



The Regional Review

The latest news from the Western Illinois Regional Council & Community Action Agency

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Bigger Than Ourselves... **Shaun Pritchard, Executive Director**

I will be stepping down as Executive Director effective January 3, 2020.

I'm pleased in what we have accomplished together over the last three years. There's a new office building, which will greatly enhance and expand the mission of WIRC and WIRC-CAA. We've almost doubled the number of people that we serve through the community action agency, with the addition of Knox County programs. We've secured the membership of our most populous cities. And, we've put the right people in key management roles to ensure the future success of the organization. I'm excited about what the staff, Boards of Directors, and citizens of this region will accomplish together in the years to come.

I have such deep admiration for the dedication of our staff and board members. I will very much miss being a part of the daily activities here at WIRC; whether counseling staff, working with officials in Springfield, or offloading commodities from the truck for the food pantry. But with all things in life, there is the constant of change. The next leader will take this organization to new heights with the support of the staff and boards.

Thank you all for working with me for something much bigger than ourselves!

Farewell and God bless,
Shaun Pritchard



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'STUFF THE BUS' FOOD DRIVE RAISES OVER \$2,200 FOR WIRC-CAA



Pictured from left to right: Sodexo General Manager Colby Rhodd and Sodexo Marketing Manager Anna Filson present a check donation to WIRC Public Relations Manager Jamie Roth and WIRC Executive Director Shaun Pritchard on November 13, 2019.

Thanks to the efforts of Sodexo and University Housing and Dining Services at Western Illinois University, \$2,268 was collected for WIRC-CAA's food pantry during the "Stuff the Bus" food drive. WIRC-CAA was one of several food pantries in McDonough County to benefit from the annual fundraiser. WIRC-CAA staffers wish to thank all of the sororities, fraternities, organizations, and community volunteers that contributed to this year's food drive. In addition, they wish to extend a special thank you to Sodexo's Anna Filson

and Colby Rhodd for all of their efforts organizing this event. The funds will be used to purchase food that will help individuals and families struggling with hunger in McDonough County.

From emergency services to housing needs to educational opportunities, WIRC-CAA provides efficient and diverse human services to help individuals and families help themselves. For more information about WIRC-CAA's food pantry, call 309-837-2997 between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. ❁

PROJECT SANTA:

WITH YOU, WE CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN.

Project Santa provides a happy holiday full of gifts, food, and clothing to children in need in Hancock, Henderson, McDonough, and Warren counties in Illinois.

Call WIRC-CAA at (309) 837-2997 to SPONSOR a child/family, volunteer to WRAP GIFTS, or to make a DONATION. Deadline for SPONSORSHIP is November 8.



MCPT CELEBRATES ADDITION OF FIVE NEW TRANSIT BUSES TO THE GO WEST FLEET



One of McDonough County Public Transportation's five new 35-foot, 24,000-pound New Flyer Excelsior Clean Diesel buses is displayed at a media event on September 13, 2019.

McDonough County Public Transportation (MCPT), owned by the City of Macomb, celebrated the addition of five new buses to the Go West Transit fleet on September 13. A ribbon cutting ceremony was held courtesy of the Ambassador Committee of the Macomb Area Chamber of Commerce. The five new 35-foot, 24,000-pound New Flyer Excelsior Clean Diesel buses, manufactured in Anniston, Alabama, replaced high-mileage aging buses that were in service for more than 20 years. With the purchase of these five new buses, the average age of the Go West fleet was reduced from 16 years to 10 years.

The five new buses offer several benefits to the environment and passengers: 90% reduction in particulate emissions; 95% reduction of NOx emissions; noise reduction; and enhanced accessibility for disabled passengers enhanced thanks to an improved

step height, expanded front door, and an improved entry ramp ratio that meets the industry's highest standards. With a reduction in weight and fuel costs, MCPT expects lower operating costs. Each Excelsior bus has the capacity for up to 32 seated and 33 standing passengers, including two wheelchairs.

Funding for the purchase of the five buses was provided by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) through a 2014 State Capital Bill and was obtained with grant writing assistance from the Western Illinois Regional Council (WIRC). WIRC also provides administration to the MCPT program. Each bus cost \$413,301 and has a service life expectancy of 12 to 15 years.

In addition to the new buses, the entire Go West fleet is now equipped with tablets that will be utilized to record passenger counts and also provide automated voice stop announcements. Data from

the passenger counting software will allow route usage analysis and will also be able to provide ridership data to economic development entities to aid in attracting potential businesses that are considering opening a location in Macomb.

The City of Macomb and Western Illinois University (Go West Transit) have partnered since 1999 to provide fare-free, fixed-route transportation to the WIU campus and Macomb community. For more information about MCPT, please contact MCPT Transit Director Nathan Cobb at (309) 837-7433 or visit 837ride.com. ❁

Victim Services Joins Take Back the Night



Victim Services Director Naomi Taylor (right) speaks about domestic violence during the 2019 Take Back the Night March & Rally.

Once again, the Western Illinois University Women's Center collaborated with Victim Services throughout the week of October 21 to host events advocating for domestic and sexual violence awareness.

The highlight of the week was the 30th Annual Take Back the Night March and Rally, held on October 24 in front of Sherman Hall at WIU in Macomb. A resource fair, complete with Victim Services' Silent Witness display and The Clothesline Project, was on display before the march and rally. All proceeds from Take Back the Night events benefitted Victim Services. ❁

LONGTIME WIRC-CAA STAFFER RETIRES



Tina Lovejoy stands in front of the WIRC office on September 27, 2019. The paint on the windows says "Happy Retirement, Tina! 30+ Years."

After over 30 years of dedicated service, Tina Lovejoy announced her September 2019 retirement from WIRC-CAA. Lovejoy began her employment as an intern, and worked her way up to serve in a dual role as the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Coordinator and the Low Income Home Energy

Assistance Program (LIHEAP) Coordinator. She was passionate about helping the less fortunate, and advocated on their behalf in order to help secure grant funding for services the agency provides. In her retirement, Lovejoy plans to travel and continue to be involved in local social service programs. ❁

WIRC-CAA'S CLOTHING CENTER CLOSES TEMPORARILY FOR PROJECT SANTA

As of 12:30 p.m. on Wednesday, November 6, 2019, WIRC-CAA's Clothing Center, located at 221 South Randolph Street, Macomb, has closed temporarily for the holiday season. The Clothing Center will reopen at 9:00 a.m. on Monday, January 6, 2020. The agency is unable to accept clothing donations during this period of time due to lack of space.

The Clothing Center will be used for Project Santa. Project Santa provides children in Hancock, Henderson, McDonough, and

Warren counties with a happy holiday full of gifts, food, and clothing.

For more information about the Clothing Center or Project Santa, call WIRC-CAA at 309-837-2997, find "Western Illinois Regional Council" on Facebook, or visit wirpc.org. ❁

**Crisis Hotline
Volunteers Needed!**

To volunteer for Victim Services' crisis hotline, call (309) 837-6622.



Salon A of Macomb and guests present children's clothes, personal care items, and monteary donations collected for WIRC during their 2019 fundraising event.



The Scotland Clever Clovers 4-H Club held a coat drive for WIRC-CAA's Clothing Center.

Domestic and sexual violence can happen to anyone of any age, ability, sexual orientation, income, education level, religion, gender identity, or ethnic background.

All services are free to survivors and significant others of survivors, including partners, children, family members, and friends.



24-Hour Free and
Confidential Crisis
Hotline:
(309) 837-5555

ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM HELPS WITH HOME HEATING BILLS

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is once again being offered by WIRC-CAA in the western Illinois counties of Hancock, Henderson, McDonough, and Warren. This program, offered from October through May, assists low-income households with paying their home heating bills during the winter months. The most vulnerable populations, seniors and disabled individuals, were able to apply for the program starting October 1. The next priority group, families with children under 6 and disconnected households, were able to apply starting November 1. The final priority group, the general low-income population, will be able to apply for energy assistance starting December 2.

A household may qualify to receive energy assistance if the gross income for all household members for the 30 day income period beginning with the date of application does not exceed the following levels: \$1,561 for a one-person household; \$2,114 for a two-person household; \$2,666 for a three-person household; \$3,219 for a four-person household; for each additional household member, add \$553.

Reconnection assistance will be available to households disconnected from an energy source needed for heating, or if a delivered-fuel supplier has refused to deliver AND the tank contains 20 percent or less. For renters, if utilities are included in the rent, then the rent amount must be greater than 30% of the household's gross monthly

income to receive assistance. Households that receive emergency funding must meet a "good faith" requirement within the past 90 days of the application date.

The Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP) is available for LIHEAP eligible households who are customers of one of the following utilities: Ameren Illinois and Nicor Gas. Under PIPP, eligible households pay a percentage of their income; receive a monthly benefit towards their utility bill and, arrearage reductions for every on-time payment they make, if applicable. PIPP applications are being taken on a first-come, first served basis each month until available funding per county, per utility, and priority enrollment group is met. Applications for PIPP are taken from October 1-December 31, or until funding is exhausted.

Assistance payments are made to the energy supplier, or to the household according to the program guidelines. Funding may be applied toward current bills, past-due bills, late charges, and reconnect fees.

Appointments are offered in Macomb and at several outreach locations throughout the four-county area. To obtain an appointment, interested individuals should call WIRC-CAA at 309-837-2997 between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. ❀

WIRC-CAA Food Pantry

**223 South Randolph Street,
Macomb**

**Open Tuesdays, Thursdays, and
Fridays, 8:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.**

DEMOCRATIC WOMEN OF MCDONOUGH COUNTY DONATE HEALTH AND WELLNESS ITEMS



WIRC Public Relations Manager Jamie Roth (left) accepts health and wellness donations from Vicky McDonald of the Democratic Women of McDonough County (right) on September 24, 2019.

The Women's Health Task Force of the Democratic Women of McDonough County Illinois donated health and wellness items collected during their Drive for Women & Babies to WIRC-CAA on September 24. The donations will help individuals and families served by WIRC-CAA in McDonough County. WIRC-CAA staffers want to thank the drive organizers for their time and effort organizing this fundraiser.

For more information about WIRC-CAA's free services and programs, find "Western Illinois Regional Council" on Facebook or call 309-837-2997 between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. ❀

SURVIVAL CHALLENGE DONATES \$2,000 TO WIRC



Contestants of Survival Challenge discuss their team's progress in front of the campfire. Survival Challenge, held annually in Macomb, Illinois, donates all proceeds from the event to local charities.

The Survival Challenge, held in Macomb, invites individuals from all over the world to compete in an experience as authentic as possible to that of the famous CBS television show, *Survivor*. Players are formed into tribes that compete with each other in extreme outdoor challenges, including: obstacle courses; eating exotic food; mind games; fish toss; puzzles; and more. This year, WIRC was selected as one of the recipients of proceeds. Thanks to the efforts of event organizers, a \$2,000 donation was made to help individuals and families in need that are served by WIRC's programs. WIRC staff members want to thank event organizers Ian and Jordan Szechowycz, as well as all of the volunteers and competitors of their 2019 event.

For more information about Survival Challenge, find them on Facebook or visit survivalchallenge.net.

For more information about WIRC's free services and programs, find "Western Illinois Regional

Council" on Facebook, visit their website at wirpc.org, or call their Community Action Agency department at (309) 837-2997. ❁



LAMOINE VALLEY

ANNUAL FUNDRAISER

FOR CHILDREN IN NEED

Sunday, December 1, 2019
1:30 - 4:00 p.m.

Slup's Bar and Grill

225 South Main Street
Blandinsville, Illinois
309-652-3822



LOCAL EVENTS RAISE AWARENESS



Participants move to the beat of songs of empowerment at Drum Out Domestic Violence in Macomb on October 31.

In honor of Domestic Violence Awareness Month, Victim Services teamed up with local fitness instructors and law enforcement officials to "Drum Out Domestic Violence" during the month of October 2019 in Hamilton, Macomb, and Monmouth. Participants used drumsticks to move to the beat of songs of hope, empowerment, and support. Moments of silence were held to honor the memory of citizens and officers who have died due to domestic violence. A short informational program was given after the demonstration.

If you or someone you know are being abused, call Victim Service's crisis hotline at 309-837-5555. ❁

PROJECT SANTA PROGRAM NEEDS DONATIONS



Project Santa "elves" wrap gifts for children in need at WIRC-CAA's Project Santa Headquarters.

For over 35 years, WIRC-CAA's Project Santa Program has provided children in need in Hancock, Henderson, McDonough, and Warren counties with a happy holiday full of gifts, food, and clothing. Each child accepted into the program receives approximately \$75 worth of toys and clothing, and their family is provided with a holiday meal to take home. On designated days in December, each child has the opportunity to meet Santa Claus and open one gift with him. The remaining gifts are sent home with the family to open on Christmas Day.

Project Santa staffers are already preparing to make the joyful experience of a happy holiday happen for 207 children, but they need help from the public to reach their goal. Project Santa Coordinator Teresa Cadle says the program is in need of the following: new, unwrapped gifts for children of all ages; new wrapping paper and tape; and monetary donations to purchase gifts.

In order to make sure the

gifts are wrapped on time, the deadline to donate gifts is Monday, December 9, 2019. Donations can be delivered to WIRC-CAA at 223 South Randolph Street, Macomb. Monetary donations can be mailed by check or made online at wirpc.org/community-action.

A happy holiday for these children would not be possible

without the support of numerous volunteers and donors. Project Santa staffers want to thank everyone who has already contributed to the program.

For more information about how you can help this season, contact Project Santa Coordinator Teresa Cadle at WIRC-CAA by calling (309) 837-2997. ❁

VICTIM SERVICES SPEAKS OUT AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DURING THE WIU HOMECOMING PARADE



Victim Services counselors and volunteers hold signs speaking out against domestic violence during the Western Illinois University Homecoming Parade on October 5, 2019.

Staff members of WIRC-CAA Victim Services and volunteers participated in the WIU Homecoming Parade on Saturday, October 5, as part of their outreach campaign for Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Victim Services seized the opportunity to join the parade as a way to connect with residents of Macomb and students of Western Illinois University. Staffers displayed signs encouraging the public to speak out against domestic violence, as well as signs listing ways for survivors to call for help. Victim Services counselors and advocates

introduced themselves and their mission to attendees along the parade route. They also provided outreach materials encouraging the public to join in their mission of speaking out against domestic and sexual violence.

For more information about how to support survivors of domestic violence, call Victim Services at (309) 837-6622, visit wirpc.org, or find "WIRC-CAA Victim Services" on Facebook. If you or someone you know are being abused, call their 24-hour free and confidential crisis hotline at (309) 837-5555. ❁

WIRC-CAA NEEDS DEER HUNTERS TO HELP THE HUNGRY

WIRC-CAA is asking deer hunters to donate their deer meat to its Hunters Helping the Hungry program. For over 25 years, this program has provided free deer meat to residents in need through the WIRC-CAA Food Pantry and other collaborating food pantries throughout Hancock, Henderson, McDonough, and Warren counties. In the last year, over 5,000 pounds of deer meat has been distributed to those in need of food assistance, and the reserve of deer meat is in need of replenishing for distribution throughout 2020.

Hunters can bring their deer to the following processing centers and request that it be donated to

the Hunters Helping the Hungry Program. The participating lockers are: Blandinsville Locker Service, Blandinsville; Bowen Locker Service, Bowen; Bushnell Locker Service, Bushnell; Farmhouse Meat Co., Carthage; and Vancil Locker Service, Stronghurst.

WIRC-CAA Staff want to emphasize that this program would not be possible without the generosity and support of local hunters and the participating lockers. "Your generosity will help our food pantry, and the other participating food pantries in the region, provide nutrition for those who are less fortunate," said Executive Director Shaun Pritchard.

Note that there is a limit on how much deer burger each locker can process. When that limit is reached, WIRC-CAA will not be able to pay for the processing of any additional donations of deer.

From emergency services to housing needs to educational opportunities, WIRC-CAA, based in Macomb, provides efficient and diverse human services to help individuals and families help themselves. For more information about their services and programs, visit wirpc.org, find "Western Illinois Regional Council" on Facebook, or call (309) 837-2997. ❀

Like us on Facebook!

WIRC Phone Directory

WIRC is the parent agency to WIRC-Community Action Agency and WIRC-CAA Victim Services. Each department within the agency has its own unique services and programs. Please refer to this phone directory when seeking information about our services. We look forward to hearing from you!

Western Illinois Regional Council 309-837-3941

- Community Development
- Block Grant Inquiries
- Economic Development District
- Grant Writing & Administration
- Human Services Transportation Plan Inquiries
- Local Technical Assistance
- McDonough & Hancock County Public Transportation
- Tri-County Resource & Waste Management Council
- Membership Benefits

WIRC-Community Action Agency 309-837-2997

- Clothing Center
- Community Services Block Grant Inquiries
- Food Pantry / Non-Food Pantry
- Homeless Prevention Assistance
- Housing Rehabilitation
- Hunters Helping the Hungry
- Home Weatherization
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program
- Project Santa
- Scholarships
 - Scholastic scholarships
 - Technical scholarships

WIRC-CAA Victim Services Domestic Violence Program 309-837-6622

Sexual Assault Program

309-836-2148

24-Hour Crisis Hotline

309-837-5555

- Advocacy
- Counseling
- Domestic Violence Services
- Emergency Services
- Prevention Education
- Sexual Assault Services

You are valued. Your life matters. You are not alone.

