

Project NOW History

2015

Project NOW had its beginnings as a grass roots organization in the mid 60s when Father Tom Murphy and the former Father Jack Real as new pastors of Sacred Heart Church and St. Joseph's Church decided people in the neighborhoods needed more help than they were getting.

Members of their churches and neighborhood residents got together and planned on ways to bring attention of the authorities to the problems families and individuals were having. What was first the Catholic Interracial Council became the Rock Island County Interracial Council and the membership base increased. This resulted in more pressure on the decision makers to bring about changes. There were a few successes, but much remained to be done.

After the assassination of, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the organization was recognized as one that deserved financial support. In May, 1968, Project NOW, Neighborhood Outreach Work Inc., was established and officially recognized by the local governments. The budget of \$12,500 was supported by members, fundraisers and a generous donation from The Deere Foundation.

The next year Project NOW - as it soon was called - received federal funds and federal recognition as a Community Action Agency. Today Project NOW helps serve more than 38,000 individuals and families in three counties. From an original staff of three, today there are 140 employees on the payroll with an annual budget of \$13 million.

Many people you know have been connected with Project NOW over the years. Agency Directors include: Si Roberts, the first director in 1968, followed by: Jim Collins (1968-1970) who was the first fulltime director, Larry Pollard (1970-1974), Vince Thomas (1974-2001), Lucinda Mohr (2001-2004), Maureen "Mo" Hart (2004 - Present).

Others you may know include Stella Schneekloth, Rosie Pemberton, Ida Robinson, Rick Early, Odessa Terry, Patsy Bewley, Peter Lardner, Nancy Pulfrey, Father Jack Real, Charlean Talbert, Lucy Luna, Merritt Thomas, Toni Reyes, Patricia Pullen, Betty Miller, Sandra Fowler, Betty Fort Willis, Favian Ortiz, Ohly Ohlson, Sandi Phillips, Tom Blade, Guadalupe Reyes, Pearlie Hall, James Stampley, Margaret Ingram, Art Sierra, Frances Olvera, Ferne Perkins, Coleman Harris, Rusty Cather, Bob Hepner, Lo Milani, Marianne Moore...and this list goes on. We are proud to be part of the community and have the support of the communities we serve.

We know there is much yet to be done to "eradicate the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty." We are committed to this and hold onto the words of Martin Luther King Jr., "Change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability, but comes through continuous struggle." Together we will persevere.

Historical Timeline

- 1968 Project NOW - Neighborhood Outreach Work, Inc. became incorporated; 1st Outreach office located at 617 9th Street, Rock Island.
- 1969 First Annual Board Meeting
- 1970 **East Moline Office** opens
- 1971 Project NOW designated a **Community Action Agency for Rock Island County**
- 1974 Head Start/Home Start program begins; Weatherization program begins
- 1975 First Senior Meal Site opens
- 1976 LIHEAP (utility assistance) program begins
- 1977 **Aledo and Kewanee Outreach Offices open**; 400,000 Betty Crocker Coupons collected to purchase 1st Senior Transportation Van.
- 1978 Project NOW designated a **Community Action Agency for Mercer & Henry Counties**; **Aledo Head Start** programs begins
- 1979 **Summer Lunch Program** begins @ Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, Silvis which is purchased this year
- 1980 Guadalupe Meal Site opens
- 1981 **Mercer County Home Start Program** begins
- 1982 Rock Island County Senior Center Opens at 1919 5th Avenue Rock Island in the old Immanuel Lutheran School building and is designated as the Community Focal Point for Seniors. Good Things NOW Used Clothing Store opens in Rock Island.
- 1983 **CSBG Small Business Loan Pool** established
- 1984 Project NOW distributes government food surplus
- 1985 **Homeless assistance begins**; 1st single family home donated to agency on 5th Avenue Moline
- 1986 New Boston Meal Site Opens; **CSBG Scholarship** Program begins
- 1987 **Self Employment Training** begins; Weatherization expands to include furnace replacement/repair
- 1988 Community Gardens
- 1989 Homeless Services expands to include **Transitional Housing**
- 1990 Three buildings are rehabbed for Affordable/Transitional Housing, including duplex on 17th Street Rock Island, 12th Avenue Rock Island single family home and the Crouch Apartments 8-plex in Rock Island
- 1992 Kreative Kids Day Care opens in the old Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, Silvis; Amigo Park, Moline is established and dedicated. Moline Outreach building is acquired and rehabbed with 2 apartments upstairs and Outreach offices and a Good Things NOW store downstairs. Single family home acquired and rehabbed on 5th Street, Rock Island
- 1993 Project NOW forms a **Community Housing Development Corp** and becomes a **CHDO** (Community Housing Development Organization); Several properties are acquired and rehabbed including house next door to Moline Outreach

- building with 4 sleeping rooms and an apartment; Single family house on 13th Avenue and 4 plex on 20th St, Rock Island; Commercial property on 2nd Avenue, downtown Rock Island. Project NOW celebrates 25 years of service; flood relief is a focus
- 1994 **Homebuyer and Home Rehabilitation Programs** begin; Affordable Housing continues to expand with the **acquisition & renovation** of 2 separate 4 plexes and 1 single family home in Rock Island as well as a duplex in Kewanee
- 1995 **5 properties acquired** and rehabilitated by Project NOW including Admin building @ 418 19th Street, Rock Island, 2 single family homes, Sojourner House for Homeless women and the Floreciente Center on 4th Avenue in Moline; Good Things NOW Used Clothing Store opens in Aledo
- 1996 **Rivercrest Apartments** (8 units) are built in **Keithsburg**; Duplex acquired on 24th Street in Rock Island; Good Things NOW Rock Island building acquired
- 1997 **Marigold Apartments** (8 Senior units) are built in **Viola**; 15 County Continuum of Care is organized for Homeless Service delivery
- 1998 **Old Chicago Apartments** (11 units) are rehabbed in Rock Island
- 1999 **New Boston Apartments** (8 units) are built
- 2000 **Youth Transitional Housing** Program begins (Crouch Apartments)
- 2001 Rock Island County Senior Center relocates after 19 years to 2221 11th Street, Rock Island; Head Start Floreciente Building acquired at 350 3rd Street, Moline for 2 classrooms. Vince Thomas retires after 29 years.
- 2003 **Knox Apartments** (11 units) in Kewanee are renovated.
- 2005 Silvis Head Start relocates after 15 years to the Florence Aldridge Building in East Moline; Kewanee Head Start relocates to St Paul's Evangelical; Lutheran School Building; Good Things NOW, Rock Island, receives a facelift
- 2006 **Senior Home-Delivered and Congregate Meal Programs** expand to **Mercer County**; American Dream Down-payment Initiative (ADDI) Homebuyer Program begins
- 2007 **Weatherization's Energy Conservation & Home Repair (ECHR) Program** begins
- 2008 Project NOW celebrates **40 years with a "Ruby Celebration of People"** at Blackhawk State Park in Rock Island; Rental Housing Support Program begins; flood relief is a focus
- 2009 **RIM Rural PUBLIC Transportation** in Rock Island & Mercer Counties is formed; Weatherization Program increases dramatically with funding quadrupling; **American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)** funds provide service to more Outreach customers;
- 2010 **ARRA funding** is in full swing especially increasing the capacity of Weatherization and Community Services programs (HPRP and CSBG) which see large increases. Agency audited revenues increase 34% from 6/30/08 (\$11,189,127) to 6/30/10 (\$15,004,432) due primarily to ARRA funding. Senior Services venture into Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedom IDOT Transportation Programs.
- 2011 Rebranding of Project NOW! Head Start is declared a "Center of Excellence"

by the Federal Office of Head Start.

- 2012 **Percentage of Income Payment Plan "PIPP"** is implemented as part of LIHEAP in the rural areas. 152 units of Housing at **Maple Ridge Apartments** in Rock Island are **Weatherized** with ARRA funding. Rebranding efforts continue.
- 2013 Project NOW is 45 years old! **RIM Rural Public Transit** shows strong growth. **Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG)** helps keep hundreds of families housed with Rental Assistance. **Sequestration** funding cuts affect programs especially Head Start. Outreach staff trained in **Affordable Care Act** enrollments.
- 2014 **Attorney General funds** allow for essential improvements to Project NOW's Affordable Housing Rental units. Sequestration cuts of previous year are restored. Strong year for Homebuyer and Home Rehab.
- 2015 **Old Chicago Apartments** receives extensive exterior renovation using Attorney General and MidAmerican funds. **State of Illinois NO budget** negatively affects programs, with decreased and/or delayed funding. Bob Hepner retires after 27 years on Project NOW's Board.