



# The Regional Review

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

2022

VOLUME 32, ISSUE 1

## OVER 500 CHILDREN GET TOYS, FOOD, AND CLOTHING FROM PROJECT SANTA PROGRAM

Since 1983, WIRC-CAA has offered the Project Santa program to help local people in need during the holiday season. The mission of this social service program is to provide a happy holiday full of gifts, food, and clothing to children of income-eligible families in need living in the western Illinois counties of Hancock, Henderson, McDonough, and Warren. Thanks to the generosity of community members, volunteers, organizations, and fundraisers, the 2021 WIRC-CAA Project Santa program was able to help 535 children. Of those children, 489 were officially enrolled in the program and 46 were assisted by Project Santa in a limited capacity.

“The children enrolled in this program often need things that many people take for granted, like their own blanket or comforter, shoes that fit, winter coats, or



*Volunteer elves sorted thousands of gifts, including toys and clothing, for over 500 children enrolled in the WIRC-CAA Project Santa program. [Photo by Jamie Roth, WIRC-CAA]*

food during the holiday break from school,” said Project Santa Coordinator Jamie Roth. “Project Santa gives toys to each child that is enrolled so they can enjoy being a kid, but we also give them items like food, coats, and shoes so they have a sense of security and comfort.”

The enrollment period for this program typically starts in mid-September. Application information

is sent to local public schools, posted online, and shared with local media outlets. This year, Project Santa saw an increased number of applications, most likely due to many families being financially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

An average of \$100 is spent on each child officially enrolled in Project Santa, and each family receives a holiday meal to prepare at home. The meal typically includes items like a canned ham, canned vegetables and fruit, potatoes, dinner rolls, and holiday treats like hot chocolate and candy canes. Families who otherwise would have qualified but applied past the enrollment deadline, which is typically in mid-October, are put on the Project Santa Waiting List. WIRC-CAA gives Waiting List

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### EDITOR & DESIGNER

Jamie Roth

Public Relations Manager  
(309) 837-3941, ext. 131  
jamie@wirpc.org

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wirpc@wirpc.org  
or call (309) 837-3941.

### **SANTA** (continued from page 1)

families assorted age-appropriate toys that have been donated to the program by the public.

WIRC-CAA Project Santa employees and volunteers, referred to as elves, spend several days shopping for items requested on each child's wish list. Parents list each child's age, clothing, shoe and coat sizes, and suggestions for toys or gifts. Roth says it is not uncommon for basic necessities like blankets, pillows, and coats to be listed. "In those cases, we do everything we can to get those items for them, because they may otherwise go the winter season without them."

Families must meet the following eligibility guidelines in order to qualify for Project Santa: they live in Hancock, Henderson, McDonough or Warren County; they are not enrolled in a similar holiday program offered by another social service agency; they have not been enrolled in Project Santa in the past two years; and their household's total income is within the program's income guidelines. For 2021, each family's income could not exceed 200% of the federal poverty guidelines. For example, a two-person household's gross income could not exceed \$2,903 per month.

Funding is partially provided by the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) program through the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. The remainder of Project Santa funding comes from donations.

"Project Santa relies heavily on monetary donations from the public, and that affects the number of children we are able to assist each year," said Roth. "Thankfully, we received generous monetary gifts and donations of toys to the

program in 2021. Without our amazing donors and supporters, we would not be able to help so many children. On behalf of WIRC-CAA, I want to say thank you to everyone who helped us accomplish our mission."

The application period for the 2021 Project Santa program has closed, and the 2022 program will begin accepting applications in late-September.

WIRC-CAA, based in Macomb, Illinois, offers a variety of social service programs to help anyone in need, including a food pantry, clothing center, energy assistance program, scholarships, and more. For more information about their free and confidential programs, call WIRC-CAA at 309-837-2997, find them on social media, or visit <https://wirpc.org/>. ☺

You are beautiful as you are.



### WIRC-CAA Food Pantry

133 W. Jackson, Macomb  
Available Tues./Thurs./Fri.  
8:00 AM to 4:00 PM  
Call (309) 837-2997

### Community Members Keeping Our Communities Strong



Thank you to our donors who help  
people in need through WIRC-CAA.



133 West Jackson Street  
Macomb, Illinois 61455  
(309) 837-2997  
[wirpc.org/donate/](https://wirpc.org/donate/)

# MEET THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, JOHN PRITCHARD

Greetings, everyone! I am excited to join the WIRC & CAA team as the Interim Executive Director, and look forward to directing this great organization in the months to come until a permanent director is hired.

As the former Mayor of Galesburg, I may be a familiar face to many of you. For those of you who do not know me, I want to take this opportunity to introduce myself and discuss how my background will be an asset to the agency and the people we serve.

I was born and raised in Galesburg, Illinois. Jane Johnson Pritchard and I have been happily married for 42 years, and we are blessed with four children and six grandchildren. My educational background is in economics, which I studied at Knox College.

Over my career, I have served on many local boards, including businesses and community enterprises. Those organizations include the United Way of Knox County, the Galesburg Business and Technology Center, the National



*Courtesy Photo*

Railroad Hall of Fame, and the Knox-Galesburg Economic Development Corporation, to name a few. While I was at the United Way, I served as Treasurer, Vice President, and then President.

In 1976, I joined the Board of Directors of the First Galesburg National Bank. During my time there, I served on the Executive Committee, and was appointed Chair of the Loan Committee and Audit Committee. Over my career, I was involved with the purchase of banks in four communities. From

1986 to 1990, I served as Chairman of the Board of Directors of Madison Park Bank in Peoria.

From 1976 until 1989, I was the publisher of the Galesburg Register-Mail, and also oversaw the operations of Galesburg Broadcasting Company. I was appointed to the Illinois Bar Association Fair Trail-Free Press Committee.

I also have a background in radio. In 1991, I purchased my first radio station in Burlington, Iowa. Today, I have six radio stations in that area. In 1996, I purchased WGIL and WAAG radio stations, and have since added WLSR and WKAY in Galesburg.

On May 6, 2013, I was sworn in as Mayor of the City of Galesburg and served two terms.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to me by calling the WIRC office at 309-837-3941 between 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Sincerely,  
John Pritchard

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## SURVIVAL CHALLENGE DONATES \$2,000 TO WIRC-CAA

Survival Challenge, a worldwide interactive fundraising event based in Macomb, Illinois, recently collected and donated \$2,000 for WIRC-CAA. The funds will go to the social service programs in greatest need.

Survival Challenge is organized by Macomb residents Ian and Jordan Szechowycz. With the help of many volunteers, the organizers create an experience that is similar to the popular CBS television show, Survivor. The event is broadcast online, and has participants from all

over the world. Proceeds from each event are donated to a charity.

WIRC-CAA Public Relations Manager Jamie Roth says this is not the first time Survival Challenge has donated to the agency. “WIRC-CAA was also selected as the charity of choice by Survival Challenge in 2019,” said Roth. “On behalf of the people we serve, I want to thank Survival Challenge for their generous donations and for their continued support of our free social service programs.”

For more information about

Survival Challenge, find them on Facebook or visit <http://survivalchallenge.net>.

To learn more about WIRC-CAA and their social service programs, call 309-837-2997, find them on social media, or visit <https://wirpc.org/>. ☺

Be kind to one another.



# LAMOINE VALLEY RAISES OVER \$7,000 FOR PROJECT SANTA



*LaMoine Valley Project Santa members Kevin Six (left) and Mellissa Brinkschroeder (right) presented a \$7,000 check to WIRC-CAA Project Santa Coordinator Jamie Roth (center) on December 10, 2021.*

The LaMoine Valley Project Santa group once again held a fundraiser for the WIRC-CAA Project Santa program. Thanks to their efforts and the support of attendees, the organization raised an impressive \$7,000 for Project Santa.

The annual fundraiser was held on November 28, 2021 at Riverview Bar & Grill in Dallas City, Illinois. The group hosted a raffle and a live auction. All of the proceeds will help children in need served by the WIRC-CAA Project Santa program.

“We are grateful for this very generous gift,” said WIRC-CAA Project Santa Coordinator and Public Relations Manager Jamie Roth. “On average, we spend \$100 on each child enrolled in the program. This gift will help many children who would otherwise go without toys and basic necessities, like food, during the holiday season.”

Roth added that LaMoine Valley

members also help with distributing gifts to Henderson County families. “They do a great job at helping us distribute food and gifts to our Henderson County Project Santa families, and we very much appreciate their support every year.”

The mission of Project Santa is to provide food, clothing and gifts to children of income-eligible families living in the western Illinois counties of Hancock, Henderson, McDonough, and Warren. WIRC-CAA offers social service programs to help anyone in need, including a food pantry, clothing center, energy assistance program, scholarships, and more. The application period for this year’s Project Santa program has closed.

For more information about Project Santa, visit <https://wirpc.org/projectsanta/> or call WIRC-CAA at 309-837-2997.



**YOU ARE NOT  
ALONE.**

**WE BELIEVE  
YOU.**

**YOUR STORY  
MATTERS.**

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.



**24/7 Free and  
Confidential Crisis  
Hotline:  
(309) 837-5555**

# RENT, MINOR HOME MODIFICATION, AND OTHER ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE TO ELIGIBLE RESIDENTS

Western Illinois residents who need a helping hand may be able to get help from WIRC-CAA. The local social service agency and nonprofit is based in Macomb, but many of their programs extend throughout a five-county area in western Illinois, including Hancock, Henderson, Knox, McDonough, and Warren counties.

All services provided by WIRC-CAA are free and confidential. The agency offers a wide variety of programs to help income-eligible people in need, and also provides supplies and/or financial assistance to partner agencies and food pantries on a case-by-case basis.

WIRC-CAA Public Relations Manager Jamie Roth says their team members have a passion for helping people, and the majority of the agency's programs are funded by state and federal grants. "We want to help people when times are tough and improve the quality of life in our service area," said Roth. "It takes courage for people to ask for help. I encourage anyone who needs a helping hand to call WIRC-CAA and discuss their situation with our team to learn if they qualify for any of our programs."

WIRC-CAA currently offers the following assistance programs to eligible residents:

- Rent, mortgage, water, sewer, and/or city services payment assistance for individuals who were diagnosed with COVID-19 and have experienced a financial loss
- Financial assistance for individuals facing eviction and homelessness
- Job training and certification



*WIRC-CAA has programs available in the Illinois counties of Hancock, Henderson, Knox, McDonough, and Warren.*

stipends

- Scholarships for income-eligible students enrolled at a trade school, college or university
- Short-term financial assistance for car repairs, uniforms, or supplies to maintain or finalize non-seasonal employment
- Financial assistance for basic health and wellness assessments, devices, prescriptions or procedures
- Minor home modifications for elderly or disabled homeowners such as installation of wheelchair ramps, handicapped fixtures, and/or widening doorways for wheelchair access
- Assessment and removal of home health hazards such as lead, mold, radon, and other similar concerns

Funding for the programs is partially provided by the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) program through the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.

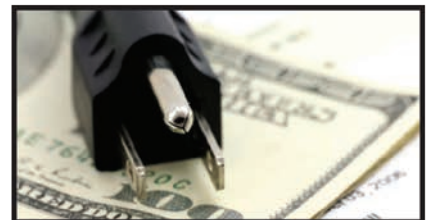
To apply, call WIRC-CAA at 309-837-2997 between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Application appointments are being completed over the phone

during the pandemic, so residents do not have to drive to an outreach site for an in-person meeting.

For more information, call their office, visit <https://wirpc.org/> or find them on social media. WIRC-CAA is an Equal Housing Opportunity organization and Equal Opportunity Employer. ☺



**Need help paying  
your utility bill?**



**APPLY FOR  
LIHEAP!**

**The income guidelines  
have increased.**



**Contact WIRC-CAA  
to see if you qualify  
(309) 837-2997**

# STAFF NEWS

## Staff Departures

We are sorry to see these team members go, and wish them the best in their future endeavors:

### Tracy Camden

WIRC & CAA Executive Director  
*Tracy served a combined  
13 years at the agency.*

### Royal White

Housing Manager  
*Royal retired happily after  
21 years of service.*

### Sally\*

Domestic Violence  
Child Counselor

### Janet\*

Domestic Violence Counselor



*Royal White was presented with an engraved watch in recognition for his many years of service at WIRC-Community Action Agency.*

*\*Full names of Victim Services advocates/counselors are kept confidential out of concern for their safety and the safety of their clients.*

 You deserve to feel safe,  
be respected, and be loved.



Team members past and present from WIRC & CAA gave Tracy Camden a fond farewell at a small gathering held at the agency. A few of those members posed for a commemorative photo. Pictured from left to right are Debbie Collins, Tim Lobdell, Suzan Nash, Tracy Camden, Rose Elam, Jarred Dexter, Tim Manock, and Jamie Roth.

# PROJECT SANTA ELVES

Project Santa could not happen without the many volunteer elves that helped us with sorting and purchasing thousands of gifts. Here are some amazing volunteers. View more on our Facebook page!



## Emergency Hygiene Assistance

Free personal care items, diapers, and non-food items for people in need.

Call WIRC-CAA at (309) 837-2997

## PAINT & ELECTRONICS RECYCLING

Tri-County Regional Collection Facility

9:00 AM to 12:30 PM / Tuesday - Friday

8:00 AM to Noon / 1st Saturday of Month

129 W. Jackson, Macomb (back side of bldg.)

# VICTIM SERVICES CONDEMNS GUILTY VERDICT REVERSAL IN ADAMS COUNTY SEXUAL ASSAULT CASE

Victim Services counselors and advocates were horrified and saddened by the recent reversal of a guilty verdict in a sexual assault case by an Adams County judge.

The perpetrator was initially found guilty of one count of criminal sexual assault of a teenage girl while she was unconscious at a graduation party. The survivor says the perpetrator placed a pillow over her head during the assault. She regained consciousness and told him to stop, but he continued. Eventually, the survivor was able to push the perpetrator off of her and escape.

In an unusual and shocking turn, the judge reversed the decision to not guilty. The judge says the perpetrator had already served five months in jail and that the mandated sentence of four years in prison was not justifiable for the situation. Instead, he blamed the parents who hosted the graduation party for not being responsible hosts and providing alcohol to teenagers.

Survivors struggle with coming forward because they worry they will not be believed and/or they will be blamed for what happened to them. By reversing the guilty verdict in this case, the judge is blaming the victim and discouraging survivors from coming forward.



*Victim Services provides free and confidential crisis counseling, medical advocacy, and legal advocacy to survivors of domestic violence, sexual violence, and/or stalking.*

- Consent CANNOT be given when a person is UNCONSCIOUS.
- The way that a person is DRESSED, or whether or not they have been DRINKING, is NOT an open invitation for sex.
- If consent was given in the past, it is not valid for any other time except that moment; prior consent does NOT obligate the person to give consent throughout the relationship.

Victim Services wants to reassure survivors that this type of verdict reversal is unusual, and that speaking with a counselor can help you feel empowered on your healing journey. Sexual assault is a traumatic crime and can have lifelong mental and physical health impacts on survivors. Speaking up and telling your story takes courage.

Victim Services provides free and confidential counseling,

medical advocacy, and legal advocacy to survivors of sexual violence in Hancock, Henderson, Fulton, Knox, McDonough, Warren counties in Illinois. The nonprofit agency also provides free counseling to friends and family members of survivors who witnessed the abuse themselves.

When you call the Victim Services crisis hotline, staff pledge to believe you and listen to your story. You have the right to be heard, to get help, and to be treated with respect.

We will LISTEN to your story! We will SUPPORT YOU! We will SPEAK UP on your behalf in court! We will never stop SPREADING AWARENESS!

How can you be an ally to survivors? Being an ally means supporting survivors, in whatever capacity you can, during their healing journey. When someone tells you they were sexually assaulted, the best response is, "I believe you". Listen to their story, and ask them how you can help. Let them know about the free resources available to them, like those provided by Victim Services.

If you have experienced or witnessed abuse at any point in your life, Victim Services' free and confidential crisis hotline is available 24/7 at (309) 837-5555. ☎️



## Contact us when you need a helping hand

**Food pantry • Scholarships**  
**Energy bill assistance • Job training stipends**  
**Homeless prevention assistance**  
**Minor home modifications for the elderly/disabled**  
**...and MORE!** Services are free and confidential.

**WIRC-Community  
Action Agency**  
**(309) 837-2997**  
**<https://wirpc.org/>**

Equal Opportunity Employer



# Become a certified hotline volunteer!

Earn your  
**State of Illinois**  
**crisis certification**  
—— and ——  
**provide**  
**crisis counseling**  
**to local survivors**  
**of abuse.**



Class is **FREE** for students **ages 18 & up**  
Working professionals pay a \$100 fee

Classes\* will be held Tuesdays & Thursdays from 5:00 - 9:00 p.m.  
starting Tuesday, February 15, 2022 at the main WIRC-CAA office in Macomb.



**To save your seat, call Victim Services at  
(309) 837-6622 or email [victimservices@wirpc.org](mailto:victimservices@wirpc.org).**

**Learn more at <https://wirpc.org/crisistraining/>**



WIRC-CAA Victim Services provides free and confidential crisis counseling and advocacy services to survivors of domestic violence, sexual violence, and/or stalking in western Illinois.

*\*The Crisis Intervention Training Course is an in-person, non-credit professional development course offered to the public by trained advocates/counselors of Victim Services.*