



# The Regional Review

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

2022

VOLUME 32, ISSUE 3

## A Scared Boy and His Dog

From the desk of Roger Pavey, WIRC Executive Director

We all need someone who will take a chance on us. Who took a chance on you? Did a relative, coach, organization, or teacher ever encourage you to succeed while others looked the other way or scoffed?

Western Illinois Regional Council bets on its customers. We are proud to work for people with limited income—good folks who are just like us.

When I was a child, I entered the foster care system in Indiana. My child protective services caseworker went above and beyond her job duties to make sure Spot, a mangy beagle-mix stray, could go with me, a rotten-toothed abused unruly child. She paid the veterinary bill from her own pocket and convinced my foster parents to accept both me and the dog. We were a package deal. For me, the return on my case



*Roger Pavey has served as the Executive Director of WIRC since June 2022.*

worker's investment is exponential. She improved my childhood because she saw me as a person with genuine needs, physical and emotional. She kept a scared boy together with his scared dog and allowed us to keep needing each other. I don't remember her name,

but I will never forget her kindness.

I have had the good fortune of being involved with social services my entire life. My family received food pantry items from Community Action. I graduated from Head Start in 1974. From college scholarships to shelter programs, I received help at every station of life. I've experienced gentle and effective caseworkers and I've been on the receiving end of bureaucratic judgment that devalued me as a human. Those of us who work with others have a choice of how we approach people, and our choices have a lasting impact that we can too often ignore.

I'm excited and grateful to be the Executive Director of Western Illinois Regional Council. WIRC's caring and dedicated staff work with our neighbors and cities to improve lives and communities. I hope to **SCARED BOY** (continued on page 2)

# IN THIS ISSUE:

From the desk of Roger Pavey	Page 1
Ewen Celebrates 20 Years at WIRC	Page 2
Cobb's Legacy Continues Through Two Local Students	Page 3
Energy Assistance Grant Program Helps with Winter Home Heating Costs	Page 5
Macomb Walmart Donates \$1,000 to WIRC Holiday Program	Page 6
Raritan State Bank Fundraiser Helps Victim Services	Page 7
WIRC Staff Milestones	Page 7

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### SCARED BOY (continued from page 1)

build on WIRC's solid foundation. Our staff is working on ideas that will improve customer services and make us even more responsive. I will be excited to share these changes with you soon. With many social service programs, applicants sacrifice a level of dignity when they ask for help. A dignified, informed, human response by WIRC and its staff can make the process easier.

Our work is personal. People often come to us at a low point in their lives, feeling like society has given up on them. Western Illinois Regional Council sees value, checking judgments and biases, in the realization that we don't know everything someone has endured to get to this point.

I saw my mother beaten. One summer day, I came home to learn we were going camping until further notice—we were homeless. My father went to prison. I dropped out of college for a while because I didn't have enough money to continue. At many points in my life, people asked me, "what's wrong with you?" Fortunately, there were just enough people asking, "What happened to you?" instead. I look forward to working with the community to ask our neighbors what happened, and how we might work together to make it better. ❀

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

**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.)

# EWEN CELEBRATES 20 YEARS AT WIRC



*Marta Ewen recently celebrated 20 years of service at WIRC.*

For over 20 years, Marta Ewen has been helping people in need at WIRC. She officially reached this special milestone on August 18, 2022.

"Marta has served as the initial point of contact for WIRC for two decades, helping thousands of people access the services they need to improve their lives. Marta approaches her work with kindness and humility," said Roger Pavey, Executive Director of WIRC.

For the majority of her time at WIRC, Ewen served as the Receptionist for the agency. She was a critical part of helping customers with scheduling appointments, applying for programs, assisting program managers, and helping to keep the office running smoothly. In October 2022, she was promoted from her role as Receptionist to Administrative Coordinator. Born and raised in Macomb, she is happy to make a difference in the community and the surrounding counties through her work at the agency. ❀

# COBB'S LEGACY CONTINUES THROUGH TWO LOCAL STUDENTS

Two more McDonough County students are able to continue their college studies thanks to the Nathan Cobb Memorial Scholarship. The annual scholarship was created in memory of Nathan Cobb, who tragically passed away in January 2020. WIRC-CAA manages the Cobb Scholarship at the request of Cobb's parents, Janet and Lee Cobb. After careful review by a committee, the Fall 2022 awards were proudly granted to Ashanti Strange and Nicole Kelly.

Ashanti Strange of Bushnell was awarded the traditional student scholarship. Strange is excited to begin her studies at San Diego State University in California. She is planning to major in Biology with a possible minor in Spanish. When asked what career she would like to pursue, she responded that she would like to continue her studies in clinical psychology and ultimately become a psychiatrist. Through her career, Strange wants to help remove the stigma people feel about getting help for their mental health, and wants her patients to know that they are not alone. She knows that she has many years of study ahead of her to realize her dream, but she is excited for the challenge and opportunity.

Nicole Kelly was awarded the non-traditional student scholarship and is a Macomb resident. She is



*McDonough County residents Ashanti Strange (left) and Nicole Kelly (right) were awarded the Fall 2022 Nathan Cobb Memorial Scholarship [Photo by Jamie Roth, WIRC-CAA].*

currently earning her Bachelors of General Studies degree from Western Illinois University while also working full-time. Kelly says her courses are all online, so that allows her the flexibility to provide for her family and continue her studies on her busy schedule. Kelly says watching her mother successfully balance work, family, and school heavily inspired her to go back to college and finish her degree. Kelly has developed an interest in health sciences management and plans to eventually earn a Master's degree in that field.

In August 2022, both recipients were able to meet Janet and Lee Cobb as well as leading members of the WIRC-CAA team. Strange and Kelly repeatedly expressed their sincere gratitude for receiving the awards to the Cobbs, who were happy to see Nathan's legacy carried on through the students' passion to help others through their careers.

To learn more about the Nathan's legacy and the scholarship created in his honor, visit [wirpc.org/cobbscholarship/](http://wirpc.org/cobbscholarship/) or call 309-837-2997. Applications for the next Nathan Cobb Memorial Scholarship plan to open in March 2023.

WIRC-Community Action Agency provides a wide range of services for people in need. For more information, visit [wirpc.org/](http://wirpc.org/), find the agency on social media,

or call (309) 837-2997 to apply for their social service programs.

WIRC-CAA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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

**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/](http://wirpc.org/donate/)

# Join the League of WIRC Elves!



WIRC's Project Santa program needs caring people to help over 500 children this holiday season. The program provides gifts, food and clothing to children of income-eligible families in Hancock, Henderson, McDonough and Warren counties in Illinois.

## How can YOU help a child?

### Be a shopping elf

Do you enjoy shopping for other people, especially children? Donate your time by shopping with the WIRC team! You will meet us at a designated time and place in Macomb during the week of November 14 and find gifts for as many kids as you can.

### Be a sorting elf

If you are detail-oriented and like to organize, you can help us sort gifts to make sure the toys and clothing are going to the correct children. Sorting is done at the WIRC office in Macomb. Volunteer opportunities start in mid-November and end in early December.

### Be a sponsor elf

This is a rewarding and interactive way to donate to the program. These special people shop for gifts on their own time with their own money. WIRC provides each sponsor with wish lists. You must plan to spend at least \$100 on each child you choose to sponsor.

### Be a donor elf

With WIRC spending \$100 on each child, the costs for this program quickly add up. By making a monetary donation, you will help us purchase what is needed most for the children who are not sponsored by a caring donor.

**Visit [wirpc.org/projectsanta/](http://wirpc.org/projectsanta/) or call (309) 837-2997!**



**Western Illinois Regional Council (WIRC)** • 133 West Jackson Street, Macomb, Illinois  
Phone: (309) 837-2997 • Email: [projectsanta@wirpc.org](mailto:projectsanta@wirpc.org) • [wirpc.org/projectsanta/](http://wirpc.org/projectsanta/)  
*WIRC helps people and communities. Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer.*

*Funding is provided in part by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.*

# ENERGY ASSISTANCE GRANT PROGRAM HELPS WITH WINTER HOME HEATING COSTS

As of September 1, 2022, people who need help with paying their energy bills can apply for a social service program through WIRC. The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is a federal grant that helps income-eligible homeowners and renters with reconnecting their energy service and/or paying their electric, natural gas or propane bills. WIRC manages the program in Hancock, Henderson, McDonough, and Warren counties in western Illinois.

“Last program season, over 2,000 households in our four-county service area were able to get help with their energy bills,” said WIRC Public Relations Manager Jamie Roth. “The amount that each household receives depends on their situation. We hope people will apply early so they have peace of mind this winter.”

Households must be at or below 200% of the federal poverty level to receive a benefit from LIHEAP. The 30-day income guidelines for LIHEAP are based on Federal Poverty Guidelines, State Median Income and the number of persons living in the household. The current income guidelines are as follows: \$2,265 for a one-person household; \$3,052 for a two-person household; \$3,838 for a three-person

household; \$4,625 for a four-person household; and \$5,412 for a five-person household. For six-person households or greater, contact WIRC at (309) 837-2997 or visit their website at [wirpc.org/liheap/](http://wirpc.org/liheap/) to view the income limit chart.

Applicants must submit the following documentation to their WIRC case worker: Proof of gross income from all household members for the prior 30-day period beginning with the date of application; Proof of Social Security numbers or Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers for all household members (individuals without those can still apply and WIRC will advise accordingly); Copies of current heat and electric bills issued within the last 30 days; and Copies of rental agreements (if the household is renting) showing utilities are included, the monthly rental amount and landlord contact information. Other documents may be needed based on the household's specific situation.

Individuals who received program assistance in the past are welcome to re-apply.

Propane customers are encouraged to apply when the program opens in September to take greater advantage of lower propane prices, as propane prices

typically increase during the winter months. By applying early, propane customers will see their LIHEAP benefit go further.

Energy assistance applications are taken on a first-come, first-served basis from September 1, 2022 through May 31, 2023. There are no priority groups this program year, meaning any household can apply at any time. All households in need, especially people on fixed-incomes, are encouraged to ask WIRC about the programs and apply.

To apply, call WIRC at (309) 837-2997 starting Wednesday, August 17, 2022 to schedule an in-person or phone appointment. WIRC team members can meet applicants at designated outreach sites in the following communities: Blandinsville; Bowen; Bushnell; Carthage; Colchester; Dallas City; Hamilton; LaHarpe; Macomb; Monmouth; Oquawka; and Stronghurst. People with mobility or transportation issues are encouraged to schedule a phone appointment.

More information about the energy assistance program can be found online at [wirpc.org/liheap/](http://wirpc.org/liheap/).

Be kind to one another.

You can help local survivors of abuse.  
Call Victim Services at (309) 837-6622.



## 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



# MACOMB WALMART DONATES \$1,000 TO WIRC HOLIDAY PROGRAM



On October 25, WIRC Executive Director Roger Pavey (center, left) accepted a \$1,000 donation from Macomb Walmart Store Manager Tiffani Garcia (center, right) and associates. The donation will support WIRC's Project Santa program.

The team at Walmart in Macomb recently donated \$1,000 to WIRC's Project Santa program.

Project Santa aims to give a helping hand to income-eligible families in need by providing gifts, food and clothing to their children during the holiday season.

The nonprofit program helps hundreds of children each year in the western Illinois counties of Hancock, Henderson, McDonough and Warren.

WIRC Executive Director Roger Pavey accepted the donation on October 25, 2022.

Public Relations Manager Jamie Roth says the donation is greatly appreciated and needed this year. "We are expecting to help over 500 children this year, and we aim to spend \$100 on gifts and clothing for each child enrolled in the program," said Roth. "Walmart's generous

donation will help us to purchase the items we need to give these children a happy holiday."

Enrollment for this year's Project Santa program has passed. There are many opportunities for the public to help support the program and get involved. To learn more, visit <https://wirpc.org/projectsanta/>, email [projectsanta@wirpc.org](mailto:projectsanta@wirpc.org), or call WIRC at 309-837-2997.

WIRC is based in Macomb, Illinois, and their services and programs extend throughout multiple western Illinois counties. The agency helps people and communities, and is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
WIRC helps local governments with applying for grants.

You are beautiful as you are.

**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**

# RARITAN STATE BANK FUNDRAISER HELPS VICTIM SERVICES



Raritan State Bank employee Chloe Gaumer (right) presented a \$544 donation to Victim Services Preventionist Educator Mariah Huston (left) on August 24, 2022.

People of all ages who have witnessed or experienced abuse will get the mental health support they need thanks to a recent fundraiser hosted by Raritan State Bank. On August 19, the Raritan, Illinois, bank hosted a cookout fundraiser with all proceeds going to WIRC-Victim Services. Thanks to their efforts and support from the public, the bank raised \$544 for the nonprofit agency.

The donation will be used to provide free counseling, medical advocacy and legal advocacy services to survivors of abuse who are served by WIRC-Victim Services. Raritan State Bank employee Chloe Gaumer nominated Victim Services as the recipient of the fundraiser.

“We are thankful that Mrs. Gaumer and Raritan State Bank choose our agency for the cookout, and are glad they share our mission to end the cycle of abuse,” said

Victim Services Public Relations Manager Jamie Roth.

Victim Services counselors and advocates want survivors to feel empowered and know they are not alone. People of any age can call their free and confidential 24/7 crisis hotline at 309-837-5555 to talk about their experience. ☘



In July, Kunes Auto Group of Macomb collected food for the WIRC-CAA Food Pantry as part of their Trade in Hunger event.

It is okay to ask for help.

# WIRC STAFF MILESTONES

These WIRC team members recently celebrated notable work anniversaries:

**Janice Stepanski**  
Accounting Specialist  
1 Year of Service

**Chase Gaumer**  
Weatherization  
Assessor/Inspector  
1 Year of Service

**Aaron Allen**  
Regional Recycling  
Center Facility Manager  
1 Year of Service

**Mariah Huston**  
Victim Services Preventionist  
1 Year of Service



## October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM)

**1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men in the U.S. have experienced some form of physical violence by an intimate partner.**



**24/7 Free & Confidential  
Crisis Hotline:  
309-837-5555**



# Do I qualify for *energy bill help* through WIRC?

- ✓ I am a renter or homeowner
- ✓ I live in Hancock, Henderson, McDonough, or Warren counties in Illinois
- ✓ My household's total gross income is within the program limits (see chart)

Number of People Living in Your Home	Your Household's Gross Income Cannot Exceed...
1 person	\$2,265 per month
2 people	\$3,052 per month
3 people	\$3,838 per month
4 people	\$4,625 per month
5 people	\$5,412 per month
6 people or more	Call or visit WIRC's website



**Apply: 309-837-2997**

**Learn more: [wirpc.org/liheap/](http://wirpc.org/liheap/)**

Funding is provided through the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity



Income guidelines effective until May 31, 2023