative:

Dementia-Friendly Quad Cities

Above, left to right: Elle Peoples, District Director, Office of Representative Gregg Johnson; Susan Thompson, Agency Director, Addus Home Care; Heather Stancliff, Director of Marketing and Sales, Friendship Manor; Amy Iams, LPN/Center Director, Active Day; Debbie Elliott, Outreach Coordinator, Western Illinois Area Agency on Aging; Michelle Dyer, Senior Services Director, Rock Island County Senior Center/Project NOW; Kristin Czuba, PT, DPT, CEEAA, GCS, Certified Exercise Expert for the Aging Adult, Geriatric Clinical Specialist, Certified LSVT BIG Provider, Rock Valley Physical Therapy; Bill Horrell, Community Impact Coordinator, Alternatives

With 220,000 people in Illinois — and five million nationally — afflicted with dementia, caregivers, families, and those with dementia face unique daily stress.

But thanks to the leadership from the Illinois Cognitive Research Network, the Western Illinois Area Agency on Aging, Project NOW and community partners, a new initiative is underway to create a more “Dementia Friendly Illinois” and “Dementia Friendly Illinois Quad Cities.”

Michelle Dyer, who’s spearheading the new effort for Project NOW, said the team is planning >>>



a May 30th Launch Party to kick off the “Dementia Friendly Illinois Quad Cities” Campaign. “With the number of families and caregivers dealing with this challenge only increasing, we need to step up and help alleviate the daily stress in their lives,” said Dyer.

“All too often caregiver’s of a loved one with dementia are made to feel that they should not be comfortable going out into the community,” said Dyer. “Our goal is to create a more dementia-friendly community that helps caregivers and those being cared for. We want them to be able to go out into this community and find new places to enjoy themselves.

The initiative, which is helped by a \$35,000 grant from the State of Illinois, is under the umbrella of the National Institute on Aging and a national non-profit, “Dementia Friendly America” which started a few years ago. Dyer, who

said this is the first multi-city effort, explained that frequently visited spots — banks, grocery stores, coffee shops — are their priority targets in Rock Island and Moline. They’ll also collaborate with police and fire departments.

Dyer said once new allies — from area businesses, libraries, interested community members — are recruited they’ll be trained to be better equipped to deal with those afflicted with dementia.

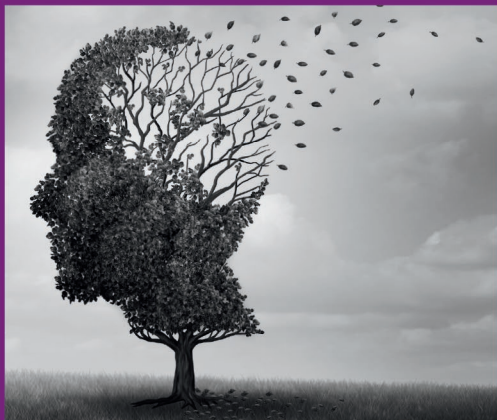
Project NOW Executive Director Dwight Ford, an enthusiastic supporter, welcomes the challenge to help the Quad Cities become more inclusive for people with dementia. “A key test for this or any community is how we treat those suffering with mental health challenges,” said Ford. “In the case of dementia, there are two people who are afflicted with the dementia diagnosis: the caregiver and the person suffering with dementia.”

“A Dementia-Friendly Quad Cities, which we’ll strive to become, will foster a safer and more informed community that makes it easier for people living with dementia to remain in the community and thrive on a daily basis,” said Ford.

Dyer said the May 30th event is meant to kick off the initiative with a party for interested community leaders, stakeholders as well as a dinner celebration for caregivers and those living with dementia. “We want our kick-off to send a message — that we thank our community partners and at the same time we want to create a fun night for caregivers and those being cared for.”

You can learn more about Dementia Friendly Illinois at www.ilbrainhealth.org/dementia-friendly-illinois. You can become a Dementia Friend by signing up at www.dementiafriendsusa.org ❖

Coming soon Dementia Friendly Quad Cities



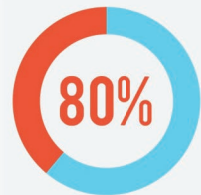
Impact on persons with dementia and caregivers

By 2025, the number of people age 65 and older with Alzheimer’s disease is projected to reach 7.1 million.

One in 10 people age 65 and older have Alzheimer’s dementia.



1 in 5 people with dementia live alone



80% of people with dementia live at home or with family.

We aim to make the Quad Cities Dementia Friendly by educating the community and providing resources to caregivers.



Individuals, businesses, and organizations can make a difference.

Contact us at: mdyer@projectnow.org to learn more about how to join the initiative.



Early Threads of Social Justice Woven Into the Story of John Deere & Project NOW



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. shared the Davenport, Iowa stage in April, 1965, with John Deere Executives, Project NOW's Founding Director, Simon "Si" Roberts (far right), and other supporters of racial justice.

"The commitment to racial justice has deep roots at Deere ... As a company, Deere has always taken its core values from its founder and namesake, John Deere. Deere himself was labelled a "raging abolitionist" by a local newspaper for his political effort during the American Civil War, aligning himself with the Whigs, and then the Republican Party, the party of Abraham Lincoln."

The John Deere Journal story also highlighted some interesting facts from Deere's history that shed light on its civil rights commitment:

- › In the early 1900s Deere employed many Black employees at its John Deere Harvester Works, Marseilles Works and Foundry in East Moline, and even loaned funds to a local church supported by many of those employees.
- › In 1922, the Deere Board of Directors assumed the outstanding \$1,100 mortgage of the African Methodist Episcopal Church of East Moline.
- › Frank Dickey, the Vice President of Deere's Industrial Relations, recalled that in the late 1950s Deere took steps to combat segregation by elevating blacks to higher-level management jobs; the so-called "white collar" jobs.
- › In 1955, Deere began making contributions to the National Negro College Fund and was involved in helping Quad City-area programs identify and help at-risk black youth.

A confluence of financial support in 1968 from members of the Rock Island Interracial Council and a donation from the John Deere Foundation generated the necessary start-up funds to launch a community action agency dedicated to defeating poverty. Project NOW got off the ground with a budget of \$12,500. John Deere also loaned one of its employee's, Jim Collins, to be Project NOW's second CEO. He served from 1968-1971.

The Quad Cities, home of John Deere's global headquarters, was also the site of an historic visit from the late civil rights legend, the Reverend Martin Luther King. On April 28, 1965, King came to the Quad Cities to receive the coveted Pacem In Terris Peace and Freedom. Eight hundred people gathered to see him get this award.

According to a copyright story which appeared in the John Deere Journal (January 17, 2019, "The Day John Deere Shared the Stage with Martin Luther King, Jr.") Besides the honor of King's visit, the event in Davenport held additional significance for John Deere. A newspaper account of the event said Deere's President and Chairman at the time, William Hewitt, was one of three leaders recognized for "leadership in fostering racial justice in the Quad City business and industry, especially in the area of equal employment opportunity." Hewitt's wife, Patricia Hewitt, was also a supporter of the effort and she donated \$3,5000 to the Neighborhood Outreach Work, Inc., which later became Project NOW.

As the Journal story reported—John Deere's commitment to racial justice was not something new.

- › In 1957, Deere hired its first Black supervisor, Chuck Davis.
- › In 1963, Deere & Company established a corporate program for working with potential high school dropouts. It also began recruiting employees from six African American colleges.

The 2019 Journal story also profiled Charles Toney — a Deere employee who advocated for equality and civil rights.

“Deere benefited from the work of many civil rights activities, chief among them Charles Toney, a long-time employee, activist, and General Chairman of the Pacem in Terris award ceremony. Toney was the first Black welder in the states of Illinois and Iowa when he joined Deere in 1938. In 1943, he and his wife stopped at a soda fountain in Davenport,

Iowa, and because of their races, were asked to leave. Toney filed suit the next day and eventually won the first civil rights lawsuit in the state of Iowa.”

In 1944, he started a magazine called *The Sepia Record*, the first pictorial magazine dedicated to Black culture published in the United States. It predated *Ebony* magazine by two years, but due to financial issues, likely the loss of advertising due to the lawsuit, published only two issues. The magazine set another precedent—John Deere’s full-page cover advertisement was the first by a major corporation in a primarily black publication. Toney left Deere for a time, returning in 1947 to his former position as a shop welder, and ultimately worked his way up to become the Manager of Minority Relations in 1968. He retired after 42 years of service, as Director, Affirmative Action.”

And there was another unique John Deere connection to Martin Luther King, Jr. The John Deere Journal tells the story: “That night, after the event (in Davenport), William Hewitt (then Deere’s CEO and also a civil rights advocate) left for New York, with a stop in Chicago. As it happened, King needed a ride to the Windy City; Hewitt offered a seat on the company plane. Surely, the two spoke of the unfinished work ahead.”

In the 49 years that have passed since King and Hewitt flew from Davenport to Chicago, much has changed in the Quad Cities. But, despite progress in areas of social and economic justice, there remains poverty in the midst of plenty that keeps Project NOW in motion on a challenging journey to improve the quality of life for all. ❖

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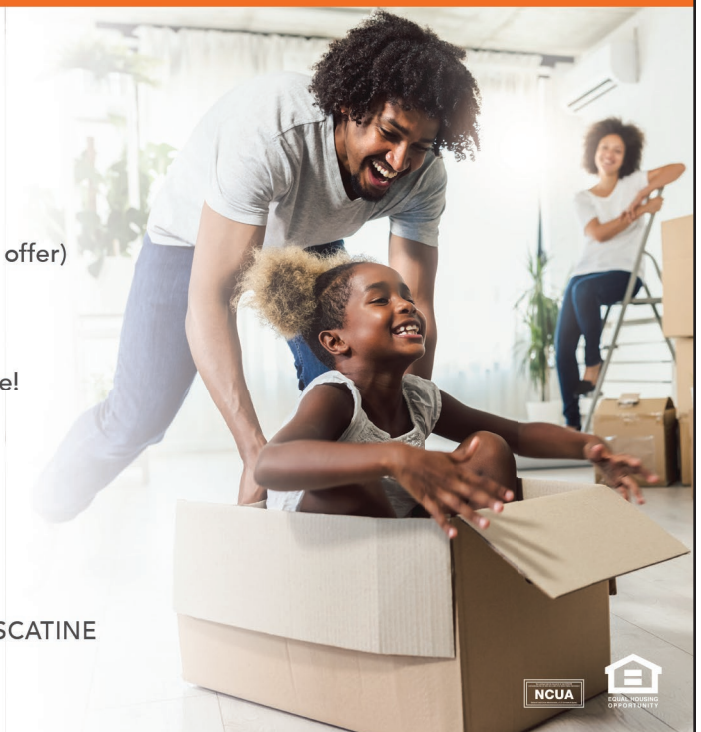


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Project NOW

OUR BOARD

We have 15 board members representing the three counties we serve — Rock Island, Mercer, and Henry Counties. Our board is tri-partite representing:

- The low-income community we serve (C)
- Private sector (Pvt)
- Elected officials (P)

Cathy Bizarri, Chair (C)
Emily Cummings, Vice Chair (C)
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Suzanne Eagle, Secretary (P)
Gary Bradley (P)
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Carla McElrath (C)
Brandy Poston (Pvt)
Moses Robinson (P)

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Jeni Biskie, Chief Financial Officer
Ron Lund, Community Services Director
Kris Downey, Associate Community Services Director
Michelle Dyer, Senior Services Director
Katie Resig, Special Projects Director
La Ronda Birch, Human Resources Director
Andrea Flannery, Head Start Director

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THE MISSION OF PROJECT NOW, INC.

is to strengthen communities by helping people help themselves and one another. We strive to eliminate the causes of poverty through strategic partnerships and alleviate the negative conditions where poor people live.

OUR VISION STATEMENT:

We envision the whole community working hand in hand to meet human needs, protect human dignity, and restore hope.



NOW Magazine

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- Caregiver Supportive Services
- Transportation
- Activities Virtually and In-Person
- Tablet Library
- Home Activity Kits
- Friendship Line

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Center at 309-788-6335 for more
information about available services
and programs.**