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The Observer

Volume 43 • Issue 3



MCCA Board Member Makes Transition

After 26 years of Service, Lt Mark Kotte Retires

John Burrill, Executive Director

Agency board member Police Lt. Mark Kotte retired from his position as a Normal Police Officer on Friday, September 11th, completing 26 years of service as a sworn officer. He had been the daytime Shift Commander for the past few years, and prior to that was NPD's Community Officer. Mark is well known in our community and has been an active member of our governing board since being designated by the Mayor of Normal to represent him in the "Public Official" sector of our board in 2006. Recently, Mark was elected Mayor of the Village of Hudson, Illinois. Happily for MCCA, that position allows him to continue to serve on the board as an elected public official in his own right. To that end, the Board of Directors voted at its meeting September 16th, 2009 to change the public entity which Mark represents to the Village of Hudson.

Mark Kotte will continue involvement with law enforcement in his new career as Director of Mobile Team Unit (MTU #8) which coordinates, delivers, and tracks in-service training for all law enforcement personnel in McLean, Iroquois, Ford, and Livingston Counties. This is a nice fit for Mark as he has been teaching at ISU, Heartland Community College, and Lincoln Community College for some years.

In his role at MCCA, Mark has been the Chair of the Development Committee for the past few years, and is well known to attendees at our Annual Dinner as an enthusiastic seller of draw tickets and an active participant. We look forward to many more years of his volunteer contribution to our work for the families of our many communities.



Lt. Mark Kotte

Thank you!

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the success of "Stuff the Shelter and Fill Your Plate" August event. We made \$436.15 in bake sale profits and received \$1,290 worth of donated goods for Neville House. What a caring community we live in!

Thank you to the ladies of Zeta Phi Beta, who hosted their '09 Diamonds are Forever Black Tie Auction recently and named Countering Domestic Violence one of their 5 "pearl" organizations. Each "pearl" received a portion of the proceeds of the evening, totalling over \$800. Thank you, Zeta Phi Beta!

Thank you to Seico Security Systems of Pekin for their in-kind donation of security services for Neville House. The peace of mind provided by this service far outweighs the monetary benefit!

Dates to Remember

■ October

Domestic Violence Awareness Month

■ Monday October 6

It's Time to Talk Day

■ Tuesday October 13 & Thursday October 15

Home Buyer Education Class

■ Thursday October 22

VESSA Training

Bloomington Police Dept, 302 S East St, Bloomington

■ Saturday, October 24

Home Buyer Education Class

■ Tuesday October 27

Evening of Healing and Hope

See page 5 for details

■ Tuesday November 3

Noodles & Company Fundraiser for Neville House

Noodles & Company, 305 N Veterans Pkwy, Bloomington.

■ Saturday November 7

Home Buyer Education Class

■ Tuesday November 17 & Thursday November 19

Home Buyer Education Class

■ Tuesday November 24

Stuff the Shelter and Fill Your Plate

Osborne Room, Bloomington Police Dept, 302 S East St, Bloomington

Home Buyer Education classes are held at MCCA, 1301 W Washington St, Bloomington.

For further information or to register, contact Kathy Shubert, (309) 834-9245

The **Observer**

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Mid Central Community Action, Inc. (MCCA) is an Illinois private not-for-profit corporation with the mission of "Promoting safe and stable families, neighborhoods and communities." The agency works with government agencies, private corporations and individual citizens, including those we serve, to develop and maintain programs which address this mission.

Incorporated in 1965, the agency today delivers services to the community in three main areas. First, there is a group of countering domestic violence programs; including a shelter, emergency hot line, counseling, and intervention services for victims. We also offer the whole spectrum of traditional Community Action programs including energy assistance, home weatherization, transitional housing, and supportive case management. The third area is that of housing; again a group of programs including home ownership counseling, down payment assistance, foreclosure prevention, residential lending, and construction of housing units.

In addition to being one of 1100 Community Action agencies in the United States, MCCA is a chartered member of the NeighborWorks® America network of housing development and neighborhood revitalization organizations.

In a typical year, MCCA programs serve more than 5000 families. It also assists some 100 families in various ways to become home owners, which is considered one of the best roads to economic stability for a family.

Promoting safe and stable families, neighborhoods and communities

What if Mid Central Community Action, Inc. earned a penny every time YOU searched the internet?

Search the web with www.goodsearch.com and money from Yahoo advertisers will go to MCCA without you spending a dime!

Donate now through our website!

Donating has never been easier! Visit www.mcca-inc.org to make your donation today. Safely. Securely.



From homelessness to hope

Becky Berry, Community Services Case Worker

A new family entered the Transitional Housing Program in August. It sounds simple. But, because of some unexpected problems, this almost didn't happen for this single mother and her daughter. It took teamwork and hard work to overcome many obstacles.

Ms. Howard had prepared for her "move in date." She resolved an old \$800 Ameren IP balance (that was incurred because someone used her name to get services in the past) by contacting Bloomington Township for assistance and finding enough resources to pay-off this balance. Tiffany felt very sure that she had all of her "ducks in a row" when she came to sign her lease. What she learned the day she was to sign the lease was that she also had an \$800 balance due to Nicor for the same reason. She was out of resources and thought she would lose the apartment. Tiffany and I spent the rest of the afternoon and the next morning finding various ways to tackle this huge problem. The Transitional Housing program provided the necessary case management and eventually, the apartment, LIHEAP (the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program) came up with innovative ways to provide assistance to the utility companies, MCCA's Crisis Intervention program provided rental assistance, and the new ARRA funds provided Tiffany with clothing that she and her daughter needed for school and work. In addition to these four programs, the fiscal department finalized all of the financial aspects.

After all of the complications were resolved, it was evident how the various programs at Mid Central Community Action, Inc. contributed to this success story and so profoundly demonstrated our mission of promoting safe and stable families, neighborhoods and communities. After two days that would be stressful for anyone, let alone for a family that was homeless, fearful it would remain homeless, and facing the grim reality that dreams for the future would need to be put on hold, Tiffany Howard and her daughter were given the key to their apartment. They were going to be safe and stable and were given the opportunity to promote and actualize their future dreams!

Ms. Howard expressed her gratitude and pleasure and wanted to do something for the agency to show her appreciation. As Ms. Howard and I discussed ways this could

occur, we discussed the fact that so many different programs came to their rescue. Immediately, it reminded me of Mid Central Community Action's logo of a stairway with four people standing on different steps and reaching out to a person at the bottom of the stairway. Tiffany and her daughter's happy ending occurred because of workers from four different programs: Transitional Housing, LIHEAP, Crisis Intervention, and the new ARRA (American Recovery & Reinvestment Act) Community Service Case Management, working tirelessly to find the funds necessary to help Ms. Howard and her daughter.

This is just one of the daily examples of how Mid Central Community Action, Inc., its employees, and its mission statement work to improve in some small, and sometimes large, way to help individuals in our neighborhoods and communities.



To whom it may concern
Thank you for helping my mom and I get this place. It's a dream. I have my own room now. This is the best home ever. I wouldn't even have my own room if it wasn't for you. It's sooo great to have a place to call home again ..., and not have to live with anyone else. Thank you again, I'm so very grateful.

Love
Areona Howard

To the Community Action Staff

This letter is in regards to all of you that came together in helping me to move into the transitional housing program. It was an obstacle of things that I had to do just to be able to be eligible for the program.

I honestly was ready to give up and then one morning I came in to use the telephone to call local agencies to see if I could get some assistance with past utility bills, and was coming to a DEAD END. I guess it just wasn't the right time of year, or everyone was out of funding. Fortunately, none of you wanted to give up. By 5:00pm that same evening, with the help of Laura Grant, Becky Berry, Teresa in the LIHEAP program, I was signing my lease and getting my keys to our new place! Me and my daughter were basically homeless, and moving around from place to place. I was and still am employed, and I also attend school part time. So the only thing we were missing was a stable place to live. I got one bill paid off, and then there was another one. It just felt as if no matter what I did or how hard I was trying, I was getting so close to having a place to live but still had something else that needed to be paid off! But that day, there in Community Action, you ladies there showed me that there really are people that do care. I honestly was in doubt of that. And I have no idea as to where we would be right now without all of your help. You took the time to actually pay attention to the needs of someone that really didn't even matter to you. And I want you to know - that little gesture will never be forgotten! You people there at Community Action have helped me to start on the journey of changing my life and give my daughter the stability and love she so much deserves! I need y'all to know you are very much appreciated! And just to know that every day you go into work - you are helping someone. And that is the most admirable and amazing thing. And I am beyond grateful to all of you. We are now in our home, I still work and go to school. My daughter is enrolled in junior high. She has her friends and has some sense of normalcy in her life. We both love our home. I have several goals yet to still achieve and I will accomplish them. But just having a place to call my - our - home is the best feeling I have had in a long time. And none of it would be possible without you!!

*Thank you so much
Tiffany Howard*

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Countering Domestic Violence

..... from victim to victor

Domestic Violence Awareness Month evolved from the first Day of Unity observed in October, 1981 by the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. The intent was to connect battered

women's advocates across the nation who were working to end violence against women and their children. The Day of Unity soon became a special week when a range of activities were conducted at the local, state, and national levels.

These activities were as varied and diverse as the program sponsors but had common themes: mourning those who have died because of domestic violence, celebrating those who have survived, and connecting those who work to end violence.

In October 1987, the first Domestic Violence Awareness Month was observed. That same year the first national toll-free hotline was begun. In 1989 the first Domestic Violence Awareness Month Commemorative Legislation was passed by the U.S. Congress. Such legislation has passed every year since with NCADV providing key leadership in this effort.

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THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

October 1, 2009

September 30, 2009

NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH, 2009

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A PROCLAMATION

Domestic violence touches the lives of Americans of all ages, leaving a devastating impact on women, men, and children of every background and circumstance. A family's home becomes a place of fear, hopelessness, and desperation when a woman is battered by her partner, a child witnesses the abuse of a loved one, or a senior is victimized by family members. Since the 1994 passage of the landmark Violence Against Women Act, championed by then Senator Joe Biden, our Nation has strengthened its response to this crime and increased services for victims. Still, far too many women and families in this country and around the world are affected by domestic violence. During National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, we recommit ourselves to ending violence within our homes, our communities, and our country.

To effectively respond to domestic violence, we must provide assistance and support that meets the immediate needs of victims. Facing social isolation, victims can find it difficult to protect themselves and their children. They require safe shelter and housing, medical care, access to justice, culturally specific services, and economic opportunity. The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act supports emergency shelters, crisis intervention programs, and community education about domestic violence.

In the best of economic times, victims worry about finding a job and housing, and providing for their children; these problems only intensify during periods of financial stress. That is why the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provides \$325 million for the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA). This funding will supplement the Federal VAWA and VOCA dollars that flow to communities every year, and enable States, local governments, tribes, and victim service providers to retain and hire personnel that can serve victims and hold offenders accountable. These funds will also bring relief to victims seeking a safe place to live for themselves and their children.

Victims of violence often suffer in silence, not knowing where to turn, with little or no guidance and support. Sadly, this tragedy does not just affect adults. Even when children are not directly injured by violence, exposure to violence in the home can contribute to behavioral, social, and emotional problems. High school students who report having experienced physical violence in a dating relationship are more likely to use drugs and alcohol, are at greater risk of suicide, and may carry patterns of abuse into future relationships. Our efforts to address domestic violence must include these young victims.

During this month, we rededicate ourselves to breaking the cycle of violence. By providing young people with education about healthy relationships, and by changing attitudes that support violence, we recognize that domestic violence can be prevented. We must build the capacity of our Nation's victim service providers to reach and serve those in need. We urge community leaders to raise awareness and bring attention to this quiet crisis. And across America, we encourage victims and their families to call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE. Together, we must ensure that, in America, no victim of domestic violence ever struggles alone.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim October 2009, as National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. I ask all Americans to do their part to end domestic violence in this country by supporting their communities' efforts to assist victims in finding the help and healing they need.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this first day of October, in the year of our Lord two thousand nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-fourth.

BARACK OBAMA

November Fundraising Events for Neville House

- **Tuesday, November 3rd**- Dine at Noodles and Company on Veterans Parkway, Bloomington between 4-9pm on as Neville House will get 10% of the proceeds.
- **Tuesday, November 24th** - plan to attend our 2nd "Stuff the Shelter & Fill your Plate" event to be held at the Bloomington Police Department on from 9am - 4:30pm. Buy baked goods for the holiday or bring used cell phones, toiletries, canned goods, gift cards, etc.

Se habla español!

Todos los servicios de CDV

(Contra la violencia domestica)

son gratuitos y confidenciales

Take Action in October!

Spend a moment in silence to remember those who lost their lives to domestic violence.

- CDV advocates would like to commend Amy for her heroic act of thoughtful consideration for the safety of victims by urging community members to provide a financial donation to Neville House. In honor of Duncan and Jack, our community responded with 63 individuals and organizations providing a total of \$2,190. These funds will be used to provide a safe environment, and education and healing opportunities for youth affected by domestic violence. Due to their mother's tremendous strength and compassion, Duncan and Jack's lives do not stop with their tragic ending, but rather continue on to make positive contributions as they impact so many lives.



Duncan & Jack Leichtenberg

Begin conversations about domestic violence.

- The McLean County Board, City of Bloomington, and Town of Normal have designated October 6th as our local "It's Time to Talk" day. Their proclamations state that domestic violence is one of the most pervasive problems in our society and open discussion is the first step in promoting healthy relationships. CDV advocates encourage families, schools, churches, and businesses to begin talking about this issue that is even more common than breast cancer. For resources, please visit our agency website at www.mccainc.org or call the Neville House business line at (309) 828-8913.



Attend a training relevant for employees and employers on Senate Bill 1770 (Public Act 96-0635).

- Our multi-disciplinary team is sponsoring a training provided by the Illinois Department of Labor on the changes to the Victims' Economic Security and Safety Act (VESSA) effective August 24, 2009. This training will be held at the Bloomington Police Department on October 22nd from 10am-11am. For more information

or to register, please contact Elizabeth at elizabeth.barnhart@mcleancountyil.gov.

Participate in a special evening of healing and hope for families affected by domestic violence.

- This evening, sponsored by CDV on October 27th, will include the following activities:
 - 5:30-6:30pm - Dinner (hot dogs, chips, juice), create a t-shirt for "The Clothesline Project" (Youth / Adult shirts and art supplies provided.)
 - 6:30-7:30pm - Message offered by CDV Therapist, open microphone opportunities for youth and adults, and candle lighting ceremony.

All activities are free. For location and to RSVP, please call (309) 828-8913 by October 20th.



Red Flags and Warning Signs of an Abuser

- Jealousy of their partner; control, isolation of their partner
- "Jekyll & Hyde" personality
- Explosive temper, legal problems
- Projection
- Verbal, as well as physical abuse
- A history of family violence
- More violent when partner is pregnant or shortly before she gives birth
- Denial (that they are at fault or that they are abusive)
- A cycle of violence and apology

If you recognize any of these red flags in your partner, the CDV 24-hour hotline is always available to help you at:

(309) 827-7070

Community Services Block Grant American Recovery & Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Program

Cathy Grafton, Director of Community Services

Mid Central Community Action, Inc., along with the network of community action agencies across the country have been asked to participate in the economic recovery and to help their local communities through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Here at MCCA we are administering several ARRA grants which are all designed to create or retain jobs, assist displaced workers retrain for new jobs and help low-wage workers increase their earning ability. The program will also help stabilize and educate families so they are better able to weather the economic downturn that has affect low-wage and part-time workers so drastically.

The ARRA CSBG programs at MCCA are already starting to help people with scholarships for vocational training or attending the Heartland Community College Essentials programs. We are also assisting workers who might need uniforms, work shoes, tools or other required items to begin a new job. We can assist with car repair for those who are working or in an educational program and who own their vehicles.

Books for Kids!

A year ago we began our Books for Kids program in the waiting rooms of our main offices in McLean & Livingston Counties. This program has been a great success and children and their parents who visit our office are able to read while waiting for services and also choose a book to keep from the many books that have been donated to our program. We have received many book donations and feel this program has helped to encourage children to enjoy books and reading.

Now we are in need of more books!

We accept new or gently used books for children of all ages to be given away to those who come to our offices for services. If you have books to donate, please drop them by either office during office hours. McLean County – 1301 W. Washington Street, Bloomington and for Livingston County – 741 W. Washington, Pontiac.

Thanks so much for helping children enjoy books and reading.

ARRA CSBG has income guidelines to serve those earning 200% of poverty or less, for example a family of 4 can have a monthly gross income up to \$3,675. We also are assisting with case management services, budgeting, life skills and an expanded Second Chance Renters program which helps people gain the skills they need to become responsible renters.

We have increased our partnership with Heartland Community College to help them provide programs that will give people new training opportunities through the Workforce Investment Essentials Program and the Green Institute. We have also partnered with Futures Unlimited in Pontiac to help retain 30 jobs that would have otherwise been lost due to budget cuts in their City contract. A partnership with the Borg Reading and Literacy Center at ISU will help them expand their literacy and tutoring program to assist more children.

This program will continue until 9/30/10 or until funds are exhausted and we expect to assist over 1,000 McLean and Livingston County families and individuals with services, referrals and other assistance by the time this program ends next September.



Homeless Prevention Services

Cathy Grafton, Director of Community Services

This spring, state budget cuts severely affected the Homeless Prevention programs in both McLean and Livingston Counties. These programs have helped those facing homelessness and other crises to maintain housing and go on with their lives. The federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) has stepped in with a program to assist in preventing homelessness and help those who are homeless due to foreclosure, loss of income or other situation beyond their control. The income guidelines for this program base eligibility on 50% of area median income which varies for each county. These guidelines can be found on our website.

Homeless Prevention, or ARRA HPRP, is available to those who qualify, need assistance and have a desire to make a change in their lives. Mid Central Community Action, Inc. has three new part-time case workers to help with this program. We offer case management and support while a family or individual is working through their situation. Education, job training, life skills and referrals all help someone who is facing homelessness change their situation. MCCA has partnered with various agencies in both McLean and Livingston Counties who are providing space for use to work with those needing assistance through this program.





ARRA Funds Help Homeless Veteran

Rosalie Hjerpe, Senior Services Advocate

The senior program in Livingston County is continually getting referrals and finding new seniors to help.

Recently a gentleman moved to Pontiac from another state, where he had been homeless. He is in his 70's with an income way below the poverty level and he had used up his last social security check traveling back and forth. He tried to find a home with some relatives down south but was refused a place to live. He traveled back to where he came from. His niece and great niece heard of this, located him and brought him back to Pontiac. He presently has a home with his niece and she is taking very good care of him.

They came to MCCA to try to get him some help and to see what he may be eligible for. He was referred here from DHS. We did an interview and informed him of various services. He told us he was a veteran - a veteran in need of dental care. Fortunately we have ARRA (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) funds and will be able to help him with his dental care. Veterans Affairs first verified his eligibility and he will soon be going to the dentist for an estimate on the work needed. There will also be other programs he will be eligible for and was referred to.

Please consider investing in Mid Central Community Action, Inc's programs by making a donation today.

Please accept my donation of:

_____ \$100 _____ \$50 _____ \$20 _____ \$10 _____ \$5 _____ \$other

Name: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Mail your tax-deductible donation to:

Mid Central Community Action, Inc.
 Vikki Baptiste, Development Specialist
 1301 W. Washington St
 Bloomington, IL 61701

Thank You

Donate online with just one click at www.MCCAinc.org

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Our Mission: Promoting safe and stable families, neighborhoods and communities
Mid Central Community Action, Inc. serves McLean and Livingston Counties



Cathy Grafton 'Certifies' her Promise to Help Central Illinois' Low-Income Families

MCCA's Director of Community Services has received her Certified Community Action Professional (CCAP) designation from the national Community Action Partnership, recognizing her as member of an elite group of accomplished and motivated Community Action leaders who are helping low-income people change their lives.

Cathy's ability to guide and motivate low-income families; involvement in anti-poverty efforts on the local, state, and national levels; understanding of the history and mission of Community Action; and leadership capacity were evaluated by a national panel of Community Action leaders. Since 1993, the CCAP program has provided candidates with a structured, focused procedure for evaluating and reflecting on how they are helping low-income families achieve economic independence by requiring them to provide comprehensive, documented examples of their accomplishments.

"I wanted become a CCAP because I knew it would benefit me from a professional and personal standpoint," said Cathy. "Not only did it confirm my knowledge of the history

and principles of Community Action, it also reinforced my commitment to helping people and changing lives.

"Dealing with the current economic situation has been extremely daunting for working individuals and families. Jobs are being lost, houses are being foreclosed, and health care costs continue to rise," said Don Mathis, President and CEO of the Community

Action Partnership. "Now more than ever, people are looking to CAAs for help, assistance, and guidance. By completing the rigorous process to become a CCAP, Cathy is even more prepared to meet these new challenges.

Cathy is MCCA's second CCAP graduate, Executive Director John Burrill gained his CCAP designation in June 2008.

