



# The Observer

Mid Central Community Action News

## MCCA Calendar

Affordable Housing Fair - 3/4/2006  
Miller Park Pavilion 9am-3pm

MCCA Annual Dinner 5/2006

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## Social Service “Business After Hours”

On Wednesday November 16, the McLean County Chamber of Commerce held their monthly “Business After Hours” event with the an emphasis on social service agencies.

Mid Central Community Action’s display was not just a “set up your table and answer questions” type - we were given a challenge to entice people to want to come to our table to find out more about our services.

MCCA adopted a “candy” theme, based around the proposed development on the old Beich factory site. We offered three chances for people to win prizes. There was a “guess the number of jellybeans” game, a dice game in which people won t-shirts and little MCCA “houses” for collecting all the elements needed to buy a home in the new development, and a business card raffle for various housing related prizes and a ticket in our “Win a Lifetime of Travel” raffle.

While we didn’t win the prize for the most creative display, and we didn’t win the draw for the proceeds of the silent auction, we had a very successful evening and educated many people on MCCA’s many programs.

### Lifetime of Travel Raffle Results:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Prize: Stephanie Dagley
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize: Jason Chambers
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize: Tony Waller

The raffle was held under license number R05-106-B, issued by McLean County



## Letter from the Director

With this issue going to press in January, it seems appropriate to reflect a little on the past year and look ahead to an exciting 2006 for Mid Central Community Action. Financially we finished the last fiscal year stronger than we have been for some time, and we are now half way through Fiscal 2006 and planning to finish that fiscal year “on budget”. We have served a large number of families in our home ownership/down payment assistance programs, and achieved some big steps forward in terms of the development of new housing opportunities in Bloomington and in Pontiac. Demolition and clean up of the former Beich candy plant site is nearly complete following the total destruction of the building in May of last year. Mayors Manor continues to provide safe and healthy permanent housing to individuals in downtown Bloomington. Many families are being served each day in the Energy Assistance programs, and a number of homes have been weatherized as well. In Livingston County a great need has developed to counsel and advocate for seniors regarding the new Pharmacy plans and our staff have been very focused on that work as well as the other programs. Our Countering Domestic Violence programs have also been busy, serving many families in the Neville House shelter and in our outreach components at the Law and Justice Center and the law enforcement agencies.

The future will bring some new services as we increase our efforts to assist people in attaining home ownership and reach out to residents to seek more ways to help them achieve family and neighborhood goals. We are planning for the provision of some specific lending product, and working on plans to reach out to the Spanish speaking population as well as other multicultural groups. Our Weatherization department will also add rehab work to some regular weatherization homes using a grant we have not worked with before. At the Board level we are working to increase resident involvement in the Board’s work and continue to develop the strength of our Board.

Regretfully, we have reduced our open hours at the Pontiac office to eliminate some cost and to help the staff meet the demands on their time for work in the field. We are now open Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays only. Telephone calls will be routed to voice mail on those days. We feel confident that this change will not reduce the number of families and individuals we are able to help. All in all, in spite of some funding challenges, and the need to manage resources carefully, we are succeeding in helping more and more people in spite of level funding or in some cases less funding.

We are very appreciative of the support of all of our donors, volunteers, friends, and customers. We will continue to make it our goal to deliver services with excellence and compassion in order to warrant your continued support. Our best wishes for a Happy New Year!



MCCA programs, job postings and more.

[www.mccainc.org](http://www.mccainc.org)

# Animal Abuse: Hidden Victims of Domestic Abuse

When violence occurs within a home, all are affected, including family pets. Recent statistics show that at least 63% of US households own at least one pet and 75% of women entering shelters are pet owners. Unfortunately, many victims have had few resources for their pets when fleeing violence. Being left with the agonizing decision to stay in a violent home, or leave a beloved family pet behind, many will risk their own safety to protect their animals. For victims isolated by domestic violence, the companionship of an animal may be their only source of comfort and support. Leaving their animal behind is often something they would not consider due to fear of what their abuser may do to their animals in retaliation. It is not unusual for animals to be beaten or killed in front of victims as a way to manipulate them into silence or as a demonstration of what the abuser is capable of should they disobey their wishes. A study conducted by Frank Ascione, PhD (1998) at a Utah domestic violence shelter, found that 71% of the victims surveyed stated that their partner had threatened and/or actually hurt or killed one or more of their pets. Fifty-seven percent said that a partner had actually killed a pet and 18% said that concern for their pets delayed them from coming to shelter.

Numerous studies have now shown the important link between human violence and abuse towards animals. Those who abuse animals rarely stop there. Analysis of life histories of those incarcerated for violent crimes often show an early record of cruelty to animals, yet criminal penalties for animal abuse have been minimal up until recent years. When children are cruel to animals it is often a red flag that they are being abused themselves or are imitating violent behavior they have witnessed in the home. Without intervention these children can become further desensitized to violence, and may move on to become physically violent to others. In another recent study conducted by Ascione it was found that in 88% of 57 New Jersey families being treated for child abuse, animals in the home had also been abused.

## What You Can Do to Help

- **Volunteer to become a foster family for pets:** Mid Central Community Action's Countering Domestic Violence Program is seeking temporary loving homes for companion animals of those fleeing domestic violence. In the midst of crisis it can be tremendously comforting for a victim to know that their pet is in a safe and caring home while they are staying in emergency shelter. Please contact Trina at (309) 829-0691 ext. 229 for further information about this volunteer opportunity.
- **Report animal cruelty and neglect:** Be a voice for animals who are being abused. Illinois has adopted laws against animal abuse but they cannot be enforced without your help. Please contact your local law enforcement agency or humane organization about suspected abuse or neglect. In McLean Co. the Humane Society of Central IL has licensed humane investigators who will take your report.
- **Never minimize a victim's feelings about their pet:** A victim's pet may have served as their loyal companion throughout the abuse they endured, giving them unconditional love and compassion. Understand that they may feel a great deal of guilt if they were unable to protect their animal companions from their abuser.
- **Include pets in safety plans:** If you are a victim of domestic violence, emergency planning is important for the safety of your entire family including your family's pets. Keeping a bag packed that is not accessible to your partner can be helpful if you must leave in an emergency. Important items to have packed include vaccination and medical records, dog leashes, extra medication, a license that proves you own your pet, etc. It is also important to consider where you can take your pet in an emergency, before that situation arises. Friends and family can be good ideas for the temporary care of your pets. You may also have pets kenneled at many local veterinary clinics. If you are unable to afford private kenneling, Mid Central Community Action's Countering Domestic Violence program will work with you to find safe shelter for you and your pets. Please call our 24hr. hotline (309) 827-7070 for further information.

**April 23rd through April 29th is National Crime Victims' Rights Week**

**McLean County Domestic Violence Hotline - (309) 827-7070**

**National Domestic Violence Hotline - (800) 799-SAFE (7233)**

*"If only we can overcome cruelty, to human and animal, with love and compassion we shall stand at the threshold of a new era in human moral and spiritual evolution - and realize, at last, our most unique quality: humanity."*

- *Jane Goodall, Author of Reason for Hope*



## Energy Assistance—LIHEAP

Funding is still available for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. To qualify for this program, your household must meet the following income guidelines :

Gross Income for 30 days prior to application	# in Household
\$1,196	1
\$1,604	2
\$2,012	3
\$2,420	4

Please contact us to schedule an appointment  
**McLean County call (309) 829-0691 Livingston County call (815) 844-3201**

**Tips for saving energy and keeping warm can be found at this web site: [www.keepwarm.illinois.gov](http://www.keepwarm.illinois.gov) or by stopping by our office to pick up a brochure.**



Photograph reprinted courtesy of the Pantagraph

Senator Dick Durbin met with Lois Runge on January 5, 2006 to discuss the high cost of heating our homes this winter. He said he intends to push for a bi-partisan bill that would deliver \$2 billion in emergency aid to LIHEAP when the Senate reconvenes in January. "Low income families and seniors are facing real hardship in heating their homes," said Durbin.

## Housing Happenings

The McLean County Affordable Housing Fair will take place on Saturday, March 4<sup>th</sup> from 9am to 3pm. The fair will be held at the Miller Park Pavilion and admission is free. Participants will be able to speak with area lenders, realtors, appraisers, and social service agencies about buying a home. In addition, there will be educational sessions held on a several subjects. One such session will include a question and answer format with questions being directed to a panel of area housing experts. Anyone interested in buying a home or simply learning more about the process should not miss this year's Affordable Housing Fair!

**MCCA also offers monthly homebuyer education seminars. These classes provide 8 hours of intensive training on buying and owning a home.**

They include information about everything from what credit scores mean to minor home repairs. Many mortgage loan products as well as assistance programs require the buyer to complete an educational session of this nature.

Anyone interested in more information may contact Kathy Shubert at (309) 829-0691, ext 245.

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Our Mission  
*Building Community By Helping  
People Move To Self Sufficiency*

## MCCA Agency Picnic

On September 16, 2005 staff and volunteers from Mid Central Community Action enjoyed attending this year's agency picnic. Everyone gathered at Forrest Park for good food and good company. It started off looking as though we might be rained out, but in the end, the rain passed us by and allowed an enjoyable afternoon for staff. More than 30 people were in attendance.

John and Andy cooked burgers and hot dogs for everyone, and did a wonderful job! They kept the food coming and nobody left hungry. Many staff provided additional dishes for everyone to enjoy, and everything was fabulous. **Cookies By Design**© provided a door prize for staff, which was a tasty cookie bouquet with cookies decorated like picnic food!

