



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### **50 Years Later, the War on Poverty still Rages on**

*Sangamon County Community Resources is on the front lines helping people and changing lives*

Springfield –On January 8 of 1964, President Lyndon Johnson gave his State of the Union address where he declared “unconditional war on poverty in America.” He intended not only to relieve the symptom of poverty but to prevent it – 50 years later the war is still being fought. August 20, 2014 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Economic Opportunity Act the act creating over 1,000 Community Action Agencies like Community Resources.

As Chairman of the Community Resources Oversight Committee, County Board member, Linda Fulgenzi, states, “This year we mark the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Community Action across America. Here in Community Resources, we celebrate this anniversary by continuing the important work we do to give Sangamon County’s most vulnerable the tools they need to become self sufficient and live with dignity”.

Our agency’s Community Services Block Grant Chairman, Brad Mills provides enlightenment by telling us that “a new study from Columbia University shows that safety net programs helped our nation reduce poverty from a rate of 26 percent in 1967, right after President Johnson’s announcement, to 16 percent in 2012.”

With the on-going threat of unemployment benefits not being extended cuts to food stamps, struggling families are finding it harder and harder to make ends meet. Already, over 2 million people in Illinois saw their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly “food stamps”) benefits cut in 2013. Pair that with sequestration cuts to social service programs and those in poverty have fewer and fewer places to turn.

The war has not been won and yet the battles are getting tougher every day. As Community Resources Board member, Jason Ratts states “For the past few years, we’ve been dealing with the weak economy that is creating unemployment for millions of people, many of them low-income. This is what creates economic inequality – if you don’t give vulnerable Americans resources and opportunities to succeed economically, they will continue to live in poverty.”

In his state of the union speech, President Johnson said, “Very often a lack of jobs and money is not the cause of poverty, but the symptom. The cause may lie deeper in our failure to give our fellow citizens a fair chance to develop their own capacities, in a lack of education and training, in a lack of medical care and housing, in a lack of decent communities in which to live and bring up their children.”

The Community Action movement was one of the social initiatives that came from the War on Poverty in 1964 and has been on the front lines of the battle helping people escape the clutches of poverty ever

since. Community Action Agencies address the root causes of poverty and equip low-income citizens with tools and opportunities to become self-sufficient. Each year, Community Resources helps over 15,000 Sangamon County Residents with low-incomes through a variety of ways: educational scholarships, short-term training in high job growth areas and GED prep classes and Test Assistance. For those in crisis : food boxes, dental and medical assistance, school uniforms, homeless prevention assistance, utility assistance and home weatherization assistance to reduce gas and electric bills.

Therefore, continuing to provide opportunities to citizens to achieve self sufficiency is the answer for our struggling economy.

Today you'll hear from one of the earliest Community Action leaders to our current State leader. We hope you enjoy learning what Community Action looked like at the beginning began and continues to be a powerful force in improving communities.

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