

## **Project NOW History**

Project NOW had its beginnings as a grass roots organization in the mid 1960's when Fathers Tom Murphy and Jack Real (as new pastors of Sacred Heart Church and St. Joseph's Church) decided people in their neighborhoods needed more help than they were getting. Members of their churches and neighborhood residents got together and planned ways to draw attention to the problems families and individuals were having making ends meet. 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 tens of thousands of individuals and families in Rock Island, Henry, and Mercer Counties in Illinois. From an original staff of three, today there are 113 employees on the payroll with an annual budget of approximately \$21 million and we are celebrating our 55<sup>th</sup> year of moving people up and out of poverty.

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 – 2020), and Dwight Ford (2020-present).

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; 1<sup>st</sup> Outreach office located at 617 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Rock Island. Si Roberts, begins serving as Interim Executive Director. Jim Collins, begins serving as Executive Director.
- 1969 First Annual Board Meeting.
- 1970 East Moline Office opens. Larry Pollard, begins serving as Executive Director.
- 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. Vince Thomas, begins serving as Executive Director.
- 1976 LIHEAP (utility assistance) program begins.
- 1977 Aledo and Kewanee Outreach Offices open; 400,000 Betty Crocker Coupons collected to purchase 1<sup>st</sup> 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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. CSBG Small Business Loan Program makes first loans.
- 1985 Homeless assistance begins; 1<sup>st</sup> single family home donated to agency on 5<sup>th</sup> Ave Moline
- 1986 New Boston Meal Site Opens; CSBG Scholarship Program begins.
- 1987 Self-Employment Training Program begins and works well with the already established Small Business Loan Program. Weatherization now includes furnace replacement/repair.
- 1988 Community Gardens created.
- 1989 Homeless Services expands to include Transitional Housing.
- 1990 Three buildings are rehabbed for Affordable/Transitional Housing, including duplex on 17<sup>th</sup> Street Rock Island, 12<sup>th</sup> 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 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Rock Island.
- 1993 Project NOW celebrates 25<sup>th</sup> year anniversary; 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 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 4-plex on 20<sup>th</sup> St, Rock Island; Commercial property on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, downtown Rock Island; 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 Administration building @ 418 19<sup>th</sup> Street, Rock Island, 2 single family homes, Sojourner House for Homeless women and the Florecente Center on 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Moline; Good Things NOW Used Clothing Store opens in Aledo.
- 1996 Rivercrest Apartments (8 units) are built in Keithsburg; Duplex acquired on 24<sup>th</sup> Street in Rock Island; Good Things NOW Rock Island building acquired.
- 1996 Marigold Apartments (8 senior housing units) are built in Viola; 15 County Continuum of Care is organized for Homeless Service delivery.
- 1997 Old Chicago Apartments (11 units) are rehabbed in Rock Island.
- 1998 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 11<sup>th</sup> Street, Rock Island; Head Start Florecente Building acquired at 350 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Moline for 2 classrooms. Vince Thomas retires after 29 years of service. Lucinda Mohr begins serving as Executive Director.
- 2003 Knox Apartments (11 units) in Kewanee are renovated.
- 2004 Maureen “Mo” Hart, begins serving as Executive Director.
- 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 our 40-year anniversary 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 Transit in Rock Island & Mercer Counties is formed with Project NOW as the operator; American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) quadruples Weatherization Program funding and increases CSBG funding, allowing us to reach more Outreach customers.
- 2010 ARRA funding is in full swing, increasing the capacity of Weatherization and Community Services programs (HPRP and CSBG). Project NOW’s audited revenues increased 34% from 6/30/08 (\$11.2 million) to 6/30/10 (\$15.0 million) due primarily to ARRA funding. RIM Rural Public Transit incorporates 2 new services, 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 receive Weatherization with ARRA funding. Rebranding efforts continue.
- 2013 RIM Rural Public Transit shows robust 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 Illinois Housing Development (IHDA) Homebuyer and Home Rehab Programs.
- 2015 Old Chicago Apartments receives extensive exterior renovation using Attorney General and MidAmerican Energy funds. State of Illinois NO budget negatively affects programs, with decreased and/or delayed funding.

- 2016 State of Illinois' lack of budget continues, halting Housing Programs and cancelling Senior Transportation for 2 months. CSBG Small Business Loan Program is discontinued. New OMB Super-Circular impacts program accounting.
- 2017 Amigo Park in Moline's Floreciente Neighborhood is donated to Habitat for Humanity to build a single-family home. Housing Rehab Programs cut in 2016 are restored. IDOT updates Transportation fleet with 7 new vehicles.
- 2018 Project NOW celebrates our 50-year Golden Anniversary. Ameren Illinois makes available additional Weatherization funds.
- 2019 Moline Outreach offices partners with Global Communities, City of Moline & Bob Ontiveros; 1<sup>st</sup> Housing Stability award from ICAA Family of Distinction.
- 2020 Dwight L. Ford begins career as Project NOW's Executive Director. Partnership with SCORE to create a minority women's entrepreneurial program. Partnership with Winnie's Place to keep the shelter open. COVID vaccine clinic held at Project NOW.
- 2021 COVID-Cares Relief-Due to the generosity of many our partners, we were able to help more people than ever before; we helped hundreds get through this crisis. Created Eviction Diversion program with the 14<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit. Created a chapter of Fully FREE to end permanent punishments for those leaving prison (The Justice Network). City of Rock Island Nonprofit of the Year & Citizen of the Year Awards. Creation of an annual Hispanic Block Party.
- 2022 Andrea Flannery is named Head Start Director. Received R-3 grant to open a re-entry home. Partnership with YouthBuild to rehab our properties. Creation of a monthly Poverty Book Club with the Moline Library. Refurbished first Honor Home for a homeless veteran. Acquired a mobile food truck and conducted food giveaways—at our office & in the Floreciente neighborhood
- 2023 Project NOW acquires the DeLaCerde homes. Aledo Head Start classroom opens. Esperanza Center in Moline re-opens for 85 children. Partnership with the city of Moline & the creation of the Level Up program. Opened a Head Start building in Aledo. Nonprofit of the Year by the Greater Quad Cities Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. Took over management of the DeLaCerde properties. Director Ford participated in a state-wide Racial Equity Roundtable on Black Homelessness. First annual Poverty Conference. Publication of the first NOW Magazine. Quad Cities Business Journal's award for Non-Profit Collaboration of the Year for our work with the Eviction Diversion program.
- 2024 Celebration of our 55<sup>th</sup> year continues; 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of Community Action Agencies; a re-entry home for six men opens; a medical respite facility for the homeless opens.