



Southeast Nebraska Community Action

Mission Statement

Investing in Our Neighbors Through Education and Partnerships to Improve Lives and Build Strong Communities in Southeast Nebraska

Vision Statement

SENCA will promote, utilize, and expand opportunities to attain and maintain self-sufficiency through community education and support, collaboration, and resource development.

The Beginning

Southeast Nebraska Community Action Council, Inc. (SENCA) was incorporated on May 2, 1966, in Humboldt, Nebraska as a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation for the purpose (as stated in its articles of incorporation) of “developing and operating any and all community action programs and activities including, but not limited to those authorized or permitted by the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964.” The incorporators of SENCA were Evelyn Cooper of Humboldt, and Cecil Davis of Pawnee City, and there were twenty-eight members of the first Board of Directors. The corporation was formed under the laws of Nebraska as a non-profit corporation. The SENCA service area included Cass, Johnson, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee and Richardson Counties in southeast Nebraska.

SENCA is one of nine Community Action Agencies formed in Nebraska during the initial formation and operation of the Economic Opportunity Act:

SENCA – Humboldt

Blue Valley Community Action Partnership - Fairbury

Central Nebraska Community Action Partnership – Loup City

Community Action Partnership of Lancaster and Saunders Counties – Lincoln

Community Action Partnership of Mid-Nebraska - Kearney

Community Action Partnership of Western Nebraska - Gering

Eastern Nebraska Community Action Partnership – Omaha

Northeast Nebraska Community Action Partnership - Pender

Northwest Community Action Partnership – Chadron

Authorizing Legislation

The Economic Opportunity Act was passed during the administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson as one facet of the nationwide anti-poverty movement begun by President John F. Kennedy. Section two of the Act stated that it was “the policy of the United States to eliminate the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty in this Nation by opening to everyone the opportunity for education and training, the opportunity to work, and the opportunity to live in decency and dignity.” The Community Services Administration was then formed to oversee these programs. Programs authorized by the Act included the Job Corps, Work and Training for Youth and Adults, Work-Study Programs, Special Impact Programs, Urban and Rural Community Action Programs, Rural Loan Programs, Assistance for Migrant and Other Seasonally Employed Farm Workers, Employment and Investment Incentives, Work Experience and Training Programs, Day Care Projects, and Volunteers In Service To America (VISTA).

In 1981 the Congress of the United States abolished the Community Services Administration and authorized the Community Services Block Grant Act which shifted the administration of Federal anti-poverty funds to the individual states. In Nebraska, Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funds are administered by the Department of Health and Human Services. Funding from CSBG is available “to provide a range of services and activities having a measurable and potentially major impact on the causes of poverty in the community” and to “remove obstacles and solve problems which block the achievement of self-sufficiency” in the areas of employment, education, housing, emergency assistance, nutrition, and health services. The act also authorized activities to encourage “greater participation in the affairs of the community” by low-income persons, “to coordinate and establish linkages between governmental and other social services,” and “to encourage the use of entities in the private sector of the community in efforts to ameliorate poverty in the community.”

Current On-Going Services

Community Services: Community Services Department’s goals are aimed at the reduction of poverty, the revitalization of low-income communities, and the empowerment of low-income individuals and families to become self-sufficient.

Clothing Rooms

Community Action Centers Tecumseh and Pawnee City house clothing rooms. Clothing, household and furniture items are received by the agency in the form of donations. These donated items are provided to families in need at no charge, or sold to the general public at a nominal fee. The money received from the sale of these items is kept in the appropriate center fund to help defray the cost of daily operations and/or to help provide for families’ needs that other funding sources might not cover.

Emergency Services

These services are available to provide basic needs and support to families in crisis who are unable to provide for themselves. This includes, but is not limited to food, clothing, emergency shelter, rent and utility assistance, basic essentials, landlord-tenant mediation, and crisis intervention.

Family Development

This is a strength-based program designed to assist families through a series of assessments. These assessments are used to identify the families' strengths and what barriers or obstacles they face in reaching self-sufficiency. Families are then assisted with writing goals and mobilizing resources to move in that direction.

Food Pantries

Food pantries are available to all persons in the SENCA service area who, because of unforeseen emergency, are in need of food. Food pantries are stocked by donations from various groups, organizations and other interested individuals. The food pantries also provide information about other nutrition programs, safe food preparation, and how to make your food dollars stretch. Private cash donations to the food pantry help provide perishable items on an as-needed basis. Food pantries are provided and donations accepted at the Outreach Offices and Community Centers in each of the six counties served by SENCA.

Project First

SENCA is involved in the Southeast Region Continuum of Care for the Homeless in southeast Nebraska. The Continuum of Care consists of service providers, housing authorities, clergy, school personnel, former homeless representatives and other interested groups or individuals. The mission of this group is "to address the needs of homeless/near-homeless persons and families." The group's vision is that "services for homeless/near-homeless are available through community support and education, collaboration, and resource development.

Nutrition

The meal program is designed to provide a nutritious, affordable meal to the area senior citizens. Meals on Wheels are home delivered by community volunteers to those individuals who are unable to take advantage of the social setting that the Congregate Meals have to offer. SENCA currently operates Congregate and Meals on Wheels in Pawnee and Johnson Counties at the Community Action Centers. Various forms of Congregate and Meals on Wheels programs are available in Nemaha and Richardson Counties.

Head Start: Head Start and Home Start are comprehensive child development programs which serve children from birth to age five, pregnant women and their families. They are child-focused programs and have the overall goal to increase the school-readiness of young children in low-income families. The program involves the whole family through the four cornerstones of Head Start: Child Development, Family Development, Community Development, and Staff Development.

Income eligibility for participation in the Head Start program is based on the Federal Income poverty guidelines. Guidelines allow for 10% of our enrollment to be above the poverty guideline. At least 10% of our enrollment slots are reserved for children with special needs that meet all other criteria.

The Head Start program was launched nation-wide in 1965. In 1968 SENCA began sponsoring Head Start programs in southeast Nebraska and currently serve families in Pawnee, Richardson, Nemaha, and Otoe counties. Today, as then, Head Start's approach is based on the philosophy that a child can benefit most from comprehensive, developmentally appropriate program, and that the child's entire family, as well as the community must be involved.

Housing: In October 1995 SENCA became designated as a Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) to further its commitment to identifying the need for affordable housing, and obtaining and committing resources to develop safe and sanitary housing available to low to moderate income persons. To date, SENCA has secured funds for buying and building various Housing Development projects.

Weatherization: In 1975 SENCA started Weatherizing the homes of eligible households, with an emphasis being placed on the homes of elderly, persons with disabilities, and homes with small children. The goals of the Weatherization Program are to save energy by reducing heating and cooling costs and to ensure the health and safety of the households served. The average home experiences an 18.7% reduction in heating costs. Additional savings are achieved in cooling costs. This conservation of energy reduces Nebraska's dependence on imported energy and is a major contribution to the self-sufficiency of low-income persons allowing them to stretch their available income. Eligibility for the Weatherization program is 130% of the poverty guidelines.

Transportation: Pawnee County Transit began operation in April 1981. It is a countywide transit service serving the general public with priority for the elderly and disabled. The transit system operates on a regular schedule locally and in the surrounding area, and provides door to door service for trips within the county and out of area. Pawnee County Transit is operated under contract with the Pawnee County Commissioners.

Richardson County Transit began operation in 1994. It also serves the general public with priority given to elderly and handicapped. The transit system operates on a regular schedule locally and out of the area, and provides door to door service for trips within the county and out of area. Richardson County Transit is operated under contract with the Richardson County Commissioners.

Direct Employment: SENCA works in partnership with Experience Works and Foster Grandparents. Employees can also be hired from the Jobs Training Partnership Act.

Funding

SENCA receives grants and contracts from various governmental bodies to provide services deemed essential to the welfare of local citizens. Governmental funds must be matched and supplemented by local citizens, local cash and/or donations of time or goods. Programs are funded from a wide variety of sources and from the beneficiaries themselves whenever possible.

Independent public accountants annually audit SENCA accounts. Audits of the previous fiscal years have found no audit exceptions and found the financial statements to be in conformity with the terms of grant agreement and generally accepted accounting principles.

Volunteers

Every fiscal year approximately 1000 individuals dedicate around 16,000 hours of time in agency programs. This calculates into approximately \$220,000 in non-federal match funds. Local donations of time, talent and money are always welcome. Involvement of volunteers and people served in the SENCA programs is vital to the work of SENCA.

Year	Accomplishment or Event	Executive Director	Board Chair
1968	*Head Start services began as a summer program in Pawnee City and Tecumseh	Brad Field, Jr.	
1969	*Received notification that Head Start would become a full year program	Brad Field, Jr.	
1970	*Winnet Sewing Factory was opened in Pawnee City as a result of efforts between SENCA and Pawnee City Development Board. Approximately 100 jobs are created for low-income workers *Head Start full year program began in Falls City and Auburn	Brad Field, Jr.	
1971	*SENCA revives the Well Child Clinic at Peru State College through a collaborative effort with Nebraska State Health Department. *Betty Lippold named Head Start Director. *SENCA starts the first rural Family Planning Program in the state. *Food Stamp sales in Richardson Co. are taken over by SENCA.	Brad Field, Jr.	
1972	*Council of Governments is organized.	Brad Field, Jr.	
1973	*SENCA coordinates County Health Demonstration Projects in Nemaha and Johnson Counties until 1979. *Nutrition programs and meat-buying clubs are started in Richardson Co. Food pantries are started in Johnson, Nemaha, Pawnee and Richardson Counties. *NEMOCA Craft Guild is organized in Richardson Co.	Brad Field, Jr.	Jack Wolken Dwayne Anno
1974	*Congregate Meals Program started in Community Centers and Humboldt Auditorium.	Brad Field, Jr.	Dwayne Anno
1975	*Weatherization Program is initialized in six SE Nebraska counties. *MCH Dental Program and Alcohol Safety Program is organized.	Brad Field, Jr.	Deryl Reed
1976	*Handi-Bus in Tecumseh is in operation as a collaborative effort between the city, Johnson Co., and SENCA.	Brad Field, Jr.	Deryl Reed
1977	*SENCA conducts largest diabetic screening in the state through local schools screening over 900 students in grades 9-12. *Women, Infants & Children (WIC) Program begins. *Story Hour is started in Steinauer and Dawson *Solar Energy workshops are held.	Martha Mayer (interim) William Alden (interim)	Gordon Epps
1978	*Rural Home Repair Program/ Rehabilitation Program is started.	William Alden	Gordon Epps
1979	*Johnson Co. Health Department is voter-approved. *Nemaha Co. Health Department assumed control of the Well Child Clinic at Peru State College.	William Alden	Roger Pollock Ruth Seckman
1980	*SENCA purchases Johnson Co. Community Center in Tecumseh and through a collaborative effort with Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging begins renovation of the building. *Planning for Pawnee Co. Handi-Bus begins.	William Alden Martha Mayer (interim)	Ruth Seckman
1981	*SENCA sponsors a USDA Summer Youth/ Nutrition Program in Richardson Co. with 228 meals served during the summer. *Pawnee Co. Handi-Bus begins running in April. *Solar installations begin. *Meal Programs are again served in renovated Tecumseh center. *Federal govt. establishes Community Services Block Grant.	Martha Mayer	Ruth Seckman
1982	*Members from Cass and Otoe Counties added to SENCA Board. *CSBG Program Year changes from Feb.-Jan. to Oct.-Sept. *Home Energy Management is started. *Distribution of USDA surplus commodities begins. *Rulo Community Development Block Grant is awarded.	Martha Mayer	Ruth Seckman
1983	*Work begins on Village of Rulo: Community Center and Auditorium is renovated, solar collectors are installed on 40% of Rulo homes, renovation done on some homes and water tower. *ANCAA Migrant Development Program grant is issued for Cass and Otoe Counties.	Martha Mayer	Ruth Seckman
1984	*SENCA receives Governor's Award for Community Solar work. *Emergency Food and Shelter Program provides 3,716 meals. *Head Start Expansion grant is awarded for Nebraska City Home Start.	Martha Mayer	Ruth Seckman Harold

	*SENCA assists with FEMA Emergency Crisis Centers.		Prichard
1985	*Weatherization program is expanded into Sarpy Co. *Wherry Bothers donate building in Pawnee City for Community Center.	Martha Mayer	Harold Prichard
1986	*Renovation begins on Wherry Buiding from Kiewit Grant, Martin Marietta Corp., and many local businesses and individuals. *Home Start begins in Pawnee Co.	Martha Mayer Connie Humm (interim)	Harold Prichard Dale Bowman
1987	*Nebraska City Head Start relocated to Ft. Kearney.	Kay F. Starks	Dale Bowman Craig Martinosky
1988	*SENCA purchases a station wagon for Pawnee Co. Handi-Bus program.	Kay F. Starks	Craig Martinosky
1989	*SENCA purchases house in Auburn for Head Start program.	Kay F. Starks	Keith Sherburne
1990	*SENCA updates accounting system for computer use.	Richard M. Winslow	Keith Sherburne
1991	*SENCA receives grant from Dept. of Social Services to administer the Jobs in Families and Young Parenting Program in service area until 1992 when it was passed on to another entity. *A competitive homeless grant is received to address the needs of a growing number of homeless in the area. *A new van is purchased for the Pawnee Co. Handi-Bus. *A modular building is purchased for Falls City Head Start program.	Richard M. Winslow	Keith Sherburne
1992	*A modular building is purchased for Nebraska City Head Start program. Morning and Afternoon programs begin. *SENCA leases the Powell Building in Humboldt for the Community Clothing Room.	Richard M. Winslow	John Hodges
1993	*SENCA receives grant for the purchase of the Head Start facility in Auburn. *Humboldt Head Start begins morning and afternoon sessions.	Richard M. Winslow	John Hodges
1994	*Richardson Co. Handi-Bus begins service. *Humboldt Head Start relocates to building adjacent the hospital.	Richard M. Winslow	Howard Wilkinson
1995	*SENCA contracts with City of Auburn to occupy the new senior center in Auburn. *In October, SENCA becomes a Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO).	Richard M. Winslow	Howard Wilkinson
1996	*SENCA combines Head Start and Community Services case management into one. *Funding for a homeless shelter in Humboldt is obtained. *SENCA plays a major role in organizing the Southeast Continuum of Care for the Homeless.	Richard M. Winslow	Gayle Swisegood
1997	*SENCA purchases Elk Creek Senior Housing Complex.	Richard M. Winslow	Howard Wilkinson
1998	*SENCA purchases a station wagon for Richardson Co. Handi-Bus.	Richard M. Winslow	Howard Wilkinson
1999	*Blue Valley Action Program subcontracts with SENCA for Project First Program.	Richard M. Winslow	Phyllis Heidzig
2000	*Nebraska City Housing Development Timber Ridge is constructed – a twenty-four unit multi-family complex. *Head Start begins a full-day, full-year program in September for Falls City. *Elk Creek Housing designation is changed from “Elderly” to “Family.”	Richard M. Winslow	Phyllis Heidzig
2001	*SENCA purchases Countryside Apartments in Sterling. This is a 12-unit housing complex designated as elderly and/or disabled housing. *Falls City Head Start Center dedicated as the Betty Lippold Center upon Betty’s retirement after 31 years as Head Start Director.	Richard M. Winslow	Henry Stratker
2002	*SENCA purchases the former Humboldt Family Practice building to serve as the new headquarters for administrative offices. *SENCA was approved as a REACH affiliate educator.	Richard M. Winslow	Henry Stratker

2003	*SENCA established a full time development department.	Richard M. Winslow	Henry Stratker
2004	*SENCA agency wide Strategic Plan was developed. *SENCA purchases Fulton Villa Apartments in Falls City. *SENCA Development department changes focus and becomes the Housing Development department. *SENCA Head Start begins pilot Youth Mentoring program with HTRS schools. *SENCA implemented comprehensive governance training for the Board of Directors and Head Start Policy Council.	Richard M. Winslow	Yolanda Peck
2005	*Vicky McNealy becomes a CCAP. *Countryside Apartments designation is changed from “Elderly/or Disabled” to “Family”. *SENCA Humboldt Center is placed on Registry of Historic Places. *SENCA HOMES program is implemented. *Auburn Head Start center undergoes major accessibility renovations.	Richard M. Winslow	Yolanda Peck
2006	*SENCA Head Start expands Youth Mentoring program to Falls City and Auburn schools. *SENCA celebrates 40 th Anniversary. *SENCA receives Founders Award from Nebraska Housing Developers Assoc. *Brenda Guilliams wins State transit competition and qualifies for Nationals.	Richard M. Winslow	Robert Curry
2007	*SENCA assumed operation of the Cass county Food Pantry. *Lisa Schardt received Businessperson of the year award from State FBLA. *SENCA hosts 1 st Annual Golf Tournament at Kirkman’s Lakeview Golf Course.	Richard M. Winslow	Robert Curry
2008	*11 SENCA staff members became Disaster Volunteers for the American Red Cross *Table Rock Head Start Center dedicated as the Lisa Jo Schardt Head Start Center In memory of Lisa, a Head Start Coordinator and 1 st teacher to hold class at the site. *SENCA HOMES II Grant Awarded *Mary Jane Gist celebrates 35 years in Head Start. *SENCA collaborates with CAN & UNL Cooperative Extension and offers a Poverty Simulation at Bethel United Methodist Church in Nebraska City.	Richard M. Winslow	Dave Nielsen
2009	*SENCA Weatherization Department expands with receipt of ARRA funds. *Richardson County Transit celebrates 15 th Anniversary of service. *Community Services Department receives ARRA funding. *Poverty Simulation held at Peru State College. *Head Start hosts 1 st Annual Track & Field Day at Auburn High School. *Channel 10/11 Can Care-A-Van at Pawnee County Outreach Office in Pawnee City. *Otoe County Outreach and Full Day Head Start relocates to the Nebraska City Center for Children & Families. *Joined NE Financial Education Coalition and hosted 7 Money Smart events promoting financial literacy for all ages. *Partnered with The Food Bank of Lincoln, Falls City Public Schools and Southeast Nebraska Communication to provide the Back Pack Program to 24 students.	Richard M. Winslow	Lori Huebner
2010	*Implemented the Back Pack Program to Head Start Centers. *Major update of the SENCA website completed. *Weatherization Department hired crews and purchases new equipment to complete the ARRA contract.	Richard M. Winslow	Lori Huebner
2011	*SENCA SMART financial literacy program piloted in Pawnee and Richardson Counties. *Invest in Yourself job training program piloted in Johnson County. *Nemaha County Head Start offers extended service to children with classes held 5 days per week.	Richard M. Winslow	David Sickel
2012	*Executive Director, Richard Winslow retires after 27 years of service to Community Action. *Vicky McNealy assumes position of Executive Director. *SENCA Community Leadership Scholarship established. Provides six scholarships, one per county to graduating seniors.	Richard M. Winslow Vicky McNealy	Robert Curry

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Community Garden project started in Johnson County. *Back Pack Program started in Weeping Water Public Schools. *Individual Development Account Program (IDA) matched savings offered. *Became interim provider for Douglas County Weatherization services. 		
2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Agency enrolled in Pathways to Excellence national self-assessment process. *Agency changed legal name to Southeast Nebraska Community Action Partnership, Inc. to align with national Community Action branding efforts. *GED classes offered in Johnson County in partnership with Southeast Community College. Mary Jane Gist honored at all staff meeting for 40 years of service to Head Start. *Sixpence Early Learning grant received to work with HTRS Public Schools for 12 at risk children birth to three years of age. *Named permanent provider for Douglas County Weatherization Services. 	Vicky McNealy	Russ Smith Lori Huebner
2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *First children enrolled into the Sixpence Program. *Job skills program is piloted in Nemaha and Richardson Counties. Initial program enrolled 10 individuals in CNA classes in partnership with Southeast Community College and two area nursing homes. *Pathways to Excellence assessment feedback report received and work to improve and enhance agency capacity began. *Countryside Apartments in Sterling is sold to private individual. *Community Action Celebrates the 50th Anniversary of the war on poverty. *Richardson County Transit celebrates its 20th anniversary of providing service. 	Vicky McNealy	David SICKEL
2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Awarded the VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) grant through Community Action of Nebraska. One VISTA worker assigned to the SENCA service area. *Jenny Strecker becomes a certified ROMA Trainer. *Job Skills program expands to all counties and includes Medication Aide Classes. *Timber Ridge Apartments partnership is dissolved. SENCA's 40% ownership bought out. *Susan Phillips-Keholm becomes a CCAP (Certified Community Action Professional). 	Vicky McNealy	Ted Evans
2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *SENCA celebrates 50th Anniversary of incorporation through many activities including walking through county fair parades with an 8 ft helium balloon to bring awareness to the agency and its programs. *HTRS takes over administration of the Sixpence program. *Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) offered in the core service area through a partnership with Blue Valley Community Action *Otoe County CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) program comes under the auspices of SENCA. *Connected Youth Initiative begins through a partnership with Blue Valley Community Action. *Melissa Hardenberger becomes a certified ROMA Trainer. 	Vicky McNealy	Lori Huebner
2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Pathways to Excellence work is completed. Did not apply for the Award of Excellence due to the fees being cost prohibitive. *CASA program expands into Nemaha County. *SENCA SMART financial literacy program recognized nationally in Virtual Cap's innovative programs. *SENCA outreach staff begin processing client applications for SNAP benefits through Food Bank of Lincoln grant. 	Vicky McNealy	Connie Baum
2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *SENCA Weatherization services end in Douglas County. Habitat for Humanity begins providing the service. *Angie Antholz is named Nebraska's Head Start Administrator of the Year. *Start-up funding for Radon testing and mitigation program is received. *Richardson County Transit gets new 7 passenger van. *Pawnee Center starts meal delivery to Table Rock Head Start. 	Vicky McNealy	David SICKEL
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *VITA program ends due to lack of funding. *CASA program receives funds to expand services into Richardson County. 	Vicky McNealy	Janet McCartney

	<p>*SENCA Housing receives \$795,690 from Dept. of Economic Development to rehab Elk Creek Housing and Fulton Villa Apartments.</p> <p>*CASA program receives VOCA (Victims of Crime Acts) funding to expand CASA into Pawnee County.</p> <p>*Vicky McNealy is recognized for 30 years of service to Community Action.</p>		
2020	<p>*SENCA starts partnership with OPPD's Energy Assistance Program to provide up to \$1,000 in energy saving measures to OPPD customers.</p> <p>*Debbie Green becomes a nationally certified ROMA Trainer.</p> <p>*After 46 years of serving meals in Pawnee County, the senior meal program was discontinued due to overhead costs and low number of diners.</p> <p>*Coronavirus pandemic forces changes to SENCA service delivery in every program but all programs remain open to assist those in need.</p> <p>*The Pawnee Senior Center building is sold to the local grocery store and outreach services are moved to an apartment at the Pawnee Village.</p> <p>*SENCA takes over control of the Commodity Surplus Food Program (CSFP) for Johnson, Nemaha, Pawnee, and Richardson counties. Distribution is moved to the basement of the Central Office.</p> <p>*Mary Jane Gist retires after 47 years of service to the SENCA Head Start Program.</p>	Vicky McNealy	Lori Huebner
2021	<p>*CASA program expands service to Johnson County.</p>	Vicky McNealy	Dave Sickel