

October 19, 1995  
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MEMO

To: Cindy Hirst  
From: Jerralynn

**Changing Face of Poverty:**

Who is poor and why they are poor has changed over the decades, in large part as a result of the social, economical and political decisions made by society.

Prior to the establishment of Social Security, a high percentage of elderly and disabled people lived in poverty. Social Security significantly reduced that percentage. During the 1960's and early 70's, many low income families and individuals had grown up in generations of poverty and were struggling to break the cycle. Education, training, life skills and employment opportunities, coupled with basic social services broke the cycle of poverty for many. From the mid-70's through the mid-80's there was a dramatic increase in the number of single parent, female headed households living in poverty. Divorce and loss of a spouse became a one way ticket to poverty, as women struggled with child rearing, child care, low wage jobs and no medical benefits. And finally, over the past decade, the face of poverty has become predominantly young, working families. These families are working as hard as ever but do not clear enough in their paychecks to cover the basic costs of food, housing, utilities and transportation. The loss of family wage jobs, the increase of low paying and part time work, the demise of affordable housing support and the lack of affordable child care have contributed to their poverty, their homelessness or created barriers for them to move out of poverty.

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To: Cindy Hirst

From: Jerralynn

You did a great job last night---it is a real pleasure having you as our Board Chair! Here's the info you requested, I hope it is what you had in mind. Call me with any questions or needs for additional information.

**Comparative Figures:**

In the initial years of Community Action our budget was about \$250,000, with about 20 staff and around 40 kids enrolled in Head Start. Today our budget has grown to \$4.7 million, with 140 staff and nearly 400 kids served by Head Start. We have steadily grown over the past 30 years to address the changing conditions of our community (population growth, demise of family wage jobs, lack of affordable housing and child care) and the resulting needs of the poor (hunger, homelessness, access to affordable housing, child care, training, and gainful employment).

**Changing Face of Poverty:**

Who is poor and why they are poor has changed over the decades, in large part as a result of the social, economical and political decisions made by society.

*"The Deserving Poor"* - Prior to the establishment of Social Security, a high percentage of elderly and disabled people lived in poverty. Social Security significantly reduced that percentage, and it was further decreased with the advent of SSI (Supplemental Security Income) in the early 1970's for low income elderly and disabled who had not built up adequate SSA benefits.

*"Generational Poverty"* - During the 1960's and early 70's, low income families and individuals had grown up in poverty and were struggling to break the cycle. For the most part, they lacked the opportunities, encouragement and resources to break down the barriers. But more importantly, they lacked the hope and the vision that life could be better and had few positive role models, low self esteem and limited life skills.

*"Feminization of Poverty"* - From the mid-70's through the mid-80's there was a dramatic increase in the number of single parent, female headed households living in poverty. Divorce and loss of a spouse became a one way ticket to poverty, as women struggled with child rearing, child care, low wage jobs and no medical benefits. Added to this group were elderly women long outliving their spouses with minimal resources to support them.