

1995-96 Letter to Our Friends

Dear Friends,

On October 13, 1965 the Washington County Community Action Organization was created. Our funders, Reverend Walt McGettigan, Bob Warner, a school _____ (teacher? Principal? superintendent?) from North Plains and John Dezell, a citizen activist and attorney, set up the agency as a private, non-profit corporation to address issues of local poverty. Along with our incorporators, _____ (3) local residents concerned about poverty in their communities, signed on as members of Community Action's first Board of Directors and became part of a much larger initiative America's War on Poverty, led by President Lyndon B. Johnson.

Much has been said and written about America's War on Poverty. In Washington County, the establishment of a community action agency and the development of many anti-poverty programs, such as Head Start, came out of a community of concerned people. These individuals had the foresight to know that the quality of life for the whole community would suffer if a conscious and caring effort wasn't made to address the issues of poverty and the concerns of people living on low incomes.

And 30 years later, that commitment has grown beyond what our founders could envision. Throughout every community in Washington County, individuals, businesses, civic and fraternal organizations, churches and local governments are contributing to building a healthy community where low income families and individuals can have opportunities and hope. Many are volunteering their precious time and donating their valuable resources to address poverty concerns. They understand the relationship of homelessness, family violence and crime to lack of opportunity and loss of hope.

And while the Community Action Organization has evolved and grown over these first 30 years, we remain a vehicle through which our communities can act on their poverty concerns and carry out their commitments to make a difference. One thing 30 years of experience has taught us, is that we cannot succeed in our work if it is done in isolation, outside of the broader context of community. Poverty is a community concern and it is a major issue for those who struggle on low incomes. Community Action has changed over the years, and with that we have strengthened our view of our responsibility to work in collaboration with others.

Our 1995-96 was indeed a milestone year as we reflected on our 30 year history. But it was also a turning point for the organization as we completed construction of our multi-service center in Hillsboro and moved out of five sites into our new central facility. Every day, over 100 low income 3 and 4 year old children walked through our doors, anxious for the new experiences they would have and friends they would make in Head Start.

Our central kitchen quickly geared up to support the food and nutrition needs of the children enrolled at our multiple Head Start sites, delivering over 600 meals daily. We were pleased to be

able to offer space to and welcome other service providers to become a part of our center, including: La Case del Futuro, PCC-Even Start, ESD Early Intervention, PCC Employment and Training Bilingual Outreach and the Housing Development Corporation. By co-locating, unanticipated initiatives and collaborations sprung up, increasing needed services to the low-income community. In addition, our meeting facilities were regularly utilized by dozens of community groups.

But as important, Community Action Multi-Service Center serves as a reminder of the deep commitment our community has made to assure that issues of poverty are successfully addressed. And with their belief in us, we remain committed to assist the community in being a place where every low-income family and individual can achieve their dreams through self-determination and opportunities.