

# History of the Human Development Commission



1965 to Present

***This history is a mere outline of the Human Development Commission's activities which have been drawn from Board of Directors minutes and Annual Reports. Both sources reflect specific achievements, but fail to record the personal sacrifices made which contributed to the results. Despite this, the records illustrate the many efforts made to improve the quality of life for thousands of Thumb area citizens who have been our partners during the agency's existence.***

### **1965**

Following the adoption of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, residents of Huron, Lapeer, Sanilac and Tuscola Counties formed a Community Action Agency which became known as the Thumb Area Economic Opportunity Commission (TAEOC).

At a meeting held on January 20, 1965, which was initiated by the Tuscola County Extension Director Alfred Ballweg, representatives from each county expressed a desire to proceed with incorporation of the agency. In order to provide local matching funds required to apply for the original federal grant, two local attorneys, Don Reddy of Caro and Jim Churchill of Vassar, each played an important role; Churchill promising to rapidly complete the incorporation papers and to personally pay for the \$20 filing fee, and Mr. Reddy offering to donate office space at 264 North State Street for use by the agency.

Articles of Incorporation were filed on January 27, 1965. Original offices for the agency were located at 264 North State Street in Caro, and then subsequently moved to 455 North State Street during the first year of operation.

Goals of the organization were, and still are, *"to stimulate a better focusing of all available local, state, private, and federal resources upon the goal of enabling low-income families and low-income individuals of all ages to attain the skills, knowledge, and motivations necessary and to secure the opportunities needed for them to become self-sufficient."*

### **1966**

The first Annual Report was published in March of 1966. Highlights of that report include the development of a Medicare Alert Program coordinated with the Social Security offices and funded with a grant from the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) in the amount of \$11,461. The agency received a special citation from the Governor for this demonstration project. The Tuscola County Family Counseling Center was developed and meetings were held with citizens from Sanilac County regarding a family counseling center. A Child Development Project serving 110 pre-school children was initiated in Huron County, and summer programs were developed under Head Start legislation at eight separate Thumb Area sites. Director Benko developed the proposal for Teen Ranch with Ray Clendenan of Youth for Christ, and was eventually funded through private resources after being turned down by OEO, thus initiating that facility in the Thumb Area. The agency also provided review, approval and coordination of all Title 1 applicants under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

### **1967**

The Board of Directors was increased in size from 28 to 42 members to meet new guidelines as required by amendments to the original Economic Opportunity Act. Board membership included 14 members from public offices and agencies, 14 members from community groups and 14 members representing low-income individuals.

All services initiated the previous year were maintained. More than 400 individuals were served through the Family Counseling Center. The agency worked with 27 schools in the approval and coordination of Title 1 applications. The first outreach staff were hired to work with low-income families and individuals to secure employment, housing, clothing or food and worked closely with other agencies to better coordinate efforts to improve self-sufficiency of area citizens. Included in their responsibilities was the charge to find incidences of poverty in the four-county area and make recommendations to eliminate these incidences. On March 14, 1967 the offices of the agency moved from 455 North State Street to 223 East Sherman in Caro.

### **1968**

Statistics from the Annual Report showed that 21.2% of the Thumb Area population had a total annual income of less than \$3,000. Unemployment and underemployment were identified as major causes of poverty and efforts were initiated to assist individuals in this area. Grants were written for job and classroom training. Also, the agency operated a Neighborhood Youth Corps Program employing in-school, out-of-school, and summer low-income youths and initiated a Summer Enrichment Program for youths 12 to 15 years of age.

## 1969

Kenneth Phelps, owner of Dyer's Jewelry Store, donated second floor offices at 264 North State Street in Caro for further expansion of the agency, thus providing for return to the original offices of incorporation. Credit Counseling Services were initiated and, through a Planning Grantsmanship Program, proposals were submitted for Foster Grandparent programming, On-The-Job Training Programs, a Housing Development Corporation and a Legal Aid Program. In July of 1969, Mr. LeRoy Marion was appointed Executive Director of the agency.

## 1970

The agency opened its first field office in Harbor Beach. New programming was initiated to provide court counseling in Sanilac County and an agreement was negotiated with United Migrants for Opportunity to serve migrants in the Thumb Area. A proposal was submitted for alcoholism counseling and rehabilitation. A program to provide emergency food and medical services was also initiated and the agency received permission from the Federal Housing Administration to begin construction of 25 homes. Construction began on the first five homes in Fairgrove, an additional five homes in Bad Axe and a third set of five homes in Sandusky. Besides maintaining on-going programs, a GED testing program was also initiated, as well as a Huron County Dental Health Program.

## 1971

Thumb Area Helpline was established with agency funds to provide crisis referral by phone to Tuscola County residents and a Big Brother Program was established in Huron County. The agency also opened a field office in Sandusky and the Thumb Area Non-Profit Housing Corporation spun-off to become an independent agency. The Tuscola County Sheriff requested assistance in developing and implementing a program for prevention of drug abuse and a citizen's committee was formed. The agency initiated and provided funding for the Huron County Dental Health Council as an innovative pilot project in preventive dental education. Initial efforts were made to organize a Community Development Corporation in the area and an endorsement was received from Sanilac County.

## 1972

A research project was initiated with Michigan State University and the membership drive continued in the Community Development Corporation. The agency became a Western Union Agent to provide a service no longer available to the community and to raise funds for community development projects.

## 1973

The year was one of great challenge and many changes. It began with the threatened closure of the Office of Economic Opportunity. Under the direction of the agency's new Director, Sally Atchinson, the name of the agency was changed on August 1, 1973 to the **Human Development Commission** (HDC). Research with Michigan State University continued by developing studies in the Thumb Area such as Wildlife Enterprise, Recreation and Tourism, Community Services and Community Development. The Community Development Corporation spun-off under the independent leadership of its Board and members. Operation Mainstream Job Training Programs were expanded to a 14-county service area following the recommendation of the Regional Manpower Planning Board.

## 1974

The agency was designated Area Agency on Aging for a 14-county area, as well as Coordinating Agency for Substance Abuse in Huron, Lapeer, Sanilac and Tuscola Counties. Efforts were also made to organize the Commission on Aging in the Thumb Area, and a grant was written for congregate meal sites. Pre-school toys and materials were provided to local libraries to form pre-school resource centers. A proposal was developed with Michigan State University to study the usage of these materials and to work with parents. The 264 North State Street offices in Caro were expanded by installing a fire door between Dyer's and Ramsower's clothing store. Mr. Ramsower donated the second floor to the agency.

## 1975

The Annual Report reflected ten years of operation, financial growth and community participation. Meals-On-Wheels was initiated for housebound elderly with special dietary needs. The budget exceeded \$2 million of local, state and federal funding. Additional facilities at 190 North State Street in Caro were donated to the agency by Mrs. Fern Atwood and were designated to house program staff. This additional space also provided a regular Board of Directors' room and needed storage area.

Congregate meal sites were established in Huron, Sanilac and Tuscola Counties, and the Thumb Commission on Aging and the Area Agency on Aging were made independent. Head Start grants were transferred to a sister Community Action Agency. Under the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act, separate Manpower Consortias were formed in Huron, Sanilac and Tuscola Counties and in the nine northern counties of the region. Independent Manpower contracts were developed with both of these consortias, as well as a subcontract with Saginaw County for Adult Work Experience. The Substance Abuse Advisory Council was formed and licensure procedures and an annual plan were developed. The first food cooperative was organized in Caro.

### **1976**

Pilot Detoxification and Alcohol Highway Safety Programs were initiated increasing substance abuse services in the Thumb Area. The Meals-On-Wheels program in Pigeon, Harbor Beach and Sandusky became independent. Food cooperatives were organized in Bad Axe, Sandusky, Millington and Lapeer. Weatherization programs were started in response to the energy crisis and a field office was opened in Sandusky.

### **1977**

A new field office next to the courthouse in Bad Axe was provided by the Huron County Board of Commissioners. Programming continued with further food cooperative development in Lapeer. After three years of continuous efforts by the agency, a \$15,000 Juvenile Justice grant was funded and distributed to the counties of Huron, Sanilac and Tuscola. The Meals-On-Wheels Program in Lapeer was assumed by the County in July. A recycling program utilizing summer youth for curbside pick-up was initiated and the proceeds were used to build drop boxes for year-round recycling.

### **1978**

New employment and training programs were developed, such as the Senior Community Service Program and Senior Aides Program to assist older workers in finding employment, the Foster Grandparent Program to match low-income elderly volunteers with special needs youth, Partners for Youth Program for adjudicated youth, and the Career Employment Experience Program for high school youth.

Energy conservation efforts were expanded by securing insulation blowers and vehicles. Crisis Intervention funds were received to aid individuals with the high cost of electric and fuel bills. A Breeder Pig Program was also conducted as a demonstration in rural self-help. Initial activities in the development of a resource system for all human service providers in the four-county area began and the possibility of establishing a Human Service Coalition for the Thumb Area was explored.

### **1979**

The agency produced its first four-year planning document. It assisted with the incorporation of the Thumb Coalition of Human Services and entered into a cooperative agreement for the purchase of a building to be utilized as future barrier-free office space for the agency.

Internal change included the hiring of Mary Ann Vandemark as Executive Director, and many programs doubled in size including the Outreach/Intake Services, Weatherization and Crisis Intervention Programs, along with Adult Work Experience Training activities. Helpline of Tuscola County merged with the agency to assist in the operation of a four-county toll-free Information and Referral Service and a Title XX Housing Program was initiated. Planning services expanded to assist other groups in seeking and securing grant applications.

### **1980**

Major program areas were continued with expansion into a demonstration grant in credit counseling for the Farmer's Home Administration. The agency received a \$300,000 Community Development Block Grant Program for the Village of Caro and an Energy Conservation grant through the Economic Development Authority for three village-owned buildings; both grants relating to housing rehabilitation and energy conservation. Multiple funding sources were utilized to renovate the former Caro Lumber Company into a barrier-free office building to serve as the Human Development Commission's main office under a 30-year lease with the Village of Caro. A small water/wastewater grant, issued through the Regional Community Action Programs, was received.

### **1981**

On March 13, 1981 the agency moved into its new office building located at 429 Montague Avenue in Caro and maintained field offices in other counties. Economic development was a primary focus with the development of a Storm Window Manufacturing Unit, a woodcutting project and an office supply co-op. An agreement was reached which enabled the agency to insulate homes under

Detroit Edison's Free Insulation Program. Funding was received from the Department of Labor for a Displaced Homemaker Program, a Budget Credit Counseling Program was funded through the Tuscola County Department of Social Services, and the Substance Abuse Services Coordinating Agency consolidation was initiated with St. Clair County. Work also began on Tuscola County's 20-year Solid Waste Management Plan.

The economic conditions in Michigan, plus the national phase-out of the Community Services Administration, created further community action involvement in coordinating and maintaining basic services, including distribution of surplus cheese and other emergency services. PA 230, Michigan's Economic and Social Opportunity Act of 1981, was passed during the 81st Legislature.

### **1982**

Basic program operations were continued with a stronger emphasis placed on current needs and future economic growth. The agency played a lead role in the coordination of food distributions with churches and civic groups in the four-county area and distributed surplus commodity cheese made available by the federal government. Emergency housing was expanded through a joint effort with the Caro Regional Mental Health Center and a \$1.3 million, 32-unit, low-income, senior citizen housing project was funded for construction in Croswell. The agency worked with Jordan College to develop Learning Centers in the Thumb Area and explore alternative energy sources. Efforts continued on the Tuscola County 20-year Solid Waste Plan. The Storm Window Manufacturing Unit and woodcutting projects were expanded.

### **1983**

In a nationwide effort to alleviate the problem of hunger, the agency developed a continuous system for the distribution of surplus commodities, assisted in the establishment of emergency food banks within the four-county area, and funding was received for the provision of emergency food and shelter. Emphasis was placed on the Community Action Agency slogan "*Investing In People*" in order to obtain greater community involvement in Community Action. In an effort to develop its economic base, the agency continued to insulate homes under the Detroit Edison and Consumers Power Outreach Insulation programs. The CAA Supply Co-op and Storm Window Manufacturing Unit were further developed.

Michigan Community Action Agencies received a supplemental funding appropriation of \$607,000 and funding was received for the Commodity Distribution program.

### **1984**

An \$80,000 discretionary grant was received for expansion of the Storm Window Manufacturing Unit in which plans were developed to add storm doors and weatherstripping to the current line of products. An assumed name of Thumbody Enterprises was filed to encompass the economic development programs of the agency and a Business/Economic Development Advisory Council was established to assist with the direction of these activities.

The agency was subcontracted by the Village of Caro to operate Thumbody Express, the bus system for Almer and Indianfields Townships. Construction of the 32-unit Croswell Country Manor was completed late in the year and the agency was successful in applying for funds, on behalf of Tuscola and Sanilac Counties, to operate housing rehabilitation programs. A grant was received from the Bio-Energy Council to work with an engineering firm to study the potential of utilizing wood chips as an energy source.

Other programs operated during the year included COPE, Weatherization, Coordination of Substance Abuse Services in the five-county area, Information and Referral, Displaced Homemaker, Tuscola County Assault Crisis Center, Senior Home Repair, Budget Counseling, Emergency Food and Shelter, Housing Counseling, Foster Grandparent, Chore Services, Targeted Fuel Assistance, Western Union and CAA Supply Co-op.

### **1985**

The Department of Energy awarded the agency a \$50,000 energy-related business development grant for expansion of Thumbody Enterprises. In September, Thumbody Enterprises and Thumbody Express moved into the former Laethem Equipment facility located at 337 Montague Avenue in Caro.

Emphasis continued in the area of emergency food with the operation of 25 food pantries. Surplus commodities, i.e. cheese, butter, powdered milk, flour, rice and honey, were distributed to over 10,000 individuals. An approach to comprehensive substance abuse prevention services was initiated with the position of a Prevention Coordinator for the five-county area. Thumbody Express increased ridership over 200% during their second year of operation under the auspices of HDC.

The agency was selected by the Bureau of Community Services to be a recipient of an in-depth assessment of a Community Action Agency. The result of that assessment determined, *"the agency has a superb reputation for providing needed services and is highly respected for its ability to deliver a broad range of services."*

A resolution for the redesignation of the Human Development Commission as the Community Action Agency for the counties of Huron, Lapeer, Sanilac and Tuscola was passed by all County Boards of Commissioners.

### **1986**

In the fall, flooding in the Thumb Area adversely affected the lives of many. The agency participated in the Governor's Flood Relief Program which provided emergency food boxes to those whose crops and homes were damaged. HDC also worked in cooperation with the Tuscola County Health Department in the development of a Flood Disaster Manual. Grants were received from the Domestic Violence Board and the United Way of Michigan to expand the Assault Crisis Center Program, in addition to securing a shelter home in Tuscola County for use by battered women and children in the four counties.

The agency became the operator of senior service programs in Huron, Sanilac and Tuscola Counties thus increasing its operational budget to \$4.8 million and 134 employees.

A Discretionary Grant was received from the Office of Community Services for the purchase and rehabilitation of five homes to rent to low-income families in the four-county area.

### **1987**

The operation of the newly acquired Senior Service programs was a major focus. The Caro Meal Site was relocated to the HDC office building and new sites were established in Croswell and Sebawaing.

The first low-income rental home was purchased and HDC became the owner of a 14-unit mansion located in Columbiaville. The Michigan State Housing Development Authority granted the agency funds for a home rehab program in Speaker Township (Sanilac County) and for the purchase of an Assault Crisis Center shelter home in Caro.

The HDC office building was expanded to accommodate the increase in staff positions and the Croswell Senior Citizen Housing Corporation (of which HDC was a part) became the legal owners of the Croswell Country Manor.

### **1988**

The agency continued in the area of low-income housing by purchasing a home on Monroe Street in Caro and a grant was received to hire an additional Housing Counselor.

Southeastern Michigan Gas Company granted the agency \$10,000 to utilize as matching funds for a Neighborhood Builder's Alliance housing rehabilitation grant and to assist low-income residents who found themselves in emergency situations.

The Thumbody Enterprises building was renovated to provide for offices, bus maintenance, storage, and a product showroom. In a joint proposal with the Saginaw County CAA, funds were received to conduct a Mobile Home Pilot Project. Staff conducted a LENS Workshop for the Farm Coalition and an HDC Information Session was held for all four-county Boards of Commissioners.

Voters of Almer and Indianfields Townships approved a millage for the operation of Thumbody Express and a Transit Authority was organized to oversee the operation. Huron, Sanilac and Tuscola County residents also approved a millage for the operation of Senior Service Programs. In cooperation with Huron County, a Community Center/Meal Site was established in Sebawaing and a Tri-County Senior Ball was held in the spring.

An agency Multi-Year Plan was developed and the Bureau of Community Services conducted an on-site assessment, stating that...*"HDC continues to be an effective and efficiently operated agency. The report confirms excellent cooperation, dedication and performance of agency staff, and especially the leadership of the Governing Board and the Executive Director."*

### **1989**

The agency was certified to act as a Management Agent for the Croswell Country Manor. Funds were received from MSHDA to renovate a portion of the Columbiaville rental units for the provision of emergency housing in Lapeer County. Funds were received from the Neighborhood Builder's

Alliance to provide a home rehabilitation program and skill training to eligible individuals in Akron and Deckerville.

Operation of the Commodity Supplemental Food Program began in August to provide low-income pregnant mothers and preschool children with a monthly selection of USDA-purchased food. Project Thaw, a program designed to assist eligible customers in paying their utility bills, expanded their services into the Thumb Area.

Thumbody Express received a National Award for being the best rural transit system in the nation. As a result of the agency's participation in the Mobile Home Pilot Project, Weatherization Program personnel were utilized to provide trainings on mobile home weatherization techniques and funds were received for the development of a training video. The agency was selected to participate in a Management Information System Pilot Project conducted by the Bureau of Community Services.

A golf tournament was sponsored by the agency to raise funds for the Assault Crisis Center. An Information Training Session was held for all staff in February and the agency established an Employee Emergency Loan Fund.

### **1990**

The agency celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in conjunction with the Annual Meeting. Over 300 supporters were in attendance for this event and keynote speaker for the day was Governor Blanchard's Human Service Advisor Jane Snowden.

Programming was expanded as the agency was selected to administer Detroit Edison's Energy Efficiency Programs. Funds were received to implement a Pre-School Program in Vassar, a Tax Counseling Program for the Elderly, a Homeownership Counseling Program, playground equipment for the ACC Shelter, TechniTrain and RCAP funds to assist the Village of Akron with their water supply, and the Neighborhood Builder's Alliance provided for a Home Rehabilitation project in Caro and fire equipment for Deckerville. A two-unit home, located on Madison Street in Caro, was purchased and the agency became the MSHDA Loan Agent for the four-county area.

With the initiation of a purchase of service concept, staffing for the Substance Abuse Services component was increased and voters of Indianfields and Almer Townships renewed the millage for the operation of Thumbody Express.

Governor Blanchard's wife visited the agency in recognition of its participation in the NBA Program, and Polish delegate Andrew Sniadowski toured a portion of the Thumb Area and discussed rural water/wastewater concerns with agency representatives. HDC was also the first CAA in the State to conduct a successful single audit.

### **1991**

State budget cuts, which affected all aspects of agency programming in addition to the elimination of the Targeted Fuel Assistance Program, were of primary concern. Staff Ad Hoc Committees were developed for the purpose of implementing activities which provided support for clients and to offset budget reductions.

During the year, a loan was received from the Michigan Housing Trust Fund for renovations to the Madison Street duplex in Caro, \$38,000 was granted by the Bureau of Community Services (BCS) for the development of a Comprehensive Substance Abuse Services Prevention/Intervention Plan for the five-county area, \$48,700 was received from MSHDA for ACC Shelter renovations, and a \$20,717 allocation was received from BCS to fund services for migrants.

A subsidiary corporation, Cass River Enterprises, Inc., was developed and encompassed all aspects of the former Thumbody Enterprises component. The agency successfully completed operation of Detroit Edison's Electric Efficiency Programs and a video highlighting this cooperative partnership was developed.

HDC was one of eight agencies selected to participate in a Fuel Oil Replacement Burner Project (FORB), and PROBER, a client tracking system, was implemented agency wide. A fire destroyed the Sanilac County Field Office and the first Rental Certification classes were held for interested citizens. In addition, Sunday and evening meals were instituted under the Senior Services Congregate Meal Program.

### **1992**

The year began with two successful fundraising events; the Walk for Warmth and Celebrity Sling Dinner which assisted area residents with emergency energy needs.

Funding was received from St. Stephen's Christian Service Committee to assist with Project Self-Sufficiency, and MSHDA supported the agency's Emergency Shelters and provide for Housing Rehabilitation programs in Columbiaville, Tuscola County and Sanilac County. The Detroit Edison Foundation granted funding for Assault Crisis Center activities, and the Social Security Administration provided funds to identify and enroll seniors in the SSI Program.

Expansion took place in the area of Substance Abuse Services with the hiring of a Women & Families Specialist, and the agency took a lead role in attempting to establish a short-term residential treatment facility in the area. The Senior Services Sunday and Evening Meal Program boosted attendance at Congregate Sites and slots were granted to serve seniors within the Commodity Supplemental Food Program. The agency received a van from Independence for Life, and the Sanilac County Field Office was relocated within the basement of the Sandusky Post Office. During the summer, Senator Levin toured the agency and met with Board members and staff. The agency also developed a three-year Strategic Plan.

Due to reduced funding within several program areas and a recurring termite problem which led to the subsequent need for repairs within the Caro office building, the agency suspended a majority of their services for a two-week period in September. Mary Ann Vandemark was elected President of the National Association of Community Action Agencies for a two-year term.

### **1993**

Funds were received from MSHDA for First Time Homebuyer Downpayment Assistance and Home-ownership Programs. A contract was awarded by the Detroit Edison Company for inspections relating to their Energy Efficient New Home Construction Program, and the agency was contracted by the local Detroit Edison office to assist in a small landscaping project.

Grants were also received to operate a community service program in Mayville, establish a Thumb Area Volunteer Center and a Community Dispute Resolution Program. The Jank's Foundation provided funding for children's items at the Assault Crisis Center, and Techni-Train dollars were utilized to assist the villages of Metamora and Carsonville. In the area of Senior Services, the agency exceeded their goal for the provision of congregate meals which was a rare achievement based on nationwide statistics. Due to lack of funds, the Senior Home Repair Program was discontinued.

The agency assisted the Lapeer Volunteer Tutor's Association in obtaining funding for a literacy program and was contracted by the Thumb Area Consortium to provide Energy and Self-Esteem Workshops for their clients. The Substance Abuse Services Coordinating Agency was instrumental in developing a Regional Central Diagnostic & Referral Unit operated by Cass River Services, Inc.

Community Action Agencies were moved from the jurisdiction of the Michigan Department of Labor to the newly established Michigan Jobs Commission. Also as a part of a national effort, agency staff person, Lori Offenbecher, was sent to Florida to assist in the Hurricane Andrew Relief Project.

A Platinum Award was received from the Michigan Department of Education for the agency's "*phenomenal and commendable efforts*" in operating the Commodity Supplemental Food Program. The First Annual Truck Raffle fundraiser was held in October, and the agency was designated as a Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO).

### **1994**

Grants from the Office of Community Services were received for senior nutritional screening/ expansion of food and nutrition services and development of an Energy Institute for the provision of energy management job training. Funds from Region VII Area Agency on Aging were received to assist seniors in accessing public benefit programs. A Winter Meal Delivery program grant was received from Reynolds/NAMP, and Detroit Edison selected the agency to act as broker for their Residential Low-Income Energy Fitness/Education Program for their entire service area, with the exception of Wayne County.

The agency relinquished its role as Coordinating Agency for Substance Abuse Services so it could act as the Central Diagnostic & Referral Unit for the five counties. Funds were received from the Genesee/Lapeer United Way to provide for expanded planning services in Lapeer County. An office building was purchased in Lapeer, and \$88,000 was received from MSHDA to support the Emergency Shelter in Columbiaville and assist the Family Economic Crisis Center in Imlay City. HDC was also selected to operate Lapeer County's CDBG Housing Rehabilitation Program. During the year, an average of 7,200 telephone calls were answered by the agency each month.

In cooperation with the Health Departments, Community Mental Healths, and Huron Memorial Hospital, a successful proposal was developed for a Rural Health Outreach Project. HDC, the



Thumb Area Consortium and the Department of Social Services were co-recipients of a YouthBuild Planning Grant. Funds were secured for the Huron Efforts for Literacy Program and Lapeer Volunteer Tutors Association, as well as Community Development Block Grants for Tuscola and Sanilac Counties. Mary Ann Vandemark was re-elected as the National Association of Community Action Agency's President.

### **1995**

In honor of the agency's 30th Anniversary, a Special Legislative Tribute was presented by the four-county State Representatives and Senators.

Oversight of the Michigan Community Action Agencies was transferred from the Jobs Commission to the Department of Social Services, and the Governor vetoed the CAA State Supplemental Assistance funding from the State budget resulting in a \$60,000 loss to the agency.

HDC was selected as the broker for Detroit Edison's \$5 million Project Care Program, as well as continuing its administration of CDBG projects for Tuscola, Sanilac and Lapeer Counties. Neighborhood Housing funds were received from MSHDA for Lapeer County, and an additional \$75,000 was received for the HOME Downpayment Assistance Program. In cooperation with Tuscola County Community Mental Health, a Batterer's Support Group was initiated. Brookdale and Janks Foundations, Caro Eagles, Tuscola County Community Mental Health and Region VII Area Agency on Aging provided funding for the development of Adult Day Services in Tuscola County. The agency also received funding for the operation of a Medicaid Managed Care Ombudsman Service. The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) was discontinued by the federal government and the agency did not receive the contract for continuation of its Central Diagnosis & Referral Service.

Cass River Enterprises, Inc. was nationally recognized as an outstanding CAA rural development project, and a commendation was received from the Department of Education for the agency's Commodity Supplemental Food Program inventory and warehousing systems. The distribution of an agency newsletter to human service providers and County Commissioners was initiated. Walk for Warmth raised over \$14,500, which included a \$1,000 donation from the Detroit Edison Foundation, and the Third Annual Truck Raffle raised \$7,500 for various agency programs.

### **1996**

Energy services expanded with the receipt of grants from the Department of Commerce/Public Service Commission to conduct energy education workshops and distribute programmable thermostats, Family Independence Agency for the development of a collaborative partnership with Thumb Electric Cooperative, and selection as the Lead Agency for a 15-county Residential Energy Assistance Program (REACH) to provide energy education and teaching of life skills.

The 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Assault Crisis Center was celebrated and services were enhanced with the receipt of a Rape Prevention and Education Services grant, a STOP Violence grant written in partnership with law enforcement, and a COPS grant written in cooperation with the Tuscola County Sheriff's Department.

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program was expanded into St. Clair and Saginaw Counties, and an agreement was initiated with Bay Medical Center for transportation of oncology patients. The agency was awarded an Agricultural Mediation grant for the Thumb and five northern counties and mediated the first case in the State. In partnership with Mid-Michigan Community Action Agency, a 0-3 Head Start grant was received, and the agency was selected as the fiduciary for a CAA in lower western Michigan.

A Dialogue on Poverty was conducted as part of a national effort to generate public awareness of poverty and generate additional resources to assist low-income individuals and communities.

HDC was awarded the Homemaking, Personal Care and Respite Services contracts from the Region VII Area Agency on Aging, and the area's first AmeriCorps Volunteer Grant was received. Thumbody Express received an Award of Excellence from the Department of Transportation for an outstanding vehicle maintenance program.

In May, a portion of the Thumb was declared a disaster area due to heavy flooding. Through partnerships with Red Cross, FEMA, Region VII Area Agency on Aging, Pioneer Work & Learn, Teen Ranch and county jails, the agency assisted numerous residents who were in crisis.

The Eagle's building, located at 435 Green Street in Caro, was purchased to house Adult Day Services and the Tuscola County Senior Dining Kitchen, and the Bad Axe Senior Dining Center/Huron County Field Office, located at 46 Westland Drive, was also acquired. The Marlex

Factory, 415 Wells Street in Caro, was purchased to meet the needs of the Weatherization and Commodity Food Programs, and a car cleaning business was implemented by the agency's subsidiary, Cass River Enterprises, Inc.

### **1997**

Implementation of Welfare Reform led to an increase in the number of individuals served. Mortgage payment assistance rose, and requests for emergency food increased 40% over the previous year. There was also a dramatic increase in the dollar amount of utility bills brought in by clients; some as high as \$5,000.

Housing services expanded with the receipt of additional MSHDA funds for the Single Family Home Purchase Program, homeless activities and participation in the Strategic Housing Pilot Project. LAUNCH Program funds in the amount of \$511,500 were also received. MSHDA's monitoring report indicated that *"the agency continues to perform above expectations in its administration of housing grants"*. HDC continued to act as broker for Detroit Edison's Project Care Program and was also selected to broker their Energy Education Program.

Purchases during the year included: main office building at 429 Montague Avenue in Caro, former Terra Building at 227 Elk Street in Sandusky to serve as the Sanilac County Field Office and Adult Day Service Center, and the Wear-A-Bouts Consignment Store in Caro.

A Strategic Planning Session was held and a three-year plan was developed. HDC became the fiduciary for Tuscola County's Coalition for Alcohol Concerns and signed a cooperative agreement with USDA Rural Development to enhance common goals. A formal partnership was established with Thumb Area Michigan Works! to assist their Tool Chest voucher recipients, and the Department of Health and Human Services provided personal computers for use at Congregate Meal Sites. The agency was successful in assisting Lexington and Worth Townships, in Sanilac County, to obtain \$270,000 for infrastructure costs on their municipal water project. The agency was cited by the Region VII Area Agency on Aging for the exemplary implementation of Personal Care, Respite Care and Homemaking Services, and the Weatherization Program personnel received a National Award from the Secretary of Energy for their commitment to the program.

### **1998**

Based on staff creativity in promoting products made by Kraft Foods, HDC was one of 17 agencies in the nation to be awarded a food delivery vehicle for use in its Senior Nutrition program. Walk for Warmth and the Annual Raffle were held, in addition to the First Annual Golf Swing and First Annual Holiday Cheer. In partnership with the 4-H Club, a food booth was jointly operated at the Tuscola County Fair, the Domestic Violence Program was the recipient of funds raised from the Charity Island Charity Event and a Turkey Bowl was sponsored by Signature Bank and Farmer Jack.

With a grant from Thumb Area Michigan Works!, Thumbody Express expanded its services to include a Caro to Cass City route. Thumbody moved to a newly renovated area at the agency's Butler Street warehouse facility in Caro and was joined by the Early Head Start Center for Tuscola County. Wear-A-Bouts was moved from Park Street to a site on the corner of M-81 and Deckerville Road in Caro.

The agency was given Grantee status for the operation of 0-3 Head Start Programs in the four-county area and also became the statewide provider of the Technitrain Program serving low-income communities with water/wastewater infrastructure. The Agriculture Mediation Program was expanded to include 33 counties, and the agency operated a pilot project for the provision of mediation services for low-risk cases involving children's protective services. A grant was also received for a school-based mediation program in Sanilac County.

The agency was selected to administer Huron County's CDBG Program, thereby becoming administrator of all four-county CDBG's; a Home Loan Partnership Expansion Program with Rural Development and Independent Bank was implemented, and the agency assisted Habitat for Humanity in Minden City and Caro.

Due to the lack of funding to maintain the 14-unit rental/emergency housing unit in Columbiaville, known as Peter's Mansion, the property was sold. Statistics for the year showed that the majority of individuals served by the agency's homeless shelters had never been homeless, had high school diplomas and were previously employed.

HDC was one of ten agencies in the nation to be granted three VISTA volunteers who taught reading skills to low-income children. A three-year Program of National Significance was granted

which enabled Foster Grandparents to act as reading development tutors, and a two-year grant was received from Family Matters to introduce family volunteering at the Adult Day Service Centers in Tuscola and Sanilac Counties.

### **1999**

Homeownership Workshops were initiated for all customers applying for funds under agency housing programs. A grant was received from the Local Initiatives Support Council (LISC) to build agency capacity in the area of housing and, with a grant from MSHDA, the agency constructed three energy-efficient homes in Caro and Croswell to be sold as affordable housing. The agency began work with the City of Croswell for the submission of a Neighborhood Preservation Project proposal and assisted them in the potential development of a Day Care Center.

The agency signed an agreement with Thumb Area Michigan Works! to provide Tool Chest services for seniors, displaced homemakers and long-term public assistance recipients. Based on the agency's assistance in identifying funds through its Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP)/TechniTrain Program, construction began on a \$10 million Utilities Authority Water System for Lexington and Worth Townships in Sanilac County.

Early Head Start Centers were established in Lapeer, Lexington and Bad Axe, and the agency's facilities at 337 Montague Avenue were renovated to accommodate the agency's expansion. The Department of Community Health granted \$120,000 for the enhancement of the Information & Referral Service, which included computer linkages between the field and main offices, and efforts began in expanding Adult Day Services in Huron County.

A health and exercise booklet was developed for seniors, and the agency's Congregate Nutrition Program was used as a model for other programs in the State. The Foster Grandparent Program was selected as one of the top 16 mentoring programs nationwide and 17 additional counties were added to the Agriculture Mediation Program making the agency responsible for 50 counties.

Due to lack of funds, the Money Management Program was discontinued, and the agency began assisting Tuscola County in updating their Parks and Recreation Master Plan. CAA accountability and results were increased with the implementation of a Federally-mandated Outcomes Reporting System (ROMA) and the agency underwent 16 monitoring/auditing visits which ensured its accountability.

### **2000**

The year began with the Dialogue on Poverty 2000, which was a nationwide effort by Community Action Agencies to seek solutions to poverty. Ten sessions were held within the agency's service area with 156 citizens participating. Juan Williams, author, former national correspondent for the Washington Post and national spokesperson for Community Action, was the keynote speaker at the agency's Annual Luncheon. The effectiveness of Michigan CAAs was acknowledged by the State Legislature in the form of a \$1 million supplemental appropriation and an additional \$2 million to work with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)-eligible customers.

Even though the agency was faced with intense scrutiny and negative publicity from a local newspaper, it continued to meet the needs of area residents. The Assault Crisis Center and Adult Day Services received support from a variety of sources, including Blue Cross/Blue Shield, United Way, The Jimmy Durante Children's Fund, Golden Eagles, Neal Sister's Foundation, Christmas in July and Master Gardners. Adult Day Services were initiated in Lapeer with funding received from the Brookdale Foundation and Valley Area Agency on Aging. The Department of Community Health granted \$100,000 to support Adult Day Services in Caro and Sandusky, as well as to establish a service in Caseville.

On behalf of the City of Croswell, the agency obtained a \$519,900 Neighborhood Preservation Program which provided homeowner/rental rehabilitation, city beautification and marketing. The agency assisted Croswell with a Main Street development project and acted as fiduciary for a grant to clean up the Black River. The City also sold 12 vacant lots to the agency for development of a subdivision.

A Transitional Supportive Housing project for victims of domestic violence in Huron, Sanilac and Tuscola Counties was initiated, as was a Job Retention/Family Mentoring Pilot Project with Lapeer Family Independence Agency (FIA). Thumbody Express began a transfer route to Saginaw and an agency website was developed.

Housing continued to be a major area of focus as funds were received from Local Initiatives Support Corporation to expand housing development activities and MSHDA for Homebuyer Purchase/Rehabilitation and Down-payment Assistance Programs. The agency received special recognition for processing the highest number of Property Improvement Loans in the State by providing over \$142,000 to low and moderate-income households in the four counties. In honor of HDC's Chairman, the Board of Directors named the agency's facility, located at 315 Green Street in Caro, the LeeRoy Clark Center.

## **2001**

The agency implemented a Retired Seniors Volunteer Program, a Michigan Works! Staffing Grant to fund four staff to assist welfare-to-work customers, and an Independent Development Account (IDA) Program for individuals to save for homeownership, post-secondary education and business start up.

The first issue of the Thumb Area Junior News was printed and the Lapeer County Job Retention Project was continued in partnership with Lapeer County FIA and Thumb Area Michigan Works! Rural Development provided homes in Croswell and Sandusky for utilization as transitional housing, and the agency assisted Tuscola County in its development of a five-year Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

The agency was presented with an "Innovations in Elder Care Award", from the Michigan Republican Caucus, for its efforts in establishing Adult Day Care Centers in the four counties. Services to seniors expanded as a three-year contract was received from the Department of Community Health for the agency to serve as a "Single Point of Entry" to address the needs of seniors. Region VII and Valley Area Agencies on Aging provided funds for the support and training of primary caregivers of functionally impaired adults. Region VII Area Agency on Aging also selected the agency to operate their Minority Outreach Program.

Partnerships with churches continued as a Senior Conference was hosted in cooperation with the Caro Church of the Sacred Heart and St. Michael's Catholic Church in Port Austin provided use of their former convent for an Adult Day Care Center. Thumbody Express ridership frequently exceeded 200 passengers per day, and the Agricultural Mediation caseload increased to 300, as compared to a caseload of 20 in 1994. LeeRoy Clark stepped down as Board Chairman and was replaced by R. Dale Wertz. Statistics for the year indicated that 77% of the agency's customers were older adults, 32% lived below the Federal Poverty Guidelines, and 47% were living on fixed incomes.

Senators Levin and Stabenow visited the agency to learn of HDC's services and provide community leaders with pertinent information on national issues. Staff donated \$1,000 from their Employee Benefit Fund to offset the devastation of the September 11 attacks.

## **2002**

The agency operated 70 programs with the assistance of 529 volunteers donating 89,983 hours of service. The Michigan Public Service Commission granted funding for heat/utility assistance, enhancement of the Weatherization Program, and a 2:1 match for funds raised through Walk for Warmth. A&D Charitable Foundation provided support for Adult Day Services and the Sanilac County Community Foundation for the purchase of blood pressure monitors. The agency also established a Community Action Endowment Fund for the benefit of the four-county area.

The Retired Senior Volunteer Program was expanded into Huron and Sanilac Counties, and the Lapeer County Job Placement Pilot Project was discontinued due to funding. The agency continued to administer the Huron, Sanilac and Tuscola County CDBG grants, and MSHDA funds were received to rehabilitate two reclaimed USDA Rural Development homes to serve as transitional housing units in Sanilac County. A Fatherhood Initiative and Family Care Option were implemented

within the Early Head Start Program and Thumbody Express received a contract to transport Head Start participants in Tuscola County.

The agency was the recipient of Tuscola County's Friend of 4-H Award and the Michigan House Republican Caucus Innovations in Elder Care Helping Hands Award for operation of the Foster Grandparent Program. As part of a national Community Action Agency branding campaign, the agency changed its logo and adopted the motto of "*Helping People. Changing Lives*". Construction on a new field office in Sandusky was completed to accommodate Adult Day Services, staff of the agency and Michigan Works! In November, former Board Chairman and life-long supporter and friend of the agency, LeeRoy Clark, passed away.

### **2003**

PA 230, the law designating Community Action Agencies as the antipoverty network in Michigan, was amended and became PA 123. The amendment changed the makeup of the Commission on Economic and Social Opportunity and expanded the range of CAA activities and services.

The agency was designated as a Community Development Entity (CDE) for Huron and Sanilac Counties making it eligible for New Market Tax Credits in those areas. The Rural Community Assistance Program (RCAP) made funds available for implementation of the Good START comprehensive community assessment project. Staff assisted Lapeer County in establishing a Habitat for Humanity chapter and worked cooperatively with Huron County residents in the development of a domestic violence shelter. The Early Head Start Policy Council developed a Male Role Modeling Task Force to enhance male participation, and a Care Providers Demonstration Project was funded to provide home-based services for children three years of age and younger.

The three-county central kitchens began serving homemade Home Delivered Meals, and over \$800,000 in refunds were obtained for customers utilizing the Tax Counseling for the Elderly Program. Due to State budget constraints, the Long-Term Care grant was terminated a year earlier than anticipated, and a grant was received from Rural Development to begin preliminary work on the development of an Intergenerational Day Care facility in Caro. The Community Dispute Resolution Program was contracted to mediate Michigan Department of Civil Rights cases and received funding from the Council of Michigan Foundations to provide mediation services as a homeless prevention strategy.

With the assistance of several sponsors, the *Thumb Area Junior News* publication was continued, and the agency began administering Huron and Sanilac County's Discount Prescription Programs.

### **2004**

The year marked the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Thumbody Express and efforts continued to expand bus services to Cass City, Mayville and Vassar. The Walk for Warmth event raised \$38,500. The agency utilized 793 volunteers throughout the year who contributed 110,000 hours and the Retired Senior Volunteer Program provided 300 volunteer hours to the Vietnam Moving Wall which came to Caro in the summer.

New MSHDA grants during the year included Homebuyer Purchase/Rehab for Bad Axe, Croswell, Marlette, Sandusky, Caro and Vassar, and Rental Rehabilitation and Acquisition/Development/Resale for Marlette. Also, on behalf of Sanilac County, the agency administered a rental rehabilitation program for the City of Croswell and assisted that city and Marlette with community assessments through the Good START Program.

A home located at 327 Montague Avenue in Caro was purchased for the provision of affordable housing, and the former MESC Building, located on Cook Drive in Bad Axe, was purchased for utilization as a Field Office. Congressman Kildee spearheaded an effort to obtain funds for the agency's construction of an Intergenerational Facility.

The Administration for Children and Families and Altria Senior Helpings provided funds to build the agency's capacity to prepare diabetic meals and develop wellness activities for seniors in Tuscola County. A grant from the Michigan Department of Agriculture was also received to conduct food safety workshops at Senior Dining Centers.

Based on budget constraints, the Drug Testing service was discontinued for outside sources, the Caseville Adult Day Services was closed, and publication of the Thumb Area Junior News ceased.

## **2005**

The State's Commission on Community Action and Economic Opportunity was resurrected to promote participation of low-income people in reducing poverty and the agency was selected to send a delegate to the White House Conference on Aging. Board Chairman, Dale Wertz, passed away in November and Della Hammond became Board Chairperson.

The Catholic Campaign for Human Development provided funds for a budget counseling service to families receiving the Earned Income Tax Credit, and staff and volunteers assisted 1,085 taxpayers with their returns generating refunds of over \$1 million. An Energy Education Program was initiated and a pilot program was conducted for elementary school children; 673 households were provided heat/utility assistance.

Alterations were made to expand capacity of the Domestic Violence Shelter to 28 beds and support group services were also enhanced. Adult Day Services in Caro, Sandusky and Port Austin experienced tremendous growth, and Wear-A-Bouts began selling Michigan-made products.

"A Door to Open" Program provided services for homeless persons with serious mental illness and/or substance abuse issues in three counties. The agency was selected to operate a Housing Choice Voucher Program, the first 5-Star Energy Efficient home was constructed in the Crowell Sugar Run subdivision, and the rental home at 304 Madison Street in Caro was sold. The agency also became a limited partner with a for-profit developer for the construction of 49 5-Star Energy Efficient homes in Saginaw County.

A two-year Migrant Services contract was received, as well as funds to provide nutrition workshops and scholarships to summer recreation programs for low-income families in Bad Axe and Harbor Beach. The agency was also contracted by Thumb Area Michigan Works! to provide orientation to individuals participating in their Growing to Work Enterprise.

## **2006**

Michigan's economy continued to be hard hit by changes in the auto industry and the state ranked second in the nation in mortgage foreclosures. The agency assisted in developing strategies for the development of an energy conservation bill for the State and was also instrumental in developing a statewide Community Action Agency Community and Economic Development Impact Report.

Operation of the Housing Choice Voucher Program had an economic impact of over \$2 million in the four-county service area, and South Saginaw Homes I, Inc. was developed as a wholly-owned agency subsidiary for the construction of affordable homes in Saginaw County. Based on the agency's efforts, the service area received a total of \$2.4 million in housing grants. Marlette and Mayville were assisted in developing a comprehensive assessment of their communities.

Through the Rural Community Assistance Program, a \$3 million water/wastewater loan/grant was received by Denmark Township in Tuscola County, a \$1.7 million loan for the Village of Mayville, and \$2 million for a new sewer collection and treatment system for Moore Township in Sanilac County.

Construction of "*Generations – The Mary Ann Vandemark Center*", located at 430 Montague Avenue in Caro, was completed in December to house Caro's Adult Day Services and child-related services. During the year, Adult Day Services in the three counties served 101 customers which equated to a total savings of \$4.3 million in Medicaid expenditures based on the average cost of \$3,500 per month for long-term care.

The United in Faith Program assisted several churches in developing Mentoring Programs in which church families were paired with others in need of guidance; the program was discontinued in August due to lack of funding. With funds from the Department of Human Services and the Sanilac County Community Foundation, Project SOAR enabled the provision of scholarships for children to attend summer recreation programs. Within Cass River Enterprises, Inc., Advent Computer

Services was developed as a new service and joined Cass River Construction, Thumb Business Management and Sunrize Creative Services.

## **2007**

Caro Adult Day Services was moved to the Generations facility in February and a Before and After School Program for youth K-5 began in September. In January, a three-day per week Adult Day Services was opened in Bad Axe.

The agency assisted 1,820 individuals, utilized 578 volunteer hours and obtained \$2.2 million in refunds for customers served under the Earned Income Tax Credit. In partnership with Mid-Michigan Community Action Agency, funding was received from the Office of Community Services to expand 2008 EITC services to cover ten counties.

Michigan Public Service Commission funds continued to be received for weatherization services, client education and energy assistance. The agency was also successful in obtaining funds to re-establish its Volunteer Center. Wear-A-Bouts began selling items on EBay and in November a second store was opened in Sandusky.

Croswell Country Manor was approved as a tax credit project for refinancing/renovation and loans for the project were received from MSHDA, Great Lakes Capital Fund and Federal Home Loan Bank in partnership with North Star Bank. The Housing Assistance Council provided funds for the further development of Sugar Run Subdivision in Croswell and all 49 homes were leased under the South Saginaw Homes I project. Project Home M.A.D.E. (Moms and Dads Engaged) and Safe Harbor were new services funded by MSHDA to serve the homeless population.

Funding was discontinued for the operation of the Housing Choice Voucher Program, transitional housing for survivors of domestic violence, as well as the Thumb Area Michigan Works Growing to Work Enterprise workshops which were conducted by the agency. The Cass River Enterprises Building was renovated to provide additional space for HDC staff and new offices for Cass River Construction, and renovations were completed in the HDC main office to provide for a new Board Room and additional office space.

## **2008**

Michigan's unemployment rate reached 9.6%, 14% of the population were earning less than \$20,000 a year, and the agency was inundated with individuals in need of foreclosure assistance. MSHDA funds were received for the construction of five homes in the Sugar Run Subdivision in Croswell were transferred to provide for homeowner rehabilitation. Work continued on the purchase and rehabilitation of the Croswell Country Manor and Cass River/Majestic Construction, LLC was formed in preparation for the project. On behalf of the City of Sandusky, the agency received a Neighborhood Preservation Program Planning grant from MSHDA to facilitate a Community Assessment of Needs.

Generations began a Summer Enrichment Program and the USDA assisted in the purchase of playground equipment for the facility. The agency's Early Head Start Program was highlighted at the National Head Start Conference, and Thumbody Express expanded services into Vassar. Based on funding, Home Delivered Meals and Dining Center operations were reduced by one day per week, and a Lapeer County Permanency Planning Mediation Pilot Project was established. The Bad Axe Central Kitchen/Senior Dining Center burned in March and the service was temporarily transferred to the Bad Axe Knights of Columbus Hall. The agency purchased property next to the agency's Field Office on Cook Drive in Bad Axe.

Volunteer Centers of Michigan granted funds to support the agency's Volunteer Center and a VISTA slot was also obtained. Bertha Bennett celebrated her 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a Foster Grandparent, a Community Needs Assessment was completed within the service area and, based on rising energy and gas prices, a four-day work week was instituted for a majority of the agency.

Poverty expert Dr. Donna Beegle provided training prior to, as well as the keynote address for, the agency's Annual Luncheon. In partnership with State Commission on Economic Opportunity, Michigan Department of Human Services and Community Action Agencies, the agency played a key role in the development of the Voices for Action Poverty Summit held in Detroit. Over 5,000

people participated in the event and CAAs were responsible for ensuring customers were transported to the event and spearheading post-Summit activities. HDC staff volunteered at the event and provided a Seniors and Poverty Best Practice Workshop.

## **2009**

The Census reflected that one in every seven people in the State were living in poverty. The Voices for Action Sub-Regional Committee met to continue the momentum gained from the 2008 Poverty Summit. Job Creation, Health Care/Mental Health and Housing/Homeless were identified as the poverty reduction priorities for the Thumb. Dr. Donna Beegle provided a Poverty 101 Training for the Regional group, agency staff and other interested citizens.

The agency received a three-year \$5 million Weatherization Program contract through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), as well as additional Community Services Block Grant funds and expansion for the Early Head Start Program. Many new staff members were hired and the Marlex warehouse was renovated to house Weatherization staff and inventory. New programs such as Filler Pig, Property Tax Assistance and Buy Michigan Food Vouchers were initiated, and the agency served as a contractor under the utility company's Energy Optimization Program providing low-income customers with energy-saving devices. Cass River Construction continued to provide pre- and post-inspections and installations under Saginaw County's Community Action Weatherization Program.

State budget cuts resulted in the termination of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Volunteer Investment and Vassar Magic Years Pre-School contracts, and the Croswell Country Manor Development Project was discontinued. Plans were placed on hold to rebuild the agency's Senior Dining Center/Central Kitchen in Bad Axe as a partnership was formed with the Huron County Commissioners following their purchase of a Senior Center facility.

Congressman Kildee identified \$100,000 for Generations Before/After School Program and St. Joseph's Nazarene Mission Fund provided children's scholarships and supplies. The Early Head Start Program's waiting list reached a high of 83, and the agency's RSVP Program assisted seniors with installing television converter boxes.

Thumbody Express expanded services into Mayville and Kingston while maintaining Vassar and Cass City routes. Notification was received to proceed with Phase II of South Saginaw Homes and work began on identifying investors. The agency's audit reflected that HDC operated more programs than most CAAs and average daily expenses for the agency had barely fluctuated over the past four years.

## **2010**

Mary Ann Vandemark retired as Executive Director and Lori Offenbecher assumed the leadership role. The Bad Axe Dining Center and Huron County field staff were relocated to the County's Senior Center on Nugent Road in Bad Axe and Adult Day Services was moved to the agency's Cook Drive facility. To better serve customers, direct service staff based in Caro were moved to the agency's main office and the annex (former Cass River Enterprises, Inc.) building housed internal services staff.

With ARRA funding, the Early Head Start Program enrolled as many as 153 families and hired 16 additional staff. By August, over 1,000 eligible applications for Weatherization services were on file, and new monitors hired by the State received hands-on training by shadowing agency Weatherization staff.

Funds granted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture were used to purchase a commercial freezer and refrigerator, a forklift and food rescue/recovery truck for TEFAP, as well as the implementation of the Spoonfuls of Plenty Community Feeding Program in Tuscola County. Phase II of South Saginaw Homes was postponed due to lack of funding, and the agency was able to save 95 homes from foreclosure. The agency developed new partnerships with the Lighthouse for work placements, ThumbWorks for the development of Just Jobs Centers, MSU for nutrition education and food safety and Chemical Bank, Independent Bank and Freddie Mac for foreclosure and homeownership counseling efforts.



Based on the economic climate, Cass River Enterprises, Inc. operations were suspended, Sandusky Wear-A-Bouts Resale Store was closed, and the Huron and Tuscola County Adult Day Services reduced days of operation. The agency relinquished its roles as Regional Lead for the Voice for Action Project, Western Union Agent and Domestic Violence Services STOP grant administrator. A three-day event was spearheaded by the agency in which Dr. Donna Beegle provided a Customer Service Training, Navigator Training, and an Opportunity Conference providing 300 individuals with resources needed to work their way out of poverty.

An incident occurred in which two agency employees were detained by an assailant with a firearm. No one was injured, however, staff safety became a primary concern and several security measures were implemented.

## **2011**

Staff and Board Strategic Planning Sessions were held and a new Mission Statement was adopted; "Restoring Hope By Helping People and Changing Lives". A marketing campaign was initiated and included billboards, live radio broadcasts and the publication of the agency's Annual Report in area newspapers.

A Staff/Board Picnic and Recognition was held in lieu of an Annual Meeting and agency office facilities were inspected and, in many cases, enhanced to ensure security. A Needs Assessment was completed and fundraising efforts for the Home Delivered Meals Program, Walk For Warmth, and the CAA Endowment Fund were conducted.

The "Let's Do Lunch" Summer Feeding Program for youth, operated in partnership with Cass City Schools, provided 1,439 meals. Tremendous community support for the Spoonfuls of Plenty weekly meal program was realized, and the agency began partnering with the Saginaw Commission on Aging for the distribution of food, under the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, in Saginaw County. The Argyle and Cass City Dining Centers were closed and the Huron County Central Kitchen was relocated to 140 Nugent Road in Bad Axe.

Lapeer County selected the agency to be the third-party administrator for their CDBG Program and the agency was awarded the honor of being MSHDA's Homeownership Counseling Agency of the Year. With CSBG funds, a program was developed to assist villages and cities in the four-counties in meeting their infrastructure needs and an enhanced Energy Education initiative was implemented. Based on the agency's quality program, Early Head Start staff were selected to mentor other programs in the region.

The Maximus contract for enrolling Medicaid-eligible individuals was declined by the agency and the Tax Counseling For The Elderly program was not funded. Based on need, the agency chose to act as a short-term fiduciary for the Huron County Homeless Coalition and successfully reapplied for Domestic Violence STOP funds to enhance services for victims.

## **2012**

Based on funding, the Generations Before/After School Program was discontinued and Tuscola County Early Head Start was relocated to the Mary Ann Vandemark Building. With the receipt of CSBG Discretionary dollars, Adult Day Services expanded intergenerational activities in three counties. The agency assisted families with dry wells in the Gagetown area with the distribution of temporary water systems and the Village of Owendale was also assisted with a water tower improvement project.

The Reese Senior Dining Center was closed and the Lexington Dining Center was relocated to the Community Center. A grant was received from the William and Joanne Kaiser Fund for Spoonfuls of Plenty and the agency was one of three Domestic Violence Shelters in the nation to receive a grant from the Mary Kay Foundation. Chemical Bank provided funds for foreclosure intervention programming and, in partnership with local banks, the agency hosted Foreclosure Counseling Nights. Michigan DHS also provided funds for the agency to act as the Transitional Supportive Housing Leasing Assistance Lead Agency to serve six homeless families in Huron and Lapeer Counties.

A bi-annual customer satisfaction survey was initiated and agency marketing efforts were expanded to include Facebook, direct-mail campaigns, and movie theater advertisements. The Foster Grandparent and Retired/Senior Volunteer Programs held their first annual Spelling Bee fundraiser and "Walk Together", an intergenerational walking program started in Caro, was expanded to the Unionville-Sebewaing Area Schools.

The agency sponsored Community Conversations to obtain public input on education as sought by the Michigan Legislature. Five Thumbbody Express busses were converted to propane, a Propane Fueling Station was installed, and Saturday bus service was discontinued.

With the Weatherization ARRA Program winding down during the year, it was necessary to lay-off several employees, however, in partnership with ThumbWorks, the agency provided these staff with avenues for alternative employment opportunities.

### **2013**

On the national level, Sequestration resulted in funding cuts for several services and, based on the government's action to delay a decision on the Fiscal Year 2014 budget, the agency's core funding (CSBG) was cut significantly and resulted in staff lay-offs.

Housing Program staff assisted individuals in retaining their homes through the Step Forward Program and a two-year grant from the National Mortgage Settlement funds was received to support foreclosure prevention counseling services in the four counties.

Asset testing was initiated for individuals applying for Michigan Department of Human Services-funded programs. Michigan's Public Act 615 provided energy assistance to low-income households through the Michigan Energy Assistance Program. The Michigan Department of Human Services and the Michigan Community Action Agency Association were both successful in applying for funds on behalf of the Community Action Agency network.

Caregiver Support Groups and Training Sessions were expanded throughout Huron, Sanilac and Tuscola Counties and, in partnership with the Region VII Area Agency on Aging, a Kinship Caregiver Conference/Recognition was held. Spoonfuls of Plenty reached a milestone of 10,000 meals provided to the community and the Early Head Start Program's 2012/13 Program Information Report reflected that, in the majority of areas, the agency exceeded state and federal goals.

The agency-owned home in Croswell was sold and construction of 42 new homes and a Community Center were completed under South Saginaw Phase II. The Sandusky Field Office was modified to increase safety for staff and to prepare for the development of a Senior Services Central Kitchen. The agency continued to administer Community Development Block Grant services on behalf of the four counties and MSHDA regulations were changed to target individuals in specific communities.

In celebration of the agency's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of providing Domestic Violence Services, a community dinner event was held and improvements were made to the Assault Crisis Center. Deanna's Closet (named in honor for former HDC employee, Deanna Lung) was developed on the third floor of the Center to provide for basic clothing necessities for residents and Wal-Mart Foundation provided \$2,000 to assist with Center improvements and to meet customer needs. The first annual Golf Scramble benefit was held for the Assault Crisis Center and the Tuscola County Community Foundation provided \$1,950 for the development of ProTEXTion, a 24-hour text hotline.

Based on performance, the agency was one of four Community Action Agencies in the State to receive ARRA Redistribution funds for the Weatherization Program and Thumbbody Express expanded routes to Reese Public and Parochial Schools transporting 35-40 children.

### **2014**

Based on extremely cold temperatures, Michigan declared an Energy Emergency due to a shortage of heating oil and propane. With increased demand, costs spiked and led to a dramatic increase in the amount of assistance needed per household.

Several intergenerational service activities were held during the year, i.e., in partnership with schools, businesses, churches, Foster Grandparents, Retired and Senior Volunteer Program and other community volunteers, a Martin Luther King National Day of Service Rise & Shine Food Drive was conducted in 11 locations and benefited food pantries in the service area. Other activities included a partnership with local Future Farmers of America in which they planted vegetable seedlings for dispersal at the agency's food distributions, and the Foster Grandparent Program and area schools sent flower seeds to soldiers overseas.

Based on the passage of the federal Farm Bill, participation of women, infants and children were phased-out of the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, making the service available to low-income older adults, only. The Early Head Start triennial review took place and funding was received from the Tuscola County Great Start Collaborative for two new EHS child slots.

Board members and staff completed the agency's Community Assessment and three-year Strategic Plan and, after 17 years of operation, the agency closed its resale store, Wear-a-Bouts, based on the economy and the number of other resale stores in the area.

On behalf of the four counties, the agency continued to administer the Community Development Block Grant Programs targeting the areas of Bad Axe, Sebawaing, Harbor Beach, Croswell, Marlette, Lexington Township, Caro, Vassar, Cass City, City of Lapeer, Imlay City and North Branch.

Senior Services continued to see a decrease in customer contributions and, based on limited funds, it was decided that a central kitchen in Sandusky would not be constructed. The Huron and Tuscola Department of Human Services awarded the agency a three-year contract to assist their clients with home management, nutrition, child care, etc., and a \$6,000 donation was received from the Kaiser Foundation for Spoonfuls of Plenty.

In 2000, the City of Croswell deeded property to the agency for the development of a subdivision. Based on funding, only one home had been constructed and sold, and the other property remained undeveloped. During the year, the property was deeded back to the City and, upon their request, one lot was deeded to Habitat For Humanity. A lot owned by the agency in Sandusky was also sold.

## **2015**

Organizational Standards were implemented nationally for CAAs and the State was divided into Prosperity Regions with Huron, Lapeer, Sanilac and Tuscola County begin joined with Genesee, St. Clair and Shiawassee to form Region 6.

For a three-year period, PA 532 designated Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program funding for the State's Home Weatherization Program. Chemical Bank provided funds to support energy/housing-related activities in Huron, Sanilac and Tuscola Counties and the agency assisted Huron, Sanilac and Tuscola County Boards of Commissioners in submitting MSHDA Homeowner Rehabilitation applications.

The Sanilac County Central Kitchen was moved to a new location in Deckerville and opened a Dining Center in the same facility. Based on funding constraints, Sanilac County Congregate and Home Delivered Meals were reduced from four days per week to three and the Millington Dining Center was closed.

The agency participated in a Michigan Department of Education Nutrition Education Pilot Program at the St. Clair and Saginaw County Commodity Supplemental Food Distributions and the Walmart Foundation provided a grant for the purchase of a truck for the commodity food programs. A three-year Family Rehousing grant was received from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services to provide rental assistance and supportive services for homeless families with minor children in the four counties and a grant was received to conduct a pilot case management/bundled services project (known as Project Passport) in Huron County. Funds were also received from the Mary Kay Foundation to provide self-sufficiency and empowerment training for victims of domestic violence.

The Sanilac County Early Head Start office was moved from Lexington to the agency's Sandusky Field office and the rental house located at 337 Montague Avenue in Caro was sold. The provision of assistance through the THAW Program and discontinued and the agency ceased its fiduciary role for the Emergency Food and Shelter Program.

Two training videos were developed in-house; "Understanding HDC's Customers and the Role of Community Action" and "Getting To Know HDC", and 14 staff received Family Services Credential training to enhance their effectiveness in working with customers.

## **2016**

Tuscola County Adult Day Services was relocated to the LeeRoy Clark building in Caro. The Thumb Area Assault Crisis Center was then relocated into the Mary Ann Vandemark building and the former shelter home on Frank Street in Caro was sold later in the year.

The agency was awarded a ten-year Weatherization Program contract and assisted other Community Action Agencies with post-inspections for their program. New funding for the year included a grant to support a part-time Civil Legal Attorney to assist victims of domestic/sexual violence, grants from Walmart to offset transportation costs for Saginaw County's CSFP food distributions and for the purchase of recliners for the Sandusky Adult Day Services Program, two additional Rehousing Programs were obtained for families, individuals and unaccompanied youth, a grant to expand the Housing Counseling Program to provide economic and housing self-sufficiency services, a Pilot Summer Fuel Program was operated and the Tuscola County Community Foundation provided for new living room furniture at the Thumb Area Assault Crisis Center.

Due to insufficient funding, the Parent Aide Program was discontinued, as was the Welcome Home Program (transitional/ supportive services housing) and Huron County's Project Passport. Also, due to limited resources, the agency ended its Tuscola County Christmas Giving Program and a waiting list was instituted for Tuscola County Home Delivered Meals. Huron and Tuscola ADS reduced operations from four days per week to three, and Sanilac ADS increased operations to five days per week based on customer need.

Based on a review of the 58 National Organizational Standards, the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services State Technical Assessment Report (STAR) rated the agency at the highest level of excellence. Revised Early Head Start Performance Standards were received and the Program Information Report reflected that the agency exceeded the national averages for services provided to EHS customers.

The Retired & Senior Volunteer Program held a sock drive which results in the donation of 2,000 socks for veterans and Walk For Warmth raised over \$68,000. The agency's website was enhanced and the Foster Grandparent and Domestic Violence Services Advisory Councils were merged into the Community Services Advisory Council.

## **2017**

The agency received a Michigan Medicaid Lead Hazard Control Community Development Grant which was the first pilot program of this type in the nation. Funding was also received for the implementation of an Elder Abuse Prevention/Outreach Program and Rural Development funded a roof replacement and air conditioning installation at the Caro Commodities Warehouse.

The Huron County Community Foundation/Tom Gettel Memorial Fund allocated dollars to provide cancer treatment transportation for Huron County residents, ages 18-59, and Sanilac County Community Mental Health Authority provided \$4,500 to support RSVP and FGP initiatives. The agency entered into a contract with Muskegon-Oceana Community Action Agency to oversee their fiscal department and provide training and technical assistance in other matters related to agency operations.

Based on insufficient funding, the agency discontinued its emergency food pantries in Bad Axe, Lapeer and Caro, and the operation of the Housing Education and Family Self-Sufficiency Programs. Additionally, application was not made for continuation of the GST Michigan Works Staffing Grant and Community Development Block Grant funding was discontinued statewide.

Action was taken to reduce the size of the agency's Board of Directors from 24 to 12 through an attrition process and the tri-annual Domestic Violence Program Peer Review was conducted. Representatives of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services visited the agency during the State's CSBG Federal Review to learn about the agency's operations and relationship with DHHS/BCAEO.

Kiosks were installed in each of the four-county offices in order to obtain real-time Customer Satisfaction Survey results and were also utilized to increase the number of respondents for the 2017 Community Assessment.

Care Giver Support Groups were provided in Bad Axe, Brown City, Caro, Lexington, Sandusky and Vassar and a Parkinson's Support Group was established in Bad Axe. Spoonfuls of Plenty meals averaged over 300 participants each week.

## **2018**

Since 1978, the agency received funding for utility/deliverable fuels assistance, however, based on changes at the State level, funding was provided to the Departments of Health & Human Services and only individuals qualified for their services were eligible for assistance.

Home Delivered Meals were expanded from three-day a week delivery to four and Adult Day Services in Tuscola and Huron Counties expanded from three to four service days per week. Thumbody Express expanded hours to include weekends and drivers began utilizing GPS-enabled tablets. As Community Development Block Grant funding was discontinued, the four-county Boards of Commissioners entered into agreements with the agency to operate the program on a smaller scale utilizing program income.

Based on the continued growth of the Caro Dining Center and Spoonfuls of Plenty Meals, the agency relocated the two services from the LeeRoy Clark building to the Administrative building and a new Board Room was developed.

A Self-Sufficiency Program was implemented to provide intensive assistance to customers for a 12-month period and 18-month follow up. "Making Cents" classes were offered to Homeless Program customers and Dementia Training Classes were offered for caregivers and the general public. The Early Head Start tri-annual review resulted in no areas of concern and Senior Seminars were held in Huron, Sanilac and Tuscola Counties.

With input from the Board of Directors, Advisory Councils, staff and customers, a three-year Strategic Plan was completed and an internal workgroup was retained to ensure goals would be met. The Community Action Endowment Fund was dissolved and the agency discontinued its Shared Services Agreement with Muskegon-Oceana Community Action Program. The agency was selected as Huron Behavioral Health's Pinnacle Partner for "*outstanding accomplishments and contributions in embracing the concepts of recovery and hope on behalf of their customers*".

Two staff were trained as ROMA implementers, nine staff received the Family Services Credentialing and 11 staff were certified as Lead Abatement Supervisors. HDC was the first agency in the nation to utilize their own crews for production in the Medicaid Lead Hazard Control Program.

## **2019**

Based on HDC's change to a self-sufficiency service model, as opposed to emergency-based service, the agency did not accept Michigan Energy Assistance Program funds. However, because of increased participation and success, staff were asked to present the agency's Self-Sufficiency Program to multiple agencies and the Homeless Supportive Services Program was presented to other providers at the State level to also serve as a model.

During the course of the year, the Domestic Violence Legal Advocacy Program was discontinued, as well as the agency's fiduciary role for the STOP grant. Also, after 33 years of operation, the agency discontinued publication of the Thumb Area Senior News.

Thumbody Express was provided with nine new buses from the Michigan Department of Transportation and a Customer Satisfaction Survey conducted by MSU reflected that the majority

of customers were very satisfied with the service. The Early Head Start Program developed a five-year Strategic Plan and a tri-county Senior Seminar was hosted. In addition, several agency vehicles and buses were “wrapped” in program advertising to enhance the agency’s visibility in its communities.

The Medicaid CHIP Lead Hazard Control Program was expanded to Bay County (excluding the City of Bay City). Funding was received to hire a Residential Case Manager for the Assault Crisis Center and an additional Elder Advocate for the Elder Advocacy Program, and the DTE Energy Foundation granted \$5,000 to support the Assault Crisis Center. The agency also received a grant to assist with the 2020 Census.

## **2020**

The detrimental effects of COVID-19 Pandemic were felt worldwide and HDC, and its customers, were not immune. In March, key agency staff and the Board of Directors began implementing strategies that would be put in place to ensure staff and customer safety while providing essential services. Some of those strategies involved the temporary closure of several programs and office lobbies, staff lay-offs, discontinuation of face-to-face appointments and in-home visits, as well as service modifications and retrofits to agency facilities. Based on an MDHHS Emergency Order issue at the end of the year, staff whose job functions could reasonably be done offsite were allowed to work remotely.

Though there were many challenges throughout the year in working within the COVID-19 environment and, at one point, only 39% of the agency’s staff was working, we were able to continue to meet the needs of residents. For example, by developing safety protocols, we continued the Home Delivered Meals Program, Thumbody Express transit services, Surplus Commodity Distributions, as well as the provision of services to survivors of domestic/sexual violence and the homeless population. As Senior Dining Centers were temporarily closed and Home Delivered Meal needs increased, Congregate Curbside Pick-Up was initiated and local police, Sheriff’s departments and agency staff were utilized for meal delivery, in addition to volunteers.

With the receipt of CARES Act funding, the agency was able to expand services to provide mortgage, rent and water bill assistance, water and plumbing repair, as well as distribution of Quarantine Boxes and facial masks. Other services were also enhanced with CARES funding, i.e. Senior Services, Early Head Start, Thumbody Express, Domestic Violence, and the Commodity Distribution Programs.

The Bad Axe Field Office, which was located in the Huron County Senior Center, was moved to 856 North Van Dyke Road and the agency sold its duplex rental on Madison Street in Caro. A five-year Strategic Plan for Homeless and Self-Sufficiency Services was completed, as well as the tri-annual Community Assessment. Based on a State budget shortfall due to COVID-19, the Foster Grandparent and Retired & Senior Volunteer Programs were defunded in July, but reinstated October 1. The Bad Axe Meijer Store provided a grant for the Elder Advocacy Program, the Tuscola County Community Foundation funded mattresses and bed frames for the Homeless Rehousing Program, and the Meals on Wheels America Foundation supported the Home Delivered Meals Program.

## **2021**

The agency and its customers continued to feel the detrimental effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Many services continued to be suspended and/or limited, however funds to assist with mortgage, rent and water bill assistance continued for a portion of the year and American Recovery Act funds were received and benefited many programs. Adult Day Services were permanently closed in Huron, Sanilac and Tuscola Counties and the agency struggled to retain/hire employees.

Staff took advantage of technology to reach out to communities; Facebook Live interviews were conducted, Early Head Start staff developed YouTube videos for the benefit of customers and the general public and based on the increase in Home Delivered Meal customers, volunteers were trained to navigate delivery routes utilizing tablets. Online classes were held for Caregivers and Zoom became the primary tool to meet with individuals inside and outside of the agency. Drive-Up Senior Seminars were also held in large parking lots in Huron, Sanilac and Tuscola Counties utilizing audio through car radio systems.

In June, agency office lobbies were reopened for face-to-face services and all staff discontinued remote work. Senior Dining Centers were reopened the later part of the year except for Sebewaing and Port Sanilac Dining Centers which were permanently closed. Spoonfuls of Plenty free weekly meals were reinstated on a take-out basis.

Of special significance, the agency became totally debt-free after facing a \$1.9 million debt when Lori Offenbecher became Executive Director in 2010. The agency also received an "excellent" rating on its annual State Technical Assessment completed by the Bureau of Community Action & Economic Opportunity.

Domestic/Sexual Assault Services were reorganized and enhanced and room for additional beds was created. The DTE Foundation provided monetary support for the Shelter and funding was received from Futures Without Violence to support the implementation of Coaching Boys Into Men Teen Dating Violence curriculum.

Two vehicles were obtained by Thumbody Express to provide non-emergency medical services and free rides to vaccine clinics were also provided. The Bus System also expanded into Fairgrove and Gilford Townships.

The agency was awarded a contract to serve as the Coordinated Single Point of Entry/HARA (Housing Assessment and Resource Agency), for Huron, Lapeer, Sanilac and Tuscola Counties, through which individuals experiencing, or at-risk of, homelessness were able to access housing crisis response systems in a streamlined manner.

After 30 years of holding an annual Walk For Warmth fundraiser, it was discontinued. In lieu of the event, agency would schedule one annual fundraiser for a specific program it operated.

The agency entered into a lease agreement for a building located at 1785 Genesee Street in Lapeer to utilize as a Field Office which provided additional space for the Early Head Start Center at the current location of 1559 Imlay City Road.