



contents

In Times Like These 1-2,9-10

Letter from the Director 3

General Assembly News 4

CFNP News 5

ICADC Training 5

Adsystem Software 6

RCAP RECAP 7

Skillbanking 7

Peer Exchange 9

FCD Interview 8-9

Community Action OFFICERS

Mr. Dwight Lucas, Chair
East Central Illinois Community
Action Agency
Danville, IL

Ms. Granada Williams, Vice Chair
Rockford Dept. of Human
Services
Rockford, IL

Mr. Frank Schwab, Treasurer
Illinois Valley Economic
Development Corp.
Gillespie, IL

Ms. Mary Lockhart-White,
Secretary
Lake County Community Action
Project
Zion, IL

Mr. Dalitso Sulamoyo
ICAA President & CEO
Illinois Community Action
Association
Springfield, IL

VOLUME 28 • JULY 2003

provide for their families, but in women and children who are deeply traumatized by this disease of the heart of a nation. So when we combat homelessness, we are not just keeping people off the streets so we don't have to pass them on the way to our jobs or homes, we are actually preserving and restoring the souls and spirits of disillusioned people. Your work in this regard, especially advocating for homeless youth, is so desperately needed in times like these.

In times like these when there is as much poverty of the spirit and soul of our people as there are economic deficiencies, we need you to be that voice crying out in the wilderness of apathy reminding us that social policies and programs we implement, must address the emotional and spiritual needs of those impoverished. In your work you must feed those you are called to serve with a sense of hope, purpose and pride that is so badly needed today. Whether you know it or not, your words, presence and spirit can strengthen and straighten out crippled backs keeping the forces of oppression from riding them anymore. In the cities and towns that you serve, with all the political freedom that exists, there are shattered people who languish in the gutters of despair and depression sentenced to limited visions and stifled dreams. They need you in times like these. They need you to keep reminding policymakers that the goal of the federal government is not caseload reduction, but poverty reduction. Until we can see and analyze all of the factors and forces that create poverty and develop a systematic policy to address them, and formulate plans that will nurture whole and self-sufficient people, then we will continue to create generations of dependent people.

In times like these when this nation has waged a war to bring security to the world and freedom to the people of Iraq, we need your voice to remind this nation that there are those who suffer from violence, brutality and neglect right here in our own backyards. We need your voice to remind this nation that the war on poverty in America was never won at home, and the war on drugs was never waged or won in our communities. The war on illiteracy, unemployment, and underemployment needs some active soldiers here at home. Though we have overthrown a dictator thousands of miles away, the dictators of indifference and neglect have never been totally overthrown in America. There are

parts of the south and west sides of Chicago that look as war-torn as parts of Iraq do today. So regardless of whether one agreed with the war or not, we cannot overlook the fact that there are people in our midst whom we must serve and defend. There are many problems right at our doorstep, and we must enlist our social and public armies to eradicate them.

We also need you in this era of war to remind us that love is more than a nice salutation to be used in letters and greeting cards. Love is an immeasurable and powerful force that can transform people and nations. This divine love that Dr. King and numerous community activists talked about and willed to us, is a balm that can heal our political and spiritual conflicts and wounds. They understood that we needed to become a self-reflective nation that was not only strong militarily, but spiritually and morally as well. In these dangerous and volatile times we need community activists to wage a war of love.

In times like these when migrant workers in Illinois earn only \$10,000 a year, and 70% of that goes to addressing their housing needs, then we need you. We need you to be a voice for those who we would otherwise forget and ignore. We need you to not only work with others to secure rental subsidies for these workers, but to examine the wages and quality of life that these workers are presently doomed to endure. In this country we must always strive to balance our business quest for profit with our moral command for fairness, human decency and respect. This balance has never been easily reached at any time in this nation, and that is why you are so desperately needed in times like these.

In times like these when political leaders can openly yearn. For the good old days when black people knew their place and we didn't have all these problems, we need you to remind the nation that what some yearn for publicly, others may yearn for in silence. For equality and respect comes not just from transformation of the laws of a nation, but through the transfiguration of the soul and heart of a people. The racial problems and discrimination that we experience today is not the product of this country's failure to hold on to segregation, but its refusal to uproot this diseased tree and all of its countless consequences. Instead, this nation has placed band-aids like affirmative action in hopes of covering up this social cancer. And now in these times, the Supreme Court will

(cont. on pg. 9)

A Few Words From:



Dear Members:

This edition of the ICAA newsletter opens with a copy of David Hall's riveting speech he gave at the Opening Session of ICAA's Annual Meeting. The 2003 ICAA Annual Meeting was very successful. With 140 in attendance, this was one of our larger meetings. The conference's nationally recognized Families of Distinction event had 183 in attendance including the 16 families we were honoring. Thank you for attending and participating in this year's conference.

One of the workshops at the Annual Meeting was a demonstration by Adsystem Inc. The purpose of their software is to share information across databases and integrate common information into a central intake system. The ICAA is working on partnering with the Adsystem Company to provide technology that will create a central intake system for all of an agency's programs and will be able to integrate data from existing program databases.

ICAA is seeking funding on behalf of the membership to purchase the system for the CAA network. Phase 1 of this endeavor will consist of six agencies piloting the software with ICAA coordinating site visits to these agencies. In conjunction with the next ICAA board meeting scheduled for July 29, 2003 there will be membership training the following day to demonstrate the software in operation at Community Action Partnership of Lake County. Phase 2 entails raising sufficient funds to purchase the database for other interested members.

The 2003 Legislative session proved to be very successful for Community Action in Illinois. Our state advocacy agenda was quite full and involved the following areas of interest:

Good Samaritan Energy Assistance: This bill which was introduced and passed during the last legislative session allows DCEO and the Policy Advisory Council to have access to utility bills twice a year to do direct mail fundraising for the Good Samaritan Fund.

FCD Funding Maintained: ICAA was successful in keeping the Family and Community Development program funded in the IDHS Budget at the same \$325,000 level. On behalf of the membership I would like to extend my appreciation to Mike Mannion, our contractual lobbyist, for his tireless efforts to maintain FCD appropriation.

Illinois Housing Initiative: This new initiative will be charged with the development of a statewide affordable housing plan that will coordinate and streamline the allocation of housing resources for underserved low-income populations in Illinois.

The ICAA plans to promote the mission of Community Action around the state with representatives of ICAA members and staff traveling to eight Illinois communities via charter bus August 6th & 7th. At predetermined agencies we will hold news conferences with the media and local, state and federal government officials. The news conferences will focus on the benefits of Head Start, LIHEAP and CSBG, in order to promote these three programs up for reauthorization this year. The cities where news conferences will be held are Peoria, Rock Island, Joliet, Champaign, Edwardsville and Springfield at the Capital. We would also stop and visit the member agencies in Galesburg and Effingham.

We see this tour of Illinois as a chance to increase awareness and rally support for Community Action. We are inviting staff from all member agencies to be a part of this tour which will begin and end in Peoria.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Board of Directors and staff for their hard work and commitment to strengthen this Association so that we can continue to be resilient in our fight against poverty in Illinois. I Hope to see you all at the national conference in Anaheim, California next month. Thank you.



Dalitso Sulamoyo
President & CEO
Illinois Community Action Association



ICAA has General Assembly Successes but Warns They Could be Overshadowed by LIHEAP Surcharge

Illinois' new Governor and General Assembly took office amidst an atmosphere of doom and gloom, facing a \$5 billion deficit and predictions of huge budget cuts and/or an income tax increase. However, as the dust settles at the close of Spring Session, none of these threats came to pass.

Potential LIHEAP Cut: The 2004 Budget has one provision that could cost low-income households as much as \$4 million in LIHEAP assistance. The FY 2004 Budget places a 5%-8% surcharge to all Special Funds in the State Treasury. The State's Supplemental LIHEAP Fund is one of these funds. Towards Session end, we received assurances from the Bureau of the Budget that the LIHEAP surcharge would only be enacted as a last resort. However, the LIHEAP surcharge is still part of the budget and (considering the State's budget woes) it will probably be enacted unless CAA's rally to prevent it.

The use of these funds to help balance the Illinois Budget is a bad idea for the following reasons: 1) The State LIHEAP fund gives a service priority to low-income senior citizens and people with disabilities; 2) A 10 percent administrative cost is already allowed by statute for DCEO and local administering agencies to operate the program; 3) Current resources are only sufficient to provide assistance to approximately 45 percent of households that are income eligible for LIHEAP; and 4) An additional 5-8 percent surcharge to the Supplemental Low Income Home Energy Assistance Fund would result in the annual loss of approximately \$4 million dollars - or the equivalent of denying assistance to as many as 10,000 eligible LIHEAP households.

ICAA Successes in GA Session: Despite a session wrought with challenges, there were several successes. Three of them are noteworthy:

Good Samaritan Energy Assistance Act: Senate Bill 1066 passed in the final days of

the Spring Session. This bill allows DCEO and the Policy Advisory Council to have access to utility bills twice a year to do direct mail fundraising for the Good Samaritan Fund. (In a state as small as Oregon, they raise \$1 million per year with a similar effort.) ICAA will work with the PAC to implement this program and potentially generate significant funds to help with arrearage reductions for LIHEAP households.

FCD Funding Maintained: ICAA was successful in keeping the Family and Community Development program funded in the IDHS Budget at the same \$325,000 level. This will keep FCD Trainings up and running and preserve the hope of expanding upon this program in the future.

Illinois Housing Initiative: This new initiative will be charged with the development of a statewide affordable housing plan that would coordinate and streamline the allocation of housing resources for underserved low-income populations in Illinois. The annual plan will be developed by a task force chaired by a designee of the Governor and will include all key State agencies involved in housing issues, as well as other housing experts. Development of the plan will also include federal and local government representatives, Public Housing Authorities, for-profit and not-for-profit developers, supportive housing providers, business, labor, lenders, and fair housing agencies. ICAA has requested a seat on the task force. The Governor or his designee will issue requests for proposals to entities interested in developing affordable housing in underserved areas of Illinois annually. Funding from state, federal and private sector sources will be distributed on a competitive basis. ■

ICAA Annual Meeting Candid Camera



Left to right: John Colgan, Frank McNeil, Matt Pidgeon, Sen. Maggie Croty and Dwight Lucas



Dalitso Sulamoyo, ICAA Annual Meeting Keynote Speaker David Hall, Mary Lockhart-White and Dwight Lucas.

VOLUME 28 • JUL 2003

CFNP News

The ICAA is accepting applications for funding available through a grant awarded to ICAA by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) for the Community Food and Nutrition Program (CFNP). Four (4) grants will be awarded on a competitive basis for Food Stamp Outreach Projects. The desired outcomes of the FSOP include the following:

- Relationships with local DHS offices will be improved.
- Communities will be organized into a social service network that can be utilized for advocacy, improving services, identifying needs, reducing duplication of services, and sharing information and resources.
- The selected grantees will promote a positive image and accurate eligibility information about the FSP in the community through advertising, public service announcements, news releases, and marketing materials.
- The barriers that prevent potentially eligible FSP recipients from being approved will be identified and action will be taken at the local and state level to reduce or eliminate those barriers.
- A local hotline number will be available for community residents to call for general FSP information and to be pre-screened for Food Stamp eligibility.
- Food Stamp participation will increase in the selected grantee communities.



If you are interested in applying please contact Holly Copeland-Lasley at 217-789-0125 or hcopeland@icaanet.org. ■

ICADC Training



Affordable Housing 101:
A 4-day comprehensive training on pre-purchase housing counseling.

In May the Illinois Community Action Development Corporation held a four day workshop for housing counselors entitled “Affordable Housing 101: A 4-day comprehensive training on pre-purchase housing counseling”. The workshop was very successful. 33 people attended of which 25 were staff from community action agencies. The workshop received very positive evaluations.

ICADC Board and Staff are currently reviewing the responses to the Training Needs Survey. If you have not returned the survey, you may still do so. There will be two to three more workshops in 2003. We anticipate trainings on single family housing development and financing senior housing. A workshop schedule for the rest of the year will be available in July. Please call Joyce Probst to discuss your affordable housing training and technical assistance needs. ■





Moving to the Next Level of Information Management: The Adsystem Software Project

In this day of increased use of technology to manage human service programs, it appears that every state and federal program has its own system to collect the information. The CSBG system is called Tracker. Weatherization has TRACKER. LIHEAP uses Mainframe IMSC. Head Start requires its grantees to use the HSFIS system. HUD does not have a mandated database system, but it is requiring all of the Continuum of Care networks to set up their own data bases. Some agencies even have dedicated staff for data entry of each database. Technology is supposed to increase efficiency and improve service delivery, but in many ways it has limited an organization's ability to maximize its resources, provide comprehensive support to families, and determine its impact on the communities they serve.

The Illinois Community Action network is attempting to move away from this isolated, stovepipe, approach to a system that can share information across databases and integrate common information into a central intake system. The ICAA is partnering with the Adsystem Company to provide technology that will create a central intake system for all of an agency's programs and will be able to integrate data from existing program databases. Adsystem has provided several demonstrations of their software to the Illinois network, including at this year's ICAA annual conference. The demonstrations have generated much enthusiasm for the software among the membership.

On the membership's behalf, the ICAA is seeking funding to purchase the system for the CAA network. This project will be handled in phases: Phase 1, six agencies will pilot the software and ICAA will coordinate site visits to these agencies to acclimate other members with its use in the "real world". The Pilot

Agencies include: East Central Community Action, Rockford Human Services Department, Wabash Area Development Incorporated, St Clair County Intergovernmental Grants Department, Community Action Partnership of Lake County, and Tri County Opportunities Council.

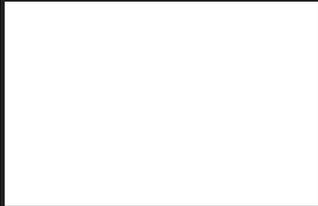
Phase 2 entails raising sufficient funds to purchase the database for the rest of the members of the association that are interested in the software. The Adsystem Platform is expensive therefore it is more cost effective for ICAA to purchase the software "in bulk" than for individual agencies to pursue this on their own.

Despite the costs, Community Action Partnership of Lake County is moving forward in their interest to adopt the Adsystem system and is purchasing the product on their own. If ICAA is able to secure funding for its project for the CAA network, then Adsystem will adjust the cost to Lake County to cover the configurations that will be unique to Lake County. In conjunction with the next ICAA board meeting scheduled for July 29, 2003 there will be membership training on the following day to demonstrate the software in operation at Lake County's agency.

Identifying all programs a client is eligible for during central intake maximizes the client's ability to gain self sufficiency and stability. In an environment where guaranteed funding is becoming obsolete, improving the way agencies manage information is critical to client service, success documentation, and to an agency's survival itself. This is the time for the Illinois Community Action network to lead the way by becoming one of the first states to implement an integrated approach to information management. ■



ICAA Annual Meeting Candid Camera



Adsystem software demo.



ICAA Annual Meeting participants look on as Adsystem demo continues.

VOLUME 28 • JUL 2003



Resource Recovery

In 1986, the Illinois Solid Waste Management Act was passed in an effort to support recycling. Since then, recycling has developed into a 12.2 billion dollar industry that generates 1.8 billion dollars in payroll and employs more than 56,000 people. Illinois is home to more than 2,400 recycling and re-use establishments.

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity is now in round 22 of grant funding for the purpose of diverting post consumer recyclable material from landfills, increasing the quantity of materials recycled in Illinois and to sustain Illinois' recycling industry. It's increasingly difficult to open new landfills due to more stringent regulations with which to comply. Moreover, some organizations are opposed to opening new landfills and create additional challenges. The goals of the solid waste management act include reduced reliance on land disposal of solid waste, promoting alternative means of managing solid waste, and assisting local units of government with solid waste planning and management. The solid waste management fund is financed by a state surcharge imposed on dumping fees for the landfill disposal of municipal solid waste.

RCAP encourages our member agencies to investigate the recycling initiatives in their communities. Is your community underserved or served at all? Is there room for expansion into the under-served rural communities surrounding your own? Could this be a possible revenue stream for your agency or community employer?

And finally contrary to belief, recycling does not destroy jobs in a consumer based economy. Recycling will actually add value to a consumer driven economy by decreasing costs for the producers and consumers. It maintains quality and product demand and reduces quantity of raw materials needed. The diverting of solid waste from our landfills helps to conserve resources, maintain a clean water supply, and create jobs. ■



Skillbanking

Recently, a Peer-to-Peer Skillbank survey was mailed to recruit network members to be a part of the Skillbank Exchange program. From this, ICAA will glean membership sources of expertise in order to facilitate peer-to-peer exchanges. If you feel that you have a special skill or ability to share, please take advantage of this opportunity. Contact Christine Westerlund at ICAA HQ to learn more about this program.

Take advantage of the Skillbank's information collection to improve your job skills or to learn something new. Here are a couple of new titles in the Skill Bank collection that are available for your use:

[Breakthrough Thinking for Non Profit Organizations: Creative Strategies for Extraordinary Results](#) by Bernard Ross and Clare Segal, 2002.

This book, part of the Jossey-Bass Series on Non-Profit and Public Management, is a good introduction to thinking outside of the box. In today's non-profit world, dollars are tight and all of us have to do more with less. Reading this will not only inspire you, but will encourage you (and your staff) to actively pursue creative solutions within your organization. New tools are introduced and well-explained, especially the Ladder of Implication and the Mindmapping. This book is highly recommended for executive directors and administrative staff.

[Success Measures Guide Book Version 1.2](#) by the Development Leadership Institute, Boston, MA, 2000.

The guidebook is a work in progress, which solicits input from the users of the guidebook. That concept alone is worthy of your attention to this useful book, especially if your agency is involved in community and economic development. The words, "accountability" "effective" "success" and "stakeholder" are sprinkled liberally through out the text and the style is engaging and thought provoking. Worksheets, which the reader is encouraged to replicate and share, provide focus to a myriad of community development issues. This book is recommended for planners and managers. ■



Sharing the Experience: The Weatherization Peer Exchange at the ICAA Annual Conference

ICAA Annual Meeting Candid Camera



St. Andrews bagpipe player Steve Scaife provides entertainment during dinner.



CEFS Executive Director Paul White enjoys dinner with the Rebecca Kuhlman FOD family

There is a wealth of knowledge and experience in the Illinois CAA network that is under-utilized. Oftentimes CAAs turn to outside consultants who may or may not understand the uniqueness of community action to address problematic areas in the organization. The ICAA's Peer Exchange program has been around for many years as a means of offering low cost technical assistance to the network by seeking assistance from CAA peers with specified areas of expertise and experience. The revival of this peer exchange method includes such recent activities as preparing agencies for the Head Start Peer Review, addressing corporate stability issues and learning and gaining consensus on programmatic issues facing the Illinois network. The weatherization peer exchange held at this year's ICAA annual conference was an example of the latter, sharing ideas regarding common practices in Weatherization.

There were nine agencies participating in the exchange and the meeting was facilitated by the chair of the Energy subcommittee of the association. This was a unique experience compared to most meetings that typically involve only two or three agencies. This exchange was set up as a forum, covering a wide range of topics such as determining the necessity of doing an intermediate blower door reading, clarifying any confusion regarding the new audit for materials used on a work order, discussing the con-

trovery over providing weatherization to renters and how much (if any) costs should landlords pay for work done on their property. While no consensus developed to possibly report to the energy subcommittee, a good dialogue transpired. To close out the exchange, a staff person from the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity fielded any questions that staff had on the state and federal regulations.

The Association has also sponsored one on one peer exchanges this year including one involving the ICAA Individual Development Account (IDA) Program. Another potential exchange would involve CAAs new to the Family and Community Development (FCD) Program who expressed interest in visiting an agency with more experience operating the FCD Program. The ICAA pays for the travel expenses to conduct the exchange. If your agency is interested in doing a peer exchange with another ICAA member or even an organization that is not in the CAA network, please contact Christine Westerlund or Michelle Pulce to set up a meeting. Peer Exchanges are a useful and low cost means of gleaned valuable insight into how other agencies operate their programs and how those methods may be applied to your own agencies. ■

FCD Interview with Lisa of Madison County

A ROMA-inspired quest for concrete benefits of Family and Community Development (FCD) Training prompted ICAA to interview a recent graduate of the training.

Lisa Henke has worked at Madison County Community Development (MCCD) since summer of 1995 as a student worker. After earning a degree in Studio Art from Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville in 2002, she was hired full-time by MCCD. She works with the Food Stamp Outreach Program, specifically serving the low-income population who are eligible for but not receiving Food Stamp benefits and encouraging them

to sign up at their local DHS office for assistance. In addition, she works with the ROSIE system, a version of a HUD Management Information System (HMIS). Lisa is currently engaged to "the most wonderful man on the planet," and they're planning a November 29th Wedding.

Question One: Describe your FCD Learning experience

The FCD experience has helped me change the way I 'help' customers.

FCD Interview (cont. from pg. 8)

I have learned how to empower customers. I have learned the necessary skills to deal with families' problems and crises, and how to determine what services and what type of support they need.

Question Two: Has the training helped your ability to serve clients (even if your contact with them is limited)?

I feel that my ability to serve clients has changed since my FCD training experience. This training has taught me about family structure, and the ways a person or family in crisis can act differently. It also taught me how to determine why a family is in crisis (the cause). Knowing this information, I am first able to gain the customer's trust, and then focus on the needs that they present to me, and also give each customer as much time as he/she needs. Many times, in addition to the normal services I provide a family, I am someone who listens, which is valuable in itself. .

Question Three: Please give an example of how learning evolved into real case work?

I recently had the challenge of working with a person who's hearing impaired. My initial contact came when she made a surprise visit one afternoon, so I was unable to have an interpreter present. We wrote notes back and forth to each other which ended with her agreeing to make an appointment and come back. I made arrangements for an interpreter to be present at the next scheduled appointment. Unfortunately, she did not show up which prompted me to have negative thoughts. As it turned out, she missed our appointment because she was in the hospital receiving stitches due to physical abuse from her spouse.

At our next meeting, we will use a genogram to help the client focus on what family members actually live with her. This will assist with her attention deficit issues and help to establish a pattern of her taking responsibility so we can associate past and present living situations to help clarify things for her.

Question Four: How has the FCD experience changed your approach to dealing with clients?

I try very hard, not always successfully, to give clients the benefit of the doubt. I also try to give guidance to individual clients and give them the tools to actually solve problems with supervised guidance with the hope that one day this guidance will be retained and applied to future problems.

Lisa to shares the following inspiring quote with co-workers. (John-Paul is the head trainer at the National Resource Center, and is currently training Summer FCD class at Silvis. ■

In Times Like These (cont. from pg. 2)

soon determine if even that band-aid can remain. But if that band-aid is removed and nothing substantive is put in its place, then the open wound of this country's horrid past will be exposed again. What your voice can add to this debate, is that regardless of what the Supreme Court decides in the University of Michigan case, if we don't do something to address the underlying causes and conditions of generational poverty and its devastating consequences, then the dreams of this nation will never be fully realized. You cannot correct centuries of racial injustice and poverty by wishing them away.

In times like these when budgets are tight, government spending must be reduced but there are not enough resources to address all of our critical needs – we need you. For in these times it is very easy to sacrifice the needs of those who have little political power. But it is the legacy of your agencies to loudly and proudly be a voice for those whose passion for life has been sucked out of them through circumstances and tragedies; for a nation is not ultimately judged by how it caters to the desires of the powerful, but by how it responds to the needs of the powerless. You must remind this nation that our entry into heaven is dependent in part on how “we treat the least of these my brothers and sisters.” As the poverty rate climbs in this country will we dismiss it as a statistical anomaly, or will we see it as a spiritual call and challenge that we must respond to even in tight fiscal times like these.

In times like these it is easy to erect walls between the haves and the have-nots. We need community activists and policy makers who will bestow on us x-ray vision so that we can see each other's hearts, feel each other's pain, and respond to each other's needs. In times like these we need each other. We need to reach beyond our safe and traditional spaces and touch the essence of life again. We need to be honestly concerned about the suffering that exists within our midst, within our own families, and within our own mind. In times like these we need you.

In times like these when the limitations and hypocrisy of some of our religious leaders have been exposed, we need you to remind those you serve that we must never put our ultimate faith in the hands of men and women. For only the God we serve is infallible. We also need you to remind our leaders and the leaders of your organizations that the oaths we take are sacred and must be upheld, and that those oaths are not just for clergy, but also for lawyers, politicians and community action leaders; and when we violate these oaths of trust and faith, we do so much damage to the lives and faith of those we were called to serve. We also need you to remind each other when one does make mistakes, “that a saint is just a sinner who fell down and got up.” So much of our hurt and confusion from the sexual abuse cases in the church is that those who knew

(cont. on pg. 10)



ICAA Annual Meeting Candid Camera



Rockford Dept. of Human Serv. -
Boone Co. Tutoring Proj.



Madison Co. Community Dev.
- Food Stamp Outreach Program



Sangamon Co. Dept. of Community
Resources - Dental Assistance Prg.



Champaign Co. Reg. Planning
Comm. - Court Diversion Services

VOLUME 28 • JUL 2003

In Times Like These (cont. from pg. 9)

God, fell down and chose to remain there. In times like these we need you to live up to the highest ideals of your calling.

Regardless of the position you occupy within your agency, or this association, you are our leaders. You are 21st century chosen ones who have been called to finish the work of those who gave birth to this vision. You were not chosen because you descend royalty and privilege. The chosen ones of this generation are born out of the pain of humility and crowned with a mandate of service. They earn their respect through the pureness of their heart and the consistency of their deeds. Like those who preceded you, we need leaders who put people before politics and do not crumble when public opinion brings criticism and shame.

In times like these we need you more than we ever did before. Yet none of you alone can be this nation's knight in shining armor that will save us from indifference and neglect. There is no Martin Luther King reborn that will emerge from a southern pulpit and lead us in our continuing struggle for freedom, dignity and love. In these times we all must become community action leaders and workers. Each of us is responsible for living out the ideals that Dr. King and others offered up to this nation. Dr. King was the embodiment of a powerful ancient spirit that visited this nation for a moment in time. Though the physical manifestation is gone, this powerful spirit is hovering over us waiting to be called into service by each one of us so that we can meet the challenges of this generation.

I deeply believe that just as Martin was fashioned by God for his time, you and I were molded and shaped for this present age. The question is – will we use our inheritance and change this society and world, or will we squander these gifts by failing to see the injustice, hate and suffering that stares us in the face.

Unfortunately, the struggle for love and justice never ends. There is no place we reach where a society needs no longer to learn how to love. There is no oasis where truth is always present and justice automatically achieved. These ideals require the service of men and women who understand what they have been called to do in their time, and will boldly meet the challenge.

So in conclusion – If this conference is only an opportunity for you to get away from the office and

network with others who do the same work, then of a spiritual journey to Jerusalem or Mecca where we renew our faith and rededicate ourselves to the service of the ideals upon which these programs were created. This must be a sacred opportunity for you to re-commit yourself to this mission, not because it's your job, but because the ideals this organization stands for ought to be some of the most sacred principles of each person in this room and of this nation.

In the 60's to be a true community action leader meant that one had to overcome a lot of fear especially if your agency was located in the south, or even southern Illinois. One had to overcome the fear that your building and your life could be the target of violence and disdain. But your predecessors found an answer to their fear. Just as they, by tapping into a deep spiritual well were able to work through their fears, we must drink from that same well and work through our fears. For though we may not have to fear violent attacks, we must work through our fears of collective complacency; our fear that no matter what we do nothing will really change; our fear that if we go against the accepted view we will lose our standing and position in society. Their lives are shining examples that on the other side of fear lays the true land of freedom. If we do not escape our fears, then we will remain enslaved no matter how much funding we secure or new regulations we get passed. These courageous men and women who gave birth to these agencies and movements stared fear and death in the face and did not flinch. They became free men and women in that moment. Long before civil rights legislation was passed they had already reached the freedom land of their souls and spirits. They were able to reach this place because they served and submitted to a God that only brings good news. They saw and understood the good news that comes from struggle, and even the good news that comes from death. If we embrace the spirit of these community action heroes and heroines and apply it in times like these you must remind us that this movement of self-sufficiency and community empowerment does not belong to you, but to each individual. This is a mantle that has been passed onto a nation. All of us must engage in community action in times like these and for time eternity. It is only by continuously walking down this path together can the true dream of this nation be fulfilled. ■