

WAR ON POVERTY

Community Resources marks 50 years

By John Reynolds
Staff Writer

The Sangamon County Department of Community Resources celebrated 50 years of community service Thursday during an afternoon ceremony.

Sharrin Doering, executive director of Sangamon County Community Resources, said her department is the community action agency for the county. Community action began

in 1964 when President Lyndon Johnson signed the Economic Opportunity Act and started the War on Poverty.

"Community action started off with programs like the Job Corps, Head Start and legal services," Doering said. "A lot of these programs spun off on their own, which is the beauty of community action. It's flexible and allows agencies to see what works."

Current programs that Doering's office oversees

include the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, or LIHEAP, an emergency medication program, a weatherization program, homeless prevention and scholarship opportunities.

"Community resources is moving toward more self-sufficiency and bundling of services. We are creating self-sufficiency through education and training," Doering said.

Springfield resident Brad Mills chairs the Community

Services Block Grant advisory council. The council oversees the agency's program and is made up of elected officials and members from the community.

"With the economy the way it is and the lack of jobs, the services provided by community resources are very important," Mills said.

"We like to do our best to make sure everyone is taken care of within Sangamon County,"

Doering's father, former

Ward 8 Ald. Irv Smith, was recognized during Thursday's program. Smith served as the first local community action chairman in 1965.

Also on hand was former Springfield Park Board member Jack Pfeiffer, who worked with adult education classes when the program started.

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