



The Regional Review

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

2022

VOLUME 32, ISSUE 4

WILL YOU "FLY" WITH US?

From the desk of Roger Pavey, WIRC Executive Director

If you travel during the holidays, my best wishes go with you, especially if you choose to fly. My travel method of choice is a sturdy pair of boots, so the most I have ever earned from my frequent flyer account is a crummy magazine subscription. I hope you earn a flight to Hawaii if that's your idea of a good time. I'll be in the woods at Argyle Lake smiling at birds some cold winter Saturday while you are on the beach.

The term "frequent flyer" has unfortunately become pejorative slang in the human services and healthcare fields. People who frequently request services are called frequent flyers. The term is shorthand for someone abusing the system. Since moving to Macomb several months ago, I've heard this term used by those in the social service fields and in the community



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

to refer to people who repeatedly ask for help. It's often said with an eye roll or a grumble from the person charged with helping.

Our community is incredibly generous and giving. It isn't a lack of love that creates a stigma about the poor. It's a cultural belief that people

who are poor or downtrodden are at fault for their station in life. The old myth that people should just pull themselves up by their bootstraps solves nothing. If only success was that easy. Poverty is far more complex. Even when the person has made poor choices, how will name calling help?

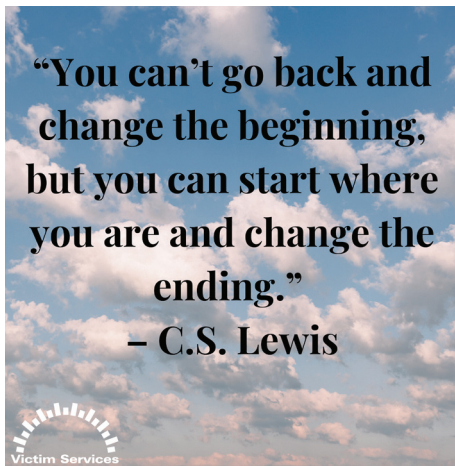
Referring to people who need help as frequent fliers is both ethically and clinically inappropriate. Such statements are thick with biases and judgment. I don't have to feel someone's pain if I can push the person away from me, divide us, and declare them different with a weak joke as a label.

C. S. Lewis wrote, in *The Screwtape Letters*, "My symbol of Hell is something like... the offices of a thoroughly nasty business concern."

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WILL YOU FLY (continued from page 1)

Let's strip the bureaucracy and the labels; there's a better way.

I understand why food pantries, social service programs, emergency rooms, and others with limited resources have rules about the frequency and methods of service acquisition, but our job—as human beings—is to help each other whenever we can. As a human, I get cold every time I am disconnected from my power in the winter, and I get hungry every time I don't have food, regardless of how often I am expected to visit an organization whose mission it is to help me. If I walk in hungry again, and staff refers to me as a frequent flyer, whether or not to my face, I am stripped of some measure of my humanity, and I might leave feeling re-traumatized by the experience.

An organization's limited resources should not limit its compassion.

At WIRC, we are developing a trauma-informed approach to the way we provide services, and infusing equity into all of our activities. As humans, we will fail at times, but we can also learn from our mistakes and become more humane.

If you need help, you are welcome here at WIRC. We want you to come back again.

Isn't that the point of a frequent flyer program? Airlines intentionally market to get people who need to fly often to return to them. We want people to come to WIRC until they no longer need us, and then to keep coming as volunteers. My wish for the New Year is that we can remove biases about people looking for help, to get to know them, to help them find meaningful change they want

and need. We all have hopes and dreams, if the trauma we might have faced has not beaten them out of us. We should celebrate every time someone finds the courage to walk through our door.

WIRC wants to help people travel on this journey we call living, to be our frequent fliers in the best meaning of the term.

We want to help meet basic needs, prepare people to pursue their dreams, and improve neighborhoods and communities.

We would love to have you come fly with us, either as a customer of our services or as a volunteer. You have a place at WIRC, and I would like to visit with you to dream about the great things we can do together to make western Illinois a better place to live, work, and play for everyone.

Until our paths cross again, hopefully soon, safe travels, my friends. ☘

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.)

**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/

WIRC AND GOOD FOOD COLLABORATIVE ANNOUNCE PARTNERSHIP TO FIGHT HUNGER

Macomb-based nonprofits Western Illinois Regional Council (WIRC) and Good Food Collaborative (GFC) are excited to announce they are now partnering in the fight against hunger in McDonough County, Illinois. The two organizations will



Western Illinois Regional Council and Good Food Collaborative will collaborate to open a choice-based food pantry in 2023.

open a choice-based food pantry at the WIRC office in Macomb to empower people in need to choose healthy options to feed their family.

Since they formed in 2021, GFC has seen increasing demand for their mobile food pantry program that delivers food directly to the homes of people in need. Recently, GFC has been exploring collaborations with other nonprofits to help coordinate their food outreach programs with other providers.

WIRC's mission is to partner with people and communities to improve lives and neighborhoods, and has operated their own food pantry for many years. Roger Pavey, Executive Director of WIRC, saw the opportunity for the two organizations to offer a food pantry that is welcoming, supportive, and offers a variety of healthy, delicious food options.

"The Good Food Collaborative's customer-informed approach to hunger meets the needs of our community. Working together, we will create an inclusive choice-based food pantry option unlike anything previously offered in Macomb," said Roger Pavey, WIRC Executive Director.

In late-December 2022, GFC will start moving into the former clothing center area of the WIRC office located at 133 West Jackson Street in Macomb. The public space will be remodeled to look and operate like a grocery store, with office space for GFC personnel being added in adjoining rooms. All of the food items in the pantry will be free to people in need. Good Food Collaborative will continue to provide home-delivered food pantry services to households that cannot come to the new food pantry store because of transportation or health barriers.

Besides providing space, WIRC will also collaborate with GFC to find grant funding opportunities, assist with marketing the program, and provide other resources as-needed to make their shared vision a reality. WIRC and GFC will both maintain their status as separate organizations. After the transition, the WIRC clothing center will remain closed and the new food pantry is expected to open in that space sometime in early 2023.

Both nonprofits are excited for what the future will bring with their collaboration, and look forward to

seeing the positive changes in McDonough County that come from offering a choice-based food pantry.

"We are currently serving over 500 hundred people a week with our mobile food pantry, and now our storefront food pantry will allow users to pick the food they want to feed their

families, just like we all do when we go to the grocery store. We are very excited about the collaboration with WIRC and thank all the members of the community that support us in our efforts," says Richard Chamberlain, Board President GFC.

WIRC helps people and communities. The agency offers a wide range of social service programs and community development grant programs to improve the quality of life in the western Illinois counties the agency serves. To learn more, call WIRC at 309-837-2997, find them on social media, or visit <https://wirpc.org/>.

Good Food Collaborative (GFC) brings good food and people together. Their food-based programs include Kids Cook and Food U—which teach children and adults how to cook healthy meals, and a mobile food pantry. To learn more, call 309-326-3049, find them on social media, or visit <https://goodfoodcollaborative.org/>.

WIRC and GFC are equal opportunity employers and providers. ☎

You are beautiful as you are.



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/

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



Income guidelines effective until May 31, 2023