When President Lyndon Baines Johnson declared “an unconditional war on poverty” 51 years ago in his State of the Union Address, it marked the first and last time the federal government launched an all-out attack to eliminate poverty in this country. Sadly, Johnson turned out to be the only president in our history to be a strong, forceful advocate for poor and disadvantaged people.

Prior to the early sixties, responsibility for dealing with poverty was left to the states and local governments, neither of which devoted more than a modicum of resources and concern to the issue. Only when Michael Harrington wrote his celebrated book, The Other America in 1962, revealing the massive extent of poverty in both urban and rural America (est. between 20-25%), did the American public and political leaders awaken to the pervasive problem of poor people in the U.S.

Some of the groundwork for the Johnson anti-poverty programs was built by community organizing groups in the 1950s, led by organizers like Saul Alinsky and Fred Ross. The Ford Foundation’s Gray Areas program that targeted five cities and Mobilization for Youth on the lower east side of New York City also featured prototypes of community action and advocacy that characterized much of the early war on poverty.

President Johnson and his planners saw the need for a comprehensive approach to poverty reduction, not just the provision of a few scattered services. Medicare and Medicaid, the introduction of food stamps, the expansion of social security benefits and the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts accompanied the administration’s flagship program in the war on poverty, the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), run out of the White House.

With a starting budget of $1 billion, OEO created a large number of new programs, projects and services, many of which still exist today. These initiatives - Head Start, the Job Corps, community health centers, community development corporations, Volunteers in Service to America (Vista), legal services and community action agencies - continue to provide vital assistance to millions of people in need throughout the country.

Other projects like the Neighborhood Youth Corps, summer youth programs, manpower training programs, senior health centers and family planning clinics were eventually discontinued but later picked up in some form by other agencies, both federal and state. A robust research and demonstration division at OEO tested new ideas and projects, resulting in such efforts as early computer programs, the creation of a Navajo community college and model comprehensive community service centers.

But by far the most controversial, creative and politically sensitive part of Johnson’s War on Poverty was the creation of community action agencies (CAAs), local organizations (mostly nonprofit) with independent boards and budgets that provided services and advocacy help to poor residents of cities, rural areas and Indian reservations. State anti-poverty offices were also established to help coordinate and supplement the work of CAAs.
The premise of community action was that local residents, especially the poor and other disadvantaged people, had to have the tools and power to play an active role in shaping and administrating programs and services in their own communities. This concept, then referred to as ‘maximum feasible participation,’ called for low-income people to be heavily represented on CAA boards as well as on board of social service agencies. This was a revolutionary idea at the time that rankled many politicians, government officials and establishment citizens. In many counties and small cities, CAA budgets often exceeded those of government jurisdictions, creating added tensions, resentment and ill will.

In a little over a year, the Office of Economic Opportunity established well over 1200 community action agencies, hired tens of thousands of people and created a huge number of programs to help poor and minority residents who had been ignored by the authorities and society in general. In many, if not most jurisdictions, CAAs became either the lone or strongest advocate for poor people. Many civic institutions were upset by this shift in the balance of power at the local level, unused to hearing strong voices from what Harrington called the “invisible poor”.

All these activities were accomplished with a first year’s budget of only a little over $300 million. Years later, ironically, critics of the OEO programs claimed the federal government had simply thrown money away on these programs that turned out, in retrospect, to be a bargain investment.

Not surprisingly, the new community action initiatives that generated such apprehension and turmoil among local governments were bound to create a severe political backlash. By 1967, Congress mandated changes in the community action program. Locally elected officials were required to designate a CAA as the official agency in the area before the latter could collect federal funds. And their boards had to have broad representation: 1/3 government officials or representatives appointed by them; 1/3 private members of the private sector, including nonprofits; and 1/3 representatives from low-income communities. While this new CAA structure somewhat dampened the ardor of community action advocacy, the agencies continued to deliver essential services to their poor constituents. Surprisingly, most of the CAAs that existed in 1968 survive today. In many rural areas, they continue to be the only organizations that advocate for poor people.

While the national budget for community action increased slightly during the initial years, it never reached a level that would have enabled the program to meet the momentum it had created, or even keep up with inflation. Moreover, Sargent Shriver, the OEO Director, was never comfortable with community action, preferring to focus his attention on safe programs like Head Start and Job Corps. Community action was left to fend for itself.

"Very often a lack of jobs and money is not the cause of poverty, but the symptom. The cause may lie deeper in our failure to give our fellow citizens a fair chance to develop their own capacities."

President Lyndon B. Johnson, State of the Union Address, Jan. 8, 1964
President Lyndon Johnson declared a “War on Poverty” in his first State of the Union Address. As a result, community action agencies were created throughout the U.S. to determine local needs, organize consumer and community support, initiate services for the poor, and empower the poor to break out of the cycle of poverty.

To respond to this legislation, the first official meeting with community leaders in the tri-county area of Mahnomen, Hubbard and Becker Counties was held on May 26, 1965. At that meeting, 10 Board Members were elected to oversee an agency that would provide community action services. They adopted the name Mahube Community Council, Inc. to give identification to the joint MAhnomen, HUbbard and BEcker County organizations involved in providing services to low income residents of the area.

The initial By-Laws empowered the Board with the responsibilities of hiring staff, approving projects and budgets and making policy decisions. The Board held regular monthly meetings, which continues today.

Mahube Community Council, Inc. was incorporated as a private, non-profit organization on July 2, 1965. On July 27, 1965, the Board of Directors voted to increase membership from 10 to 12 members, and designated the additional members as being selected from the economically disadvantaged population to ensure they have representation and voting rights on the Board.

The Agency started working immediately on developing funding proposals for programs that would benefit residents of the three county area. The Agency’s first funding application was submitted to the Office of Economic Opportunity for $48,605 to: 1) employ staff, 2) collect, analyze and document the demographics and incidence of poverty in the three county area, and 3) develop programs that would address the problems of poverty. This was the initial “Block Grant”. The Block Grant is funding that supports overall agency operations and services. The first three staff employed were Executive Director Emil Marotzke, Assistant Director Delmoure Hultgren, and Accountant Cele Mazour.

The Board of Directors consistently focused on selecting high quality board members from each county in the service area, and worked hard to ensure each county had equal representation. During the early years, the Agency also had members who were expected to attend Board meetings and support the work of the Council. In 1967, there were 34 members. In September 1976, the Board voted to have equal representation from each county on committees appointed by the Board.

Over the years, Board composition changed as a result of the Minnesota Non-Profit Corporation Act that required community action agencies have Board representation from 3 sectors: 1) low income, 2) private organizations, and 3) elected public officials. Mahube’s current Board composition has two representatives from each sector in each county. Mahube Community Council, Inc. has been fortunate to have excellent representation from all three sectors.
The first programs operated by the Agency began approximately one year after the Agency was incorporated and included:

**Multi-County Nursing Service** provided public health services to residents of the three county area. Services were provided to 2,921 men, women and children, and included everything from newborn visitation, counseling for the mentally ill, to home care for the sick and elderly. The budget for the program during the first year of operation was $54,986, including federal funds and in-kind.

**Head Start** provided an eight week summer early childhood program for 4 year old children. During the summer of 1966, Head Start offered health, nutrition and early childhood education to 301 children in nine centers throughout the three county area. Parent and community involvement were especially important. The budget for the first year of operation was $51,242, including federal funds and in-kind.

**Neighborhood Youth Corp (NYC)** provided in-school and summer projects to 97 youth ages 16 to 21 years. The primary goal of Neighborhood Youth Corp was to assign meaningful work activities to youth in order for them to stay in school and gain skills that would be useful to them following graduation and to earn money.

**Employment Service Center** was a joint project with the Minnesota State Employment Security Office. The primary goal of the Employment Security Office was to provide employer-employee referral services to match underemployed or unemployed individuals to meaningful and productive employment. A total of 2,933 individuals were assisted the first year. The operating budget was $18,714.

**Senior Citizens Social Service Center** initiated a center in each county where senior citizens could gather and socialize. Each center made available social work, cultural, educational, occupational therapy, and recreational programming for low income senior citizens and disabled individuals. The budget for the first year of operation was $51,343.

**Work Study Program** - Mahube worked with Moorhead State College to offer work study opportunities to college students during the summer months. Students were placed in various work sites throughout the three county area. Twenty-seven college students participated in the Work Study Program in 1966.

**Upward Bound** - The Agency worked with Bemidji State University to offer Upward Bound to 10th grade students. Upward Bound offered educational opportunities to low income high school students, giving them an incentive and encouragement to pursue higher education following graduation. During the first year of operation, 12 students participated.

**Mahube Community Council, Inc.** served as a catalyst to develop and operate programs that were seen as important to meet the needs of the community.

**Multi-County Nursing Services** is one example. This program was started by Mahube in 1966. During the next few years, one mill was raised by counties to support this service. In addition, reimbursement for nursing services was made by the Veteran’s Administration, Welfare and Medicaid. The Nursing Service was spun off to operate within a five county area in 1968.

**The Midwest Community Development Corporation (CDC)** was formed in April, 1971. Initially, the program served a 7-county area in northwestern Minnesota including: Becker, Hubbard, Mahnomen, Pennington, Clearwater, Red Lake and Polk. The goal of the CDC was primarily to stimulate economic development. Mahube operated the CDC until 1972, when the “Successor in Interest Agreement” was signed that began a phase-out procedure and the CDC became an independent non-profit organization.

In 1969, Mahube Community Council, Inc. acquired a lease of the Tamarac Job Corp facility from the U.S. Department of the Interior. Tamarac was primarily used as a site for youth and job training. In 1970, the City of Minneapolis, the Dayton Hudson Corporation and Minneapolis Public Schools negotiated a lease to rent Tamarac for YMCA activities. Mankato State College leased the facility during the school year in 1972-1974. During the summer months, Tamarac had a variety of uses; it was used for Boy Scout Camps, Young Adult Conservation Camps, summer camp for low income children, 4-H and church groups. The diesel mechanics course taught at the Detroit Lakes Technical College was housed at Tamarac for several years.

By December 1976, the Agency provided Rural Transportation Services to seniors living in Hubbard and Mahnomen counties. In-town services were also provided in the communities of Park Rapids and Mahnomen. On March 28, 1980 the Becker County Commissioners approved an application to be submitted to the Department of Transportation to offer transit services to residents of Becker County. Mahube then operated transit programs in all 3 counties for approximately 10 years. Mahnomen County decided to operate the Transportation program only in that county in 1989. In January 1990, Hubbard County opted to operate the Transportation program exclusively for that county. In July 1997, Mahube operated the Transportation program for Becker County; and in July 1998, Becker County took over the sole operation of the program and continues to operate these services today.
Funding of $90,358 was awarded by the federal government for Specialty Crops and Timber Planning Projects, to provide training on developing specialty crops and marketing them throughout the region. This project included planting, irrigation, harvesting and marketing crops. Up to 120 families were enrolled in this project, providing them with resources to grow and market their crops and wood projects. This project was initially designed to provide supplemental income to farmers and loggers, and expanded into a loan program for small agricultural businesses in the area.

The Regional Office of Economic Opportunity recommended initiation of Community Organization & Outreach programming as a primary goal of community action. One responsibility was to assess the needs of low income residents, in order to make decisions about programs to be offered. This initiative was the first step in providing community outreach and conducting the Community Needs Assessment. This requirement still exists today.

The Board decided to place an emphasis on finding adequate housing for low income residents and over the next few years explored opportunities to access funds for housing programs. In 1975, the State Housing Finance Agency earmarked $21 million for home improvement grants. In August 1976, the Agency received $143,188 to spend on home improvements for low income households; a maximum of $5,000 could be spent on each home, with 50% of the total allocation awarded to senior citizens.

The Agency operated a Nutrition Program for residents of Becker, Clay, Douglas and Otter tail counties, with a funding level of $124,000. This program evolved over the next few years and by 1977, 467 households participated in the Food & Nutrition program that operated in Becker, Hubbard and Mahnomen Counties. This program included gardening projects, canning and emergency pantry supplies.

The Agency initiated the first HUD Home Rehabilitation Project that was operated in Hubbard County. Funds were spent to rehab substandard housing in need of repair to make them more livable for low income residents. Also during the 1980’s, home loan mortgage funds were made available throughout the three-county area from the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency.

The Agency began the Commodity Distribution program, in which surplus commodities of cheese, butter, milk, canned meat and other food products were distributed to residents in Mahnomen, Hubbard and Becker Counties. This was an extremely popular program that resulted in serving hundreds of households. The program continued for several years.

The Agency instituted the first organizational-wide audit, as opposed to individual program audits, as a result of new federal guidelines and the recommendation of Controller Larry Hanson. This provided a more uniform fiscal view of Agency budgets and annual audits. The first single audit Agency CPA firm was Lee & Kaiser, and the cost of the first Agency audit was $800.
The Agency first explored using computers for fiscal and program tracking services. Exploration evolved to implementation of an IBM mainframe and AS400, with a few management staff using a ‘dumb terminal’ connected to the AS400 to actually process information.

As part of the 1993 Government Performance & Results Act, the CSBG Law was amended to require community action agencies create outcome measures in promoting self-sufficiency, family stability and community revitalization. In response, the Community Action’s Monitoring & Assessment Task Force introduced Results Oriented Management & Accountability (ROMA) as a framework to measure outcomes. In 2005, National Performance Indicators (NPIs) developed six national goals as part of the fulfillment of ROMA reporting by CSBG grantees. Today, the Agency continues to complete its ROMA Work Plan defining and measuring Family, Community & Agency goals and outcomes; reporting results annually to OEO.

The American Recovery & Reinvestment Act (ARRA): ARRA and other grant programs brought new funding and program expansions to the Agency beginning in April, 2009. A summary of this funding is below:

- $100,000 ARRA HUD Homeless Prevention & Rapid Re-Housing
- $100,000 Additional funds for Family Homeless Prevention & Assistance
- $2,367,903 ARRA Weatherization & ARRA Weatherization Performance Funding
- $94,860 ARRA Head Start Expansion
- $401,306 ARRA Early Head Start Expansion
- $40,000 ARRA Child Care Resource & Referral
- $32,900 Kinship Navigator Program
- $211,959 ARRA FAIM/Employment & Small Business Development
- $23,448 ARRA Emergency Food & Shelter
- $44,750 Becker County Senior Coordinator
- $85,767 RSVP Expansion: Otter Tail, Wadena, Todd & Wilkin Counties
- $21,000 RSVP Augmentation
- $99,000 Community/Service Development for Chore & Home Maintenance

As of April 1, 2012, Mahube Community Council, Inc. became Mahube-Otwa Community Action Partnership, Inc. This transition came about as a result of the Otter Tail/Wadena Community Action Board of Directors making the decision to dissolve their agency. The Otter Tail/Wadena Board authorized their Executive Director to begin to work with our Agency to initiate a merger of service areas. Both the Board and Executive Directors followed the merger guidelines established in the MN Community Action Programs State Rule. After many months of planning with both Boards, the Minnesota Department of Human Services, Office of Economic Opportunity, recognized Mahube-Otwa as the new community action agency serving the five-county area of Mahnomen, Hubbard, Becker, Otter Tail, and Wadena Counties.

In 2015, information and technology is essential to successful business operations. The Agency uses 160 desktops, 60 laptops, 5 physical servers, 18 virtualized servers, and approximately 20 core software products. Technology, internet connectivity and email allows us to do business with the State and Federal governments and community partners; as well as provide high quality services to clients. This is an area of tremendous change which never would have been imagined 50 years ago.
The Agency began operations in 1965 with three employees and fifty years later we have 135 employees, and over 50 contractors. Many changes have taken place in terms of employee qualifications, benefits and professional services over the past fifty years. Employees now receive a full range of benefits including: paid time off, health insurance, life insurance, short and long term disability insurance and retirement benefits. Multiple training opportunities are provided to employees to support professional development.

In 1980, the Board of Directors approved a resolution to execute a Massachusetts Mutual FlexInvest Plan to offer employee retirement savings. From the inception of the plan, the Agency invested 5% of an employees’ salary and employees are able to invest anywhere from 1% to the maximum allowed by the IRS.

Although Agency programs and services have evolved tremendously, the need for compassionate and well-qualified employees has remained constant. Our success over the past fifty years is due to our committed and passionate board members and employees.

One action that has existed within our philosophy and has been paramount to the success of Mahube-Otwa is outreach in our communities. Outreach allows staff to connect with clients in need of our services. Just as important, outreach allows staff to link with community organizations; to cooperate, coordinate and communicate regarding the needs within our communities. Outreach has lead to a number of collaborative partnerships with county social services, schools, early childhood programs, food shelves, housing entities, Salvation Army, senior programs, private foundations, United Way, civic organizations, and many, many more.

Executive Directors

(1965-1968) Emil Marotzke
(1968-1982) Del Hultgren
(2000-Present) Leah Pigatti

HUMANITY is an attitude of caring and mercy toward all people. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children’s future. We all suffer and rejoice. Although in the eternal scheme of life, each of us is small, we are one of a kind, irreplaceable. We tap into our humanity when we put ourselves in others’ shoes and are genuinely concerned for their welfare. Our humanity grows as we serve others.
From 1965 to the present time, the Board and Staff leadership have focused on operating programs that address the needs of our clients and the service area. Major programs currently operated by Mahube-Otwa Community Action Partnership, Inc. include:

**COMMUNITY SERVICES**
- **BLOCK GRANT**
  - Minnesota Community Action Grant

**CHILD CARE AWARE**
- Crisis Child Care
- Pathway I and II Scholarships
- Child Care Grants & Training
- Grandparents and Relatives as Parents
- Parent Aware & Building Quality Coaching

**EMERGENCY SERVICES**
- Emergency Food & Shelter
- Salvation Army Projects
- Winter Clothing Projects
- Food Shelf Referrals

**ENERGY PROGRAMS**
- Energy Assistance
- Weatherization
- Crisis Energy Assistance
- Energy Related Repairs
- Conservation
- Reach-Out-For-Warmth

**FAMILY DEVELOPMENT**
- FAIM and Asset Building
- Child Passenger Resource Center
- Fathers Resource Program
- SNAP Application Assistance
- Financial Literacy

**FAMILY HEALTH**
- Family Planning
- Birth Control & Contraceptives
- Preconception Health
- Physical Exams
- STI Screening and Treatment

**SENIOR PROGRAMS**
- Homemaking & Chore Services
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Tax Aide
- Medicare Counseling
- Senior Exercise Groups
- MNSure Application Assistance

**HOUSING**
- Emergency Shelter
- Transitional Housing
- Family Homeless Prevention
- Homeless Youth
- DHS Supportive Services
- Long Term Homeless
- West River Town Homes

**HEAD START**
- Head Start
- Early Head Start
- Head Start Child Care
- Early Head Start Child Care
### Board Membership 1965 to Present

#### Mahnomen County
- James Stech
- Wilfred Hallstrom
- Homer Bjornson
- Lorna Beckman
- Elmer Fredrickson
- Juel Thompson
- Alvin Nelson
- Tom Moore
- Elaine Bishop
- Carl Offerdal
- Vern Wik
- Jerry Furrseth
- Vern Scott
- Marion Handyside
- Mary Mulcahy
- Ilton Thorpe, Sr.
- Donald Maruska
- Peter Domogalla
- Minna Gomall
- Lester Norby
- Fred Rothschadl
- Ilton Thorpe, Jr.
- Margaret Timmer
- Luella Voit
- David Siedschlag
- Blanche Christensen
- Russell Blattenbauer
- Charales Pazdernik
- Patricia Ulland
- Shirley Welle
- David Paul
- Eugene Timmer
- Richard Lambert
- Karen Ahmann
- John Peterick
- Karen Houska
- Wallace Eid
- Everett Kjelbertson
- Marty Warnholz
- Nancy Bisek
- Ann Lindblom

#### Hubbard County
- Roger Lundahl
- Garrett Benson
- Milo Mastny
- Gwen Dissmore
- Almeda Thompson
- Helen Smith
- Virgil Hensel
- William Guida
- Ted Cuhel
- Earl Erickson
- Vincent Arvik
- Rod Helm
- Patrick Quinn
- Betty Cermak
- Virginia Brown
- DeWayne Morgan
- Frank Ernhart
- Paul Shuster
- Patricia Cordova
- Sharon Arvik
- Norma Hanson
- Ray Melander
- Lyle Robinson
- Bonnie Moore
- Richard Thoreson
- Betty Mason
- David Long
- Floyd Frank
- Deborah Lempola
- Helen O’Dair
- Swede Nelson
- Don Carlson
- Greg Larson
- J. Edward Dvorak
- Kathy Grell
- Ed Smith
- Matt Dotta

#### Becker County
- Carl Ingebrigtsen
- Ralph Nelson
- Ernest Nelson
- Emma Johnson
- Frank Badar
- Harry Basford
- Gerhard Becker
- Chauncey Boyer
- John Quam
- Doug Hirsch
- Lawrence Bevins
- Virginia Eidenschink
- Hilma Kangas
- Arnold Porkkonen
- Dennis Hopman
- John Dahl
- Carolyn Johnson
- Jan Kangas
- Ray Wattenhofer
- Cecil Berquist
- LaVanche Larson
- Peggy Brower
- Ben Strohmayer
- Patricia Blaine
- Loren Danielson
- Raymond Larson
- George King
- Curtis Ballard
- Al Mohs
- John Jacoby
- Rita Thompson
- Norma Sandin
- Gunder Hanson
- Vern Seal
- Dana Laine
- Marj Johnson
- Carolyn Engebretson
- Bob Bristlin
- Dave Seaberg
- Larry Knutson
- continued...
BOARD HISTORY

At the first official meeting with community leaders of the tri-county area of Mahnomen, Hubbard and Becker Counties held May, 1965, ten Board Members were elected to oversee the community action services that would be provided by Mahube Community Council, Inc. This same year in July, Board Membership increased to 12 members, and continued to increase to 34 members by 1967. In March 1966, Minnesota Representative Al Quie urged community action governing boards be composed of at least one third representing the poor (“maximum feasible participation”). This amendment was adopted into law and implemented in January 1967. The Minnesota Non-Profit Act quickly followed requiring community action agencies have Board representation from three (tripartite) sectors: 1) low income, 2) private organizations, and 3) elected public officials. The Mahube Board Directors worked hard to change composition and select members to ensure equal representation of the counties as well as the three sectors. The Board voted in September 1976 to also have equal representation of the counties on committees appointed by the Board. The Board membership was reduced to 18 members. Not until 1998 did Sections 676B of the Community Services Block Grant Reauthorization Act require that, as a condition of designation, private nonprofit entities administer their CSBG program through tripartite boards that “fully participate in the development, planning, implementation, and evaluation of the program to serve low-income communities.” This Federal Act echoes a minimum of 1/3 of tripartite board membership must be democratically selected representatives of low-income individuals and families who reside in the geographic area being served by the agency.

Board composition changed again in 2012 as a result of the Agency’s designation to provide community action services in Otter Tail and Wadena Counties. The Agency’s name was changed to Mahube-Otwa Community Action Partnership, Inc. to reflect this new 5-county service territory: Mahnomen, HUbbard, B Becker--O Tter Tail and WAdena Counties. The Agency Bylaws were updated defining each six member tripartite sector’s membership to include one at-large member from the 5-county area plus five other members (one from each of the five counties).

Today, the 18 member Board membership continues, with six representatives on each of the tripartite sectors. Board Director terms of office are three years. The Agency has been fortunate to have excellent participation and representation from community members on its Board of Directors, to help carry out its mission of empowering people to achieve self-sufficiency.
Current Programs

The Community Services Block Grant was the initial program operated by Mahube Community Council, Inc. in 1965. The Block Grant is funded by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Office of Community Service. The purpose of this funding is to assist community action agencies reduce poverty in its community and to work to assist low income individuals and families acquire useful skills and knowledge, gain access to new opportunities and to achieve economic self-sufficiency. In 1984 the State of Minnesota first funded the Minnesota Economic Opportunity Grant, now called the Minnesota Community Action Grant, to support the same type of work of the Block Grant. The Block Grant also allows for overall planning administration to benefit all programs in the Agency.

- The Energy Assistance Program (EAP) began in 1981 and is federally funded through the U.S. Dept. of Human Services and administered in Minnesota by the Dept. of Commerce. EAP provides financial assistance to help pay heating costs and furnace repairs for income qualified households.
- The energy assistance program also assists households by helping resolve heating emergencies utilizing funding for Crisis Assistance, Energy Related Repairs, and Reach-Out-For-Warmth/Fuel Fund.
- In addition to primary heat payments, EAP also assists households by helping resolve heating emergencies utilizing funding for Crisis Assistance, Energy Related Repairs, and Reach-Out-For-Warmth/Fuel Fund.
- In the 2014-15 EAP season, the State put proactive measures in place, including: Crisis funds could be guaranteed with a $500 standard delivery amount rather than a minimum delivery; vendors could enter their delivery tickets into eHEAT rather than faxing the information to service providers; and new Responsive Self-Sufficiency funds were available for service providers to provide one-on-one assistance to households.
- The winter of 2013-14 was plagued with harsh weather and high fuel costs. The Governor declared a State of Peacetime Emergency in response to propane shortages; he set up a statewide emergency hotline, and increased EAP income guidelines to 60% of SMI. The MN Legislature followed by awarding an additional $20 million for EAP and increased crisis funds for delivered fuels to $1000 for households.
- In an effort to be more efficient and effective, the Agency made the decision to go paperless and EAP developed workflow processes utilizing Laserfiche scanning software. This software allows us to work on applications from any of our offices.

MISSION: To assist community action agencies reduce poverty in its community.

MISSION: To assist households maintain affordable, continuous & safe home energy, while lowering energy burden.

In the 2014-15 EAP season, the State put proactive measures in place, including: Crisis funds could be guaranteed with a $500 standard delivery amount rather than a minimum delivery; vendors could enter their delivery tickets into eHEAT rather than faxing the information to service providers; and new Responsive Self-Sufficiency funds were available for service providers to provide one-on-one assistance to households.
Current Programs

Child Care Resource & Referral was established in 1992 and Mahube was the last area in the state to become a part of the statewide CCR&R network. The program was initially funded to serve the 5 counties of Region Two: Hubbard, Mahnomen, Clearwater, Beltrami & Lake of the Woods. In the beginning years, CCR&R had a major responsibility for providing child care referrals to working parents who were looking for high quality child care. Mahube-Otwa CCR&R has been a trend-setter for the State by developing projects that have had significant impact including:

- **1993** Developing a Training Advisory Board to plan and evaluate training for child care providers.
- **1996** Coordination of training for child care providers administered from Park Rapids office for entire 5-county area.
- **1997** Began to administer Child Care Service Grants for licensed programs in Region Two.
- **2003** Participated in statewide restructuring process that combined Regions 1, 2 and 4 into the Northwest District (a large 21-county service area). Region Two became part of the NW District.
- **2010** CCR&R began to participate in a statewide initiative to improve quality in child care settings.
- **2012** Mahube-Otwa acquired Region 5 CCR&R, which is part of the NE District. The program is now funded to serve a total of 10 counties - the five counties of Region Two plus the five counties of Region Five: Crow Wing, Morrison, Todd, Wadena, and part of Cass. **Also in 2012,** CCR&R acquired a new name, Child Care Aware. This new name aligns with Parent Aware, the state’s quality rating improvement system for early childhood programs. Parent Aware Coaches are now busy working with programs to implement ‘best practices’ related to school readiness and to achieve a one-to-four star quality rating.
- **2014** Beginning in FY14, CCAware became the regional administrator for MDE’s Early Learning Scholarship program. These scholarships, up to $5,000, are available to income eligible children and are intended to increase access to quality care.

MISSION:
To help families find quality child care and support child care professionals.

CHILD CARE AWARE

Child Care Aware continues to evolve, recognizing the needs of communities by providing services to child care providers who are Friends, Family, and Neighbors (FFN) and Kinship Caregivers. Both of these programs provide services to informal caregivers, who are the people who provide the majority of child care to children in the area.
Current Programs

- From 2000 to the present, Mahube housing programs have seen a dramatic expansion. What began in 1988 with two housing programs, Transitional Housing and Emergency Shelter, has grown to encompass every type of shelter need from emergency to home foreclosure prevention.

- **2000** Initial funding was received for the Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program to serve Mahnomen, Hubbard, and Becker Counties and was expanded in 2009 to include Ottertail and Wadena Counties.

- **2006** The Long Term Homeless Services project was funded to provide services in 6 counties (Mahnomen, Hubbard, Becker, Clearwater, Polk, Beltrami, and Cass) and 3 Indian Reservations (White Earth, Red Lake, and Leech Lake).

- **2006** Initial funding was received for the Ending Long Term Homeless Rental Assistance Program.

- **2008** Opening of the West River Townhomes - a partnership between Mahube and the Becker County EDA/HRA.

- **2009** Stimulus funding received for the Homeless Prevention and Homeless Rapid Re-Housing programs.

- **2014** Added Youth Housing Program—Homeless Youth Act serving homeless youth ages 16-21, with first month’s rent and ongoing rental assistance, deposits and utilities, including case management. Also added second Housing Case Worker in Becker County, for a staff of 11 in Family Development plus one contracted person.

- **2015** For the first time, a sub-grantee of Mahube-Otwa (White Earth Indian Reservation) was approved for the Family Homeless Prevention & Assistance Program, to provide rent and deposits to Native Americans on the White Earth Reservation.

MISSION:

“Homeless To House”

2015: Family Development Director Marcia Otte was recognized as an Outstanding Salvation Army Volunteer. She was one of 36 individuals selected from 44,000 volunteers in North Dakota and Minnesota.
Current Programs

Mahube Community Council, Inc. began the Family Development program in 1988 to address the needs of low-income individuals and families who struggle with the effects of poverty, and help support them to eliminate barriers to achieving self-sufficiency. Over the years, the Family Development program has offered a variety of services to accomplish this outcome:

- **1983** Emergency Food & Shelter Program provides food and/or utility subsidies to community organizations who work with low income people.

- **1988** Partnerships established with Salvation Army, Food Shelves, United Way, and the Northwest Minnesota Foundation to assist low income people access basic needs.

- **1988** Transitional Housing and Emergency Shelter programs began to operate.

- **1999** Family Assets for Independence in Minnesota (FAIM) began to operate.

- **2001** Child Passenger Resource Center was established to provide education, training, and resources on safe child vehicle restraint systems.

- **2006** Classes developed for financial literacy, basic skills, tenant education, parenting, cooking, and employment education.

- **2010** Classes expanded to include clientele throughout the community.

- **2011** Jennifer Booge was selected to be on the National Child Passenger Safety Board of Directors.

- **2012** Family Development Program took over the housing, self-sufficiency and case management for HUD Otter Tail and HUD Wadena County Housing programs, MN Housing and National Mortgage Foreclosure programs, and the Fathers Resource Center.

**MISSION:**
To assist low-income clients meet their basic needs and become self-sufficient.

**FAMILY DEVELOPMENT**

**Best Practice Awards:**
- **2006** Jump Start Car Loan Program
- **2008** Child Passenger Safety Resource Center
- **2008** Rural Family Economic Success
- **2012** Jennifer Booge/CPS Coordinator selected as Outstanding Car Seat Safety Person in the State of MN
Most Americans were dramatically affected by the oil crisis in the early 1970’s, which created shortages and became a burden, sinking many families into debt. Low income families in cold climates suffered most. As a result, in 1976 Congress created the U.S. Department of Energy’s (DOE) Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP). In this early phase, Mahube operated WAP with a crew that installed low-cost, temporary measures such as plastic window sheeting, caulk, and weatherstripping to reduce home heating bills; a maximum of $350 per household could be spent.

(1980s) In Jan. 1983 Mahube discontinued having its own crew and began accepting bids from private contractors for WX projects. WAP focused on more permanent measures such as adding insulation and improving efficiency in heating systems; space & water heater improvements were authorized in 1984; furnace & boiler replacements approved in 1985. In 1985, the MN Legislature passed a Law by which 5% of all Minnesota Energy Assistance funds would be used for weatherizing the homes of low income residents; this transfer of funds from EAP to WAP continues today. In 1987, for the first time, fuel assistance applications also serve as WAP applications to determine eligibility. In 1988, Mahube made the decision to purchase WX materials from a single source supplier that guaranteed bid prices for one year; this practice continues today.

(1990s) The 1990 State Energy Efficiency Programs Improvement Act added health & safety statutory purposes to WAP, allowing WAP funds to address health and safety hazards in homes. The trend continued for more cost effective measures, with the adoption of advance energy audits and diagnostic equipment (infrared cameras & manometers), in particular, the use of blower doors to solve air infiltration problems in homes. In 1996 DOE-sponsored research provided significant performance & technical advances, in spite of funding reductions during this period. The practice of dense-packing insulation became a standard practice.

(2000s) WAP recognizes that all homes are unique, but on average air sealing and insulation represent the greatest opportunity for energy savings at the lowest cost. In 2006, Minnesota adopted the DOE’s “Weatherization Assistant” energy audit software to produce custom energy analysis of homes by measuring the savings-to-investment (SIR) ratio or the time a WAP measure will repay the investment over its expected lifetime. In 2009, Federal ARRA/Stimulus funding allowed Mahube to obtain nearly $3 million dollars targeted for energy conservation; the average funding allowed per home increased to $6,500. Also in 2009, Energy Auditor Certification became required of WAP Auditors. In 2010, Mahube worked on a solar air heating installation & training project with the State Dept. of Commerce, and installed solar panels on the homes of WAP clients. In 2011, DOE published an expanded WAP Health & Safety Guidance identifying issues, testing, allowable actions, client education & training. In the spring of 2012, Mahube WAP expanded to the new counties of Otter Tail and Wadena, after Mahube acquired the service area of a neighboring community action agency that dissolved. In October 2014 DOE introduced a new, comprehensive Quality Work Plan for all WAP programs. The QWP defines what constitutes quality installation of WAP measures (Standard Work Specifications); how measures are inspected and validated (Quality Control Inspection); and prescribes acceptable training & credentialing. The new QWP are to take effect July 1, 2015.

MISSION:
To reduce energy costs for low-income families by improving the energy efficiency of their homes while ensuring their health and safety.
Current Programs

Senior Programs have changed dramatically since the inception of the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) nationwide in 1973, and at Mahube since 1976. In 2015, Mahube-Otwa Senior Programs include:

**Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP):** Offers volunteer opportunities to individuals aged 55 and older in community organizations in eight counties: Mahnomen, Hubbard, Becker, Clearwater, Otter Tail, Wadena and Wilkin. RSVP consists of 700+ volunteers and 90+ community agencies, organizations and non-profits that serve as station sites for the volunteers. RSVP receives federal funding from the Corporation for National & Community Service (CNCS), state funding from the MN Board on Aging (MBA), and local funding from Becker County United Way. Major activities of RSVP include:

- **VITA Tax Aid** is volunteer led, free tax filing assistance provided to low-income to moderate income residents, with special sensitivity to seniors. Funding is provided by the MN Department of Revenue and by the West Central Initiative.

- **Tai Ji Quan & Bone Builder community exercise groups** offer local seniors exercise classes designed to prevent falls, improve balance, flexibility and coordination. Funding is provided by LDSAAA.

- **Elementary School Literacy Tutoring**

- **Volunteers at local Food Shelves and volunteer drivers providing Transportation Services**

- **Medicare/Health Insurance Counseling**

**Senior Homemaking/Chore, Home Repair & Adaptations:** Serves seniors and disabled residents by providing housekeeping, laundry and relocation assistance, large appliance repair and replacement, snow shoveling, lawn maintenance, and home repairs and modifications to enable safe, independent, community living. Individuals who are eligible to receive Elderly Waiver (EW) and Alternate Care (AC) reimbursements are referred by county human service providers. Funding is provided by the MN Department of Human Services, Adult Services Division.

**MISSION:**

To improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service & volunteering.

**Becker County Senior Coordinator** serves as a coordination point for senior resources and referrals; special attention is given to senior residents needing Medicare Counseling, Fraud Prevention Assistance, and Long term Care Counseling & Planning. The program is funded by Land of the Dancing Sky Area Agency on Aging (LDSAAA), Becker County, Becker County United Way, Essentia Health-St. Mary’s, Ecumen Community and Detroit Lakes breakfast and noon Rotary groups.

**2010 Best Practice Award**

Health Insurance Counseling Program
Current Programs

Head Start was funded in 1964 by President Johnson as part of the War on Poverty initiative. The primary purpose of the program was to provide employment and early childhood educational training to low income parents of young children. Mahube was first funded for Head Start in 1966, with an 8-week summer demonstration program. The summer program expanded in 1967 to serve 301 children living in Hubbard and Becker Counties. During the past 50 years, the program continues to expand and evolve; some milestones include:

- 1976 Head Start was funded to operate a 32-week, school year home base option, serving 72 children.
- 1981 Four Head Start center base classrooms began.
- 1984 Permanent expansion funds were received to increase enrollment to 104 children. Federal expansion funding continued for the next several years.
- 1987 The State of Minnesota began to fund Head Start services.
- 1990 Permanent expansion was received to serve 34 children living in Mahnomen County.
- 1996 Mahube was one of 18 national pilot sites to operate the Family Child Care Option, serving 36 children in child care homes.
- 1997 Mahube received Federal & State funding to serve pregnant women, infants, and toddlers. This new initiative was called Early Head Start.
- 2009 ARRA funding allowed expansion for two years to enroll 12 preschool children and 36 pregnant women, infants & toddlers. In 2011, the ARRA funds became permanent.
- 2015 Early Head Start Child Care Partnership Grant was received to expand child care services to 72 infants/toddlers, including services in Otter Tail and Wadena Counties for the first time. 452 young children ages birth to five are enrolled in the 2014-2015 Head Start/Early Head Start school year.

MISSION: To strengthen children & families by facilitating learning, independence and trust.

HEAD START & EARLY HEAD START

Head Start and Early Head Start serve preschool children, infants, toddlers and pregnant women with several options: family child care homes, center base, home base, combo and child care partnerships.
Current Programs

The Family Health program, which was initially started through Otter Tail Wadena Community Action, continues today with Mahube-Otwa Community Action.

- **1969** In March 1969, Otter Tail Wadena Community Action began offering a Family Planning program. This same year the Federal Government, with the support from President Nixon, created Title X.

- **1978** The MN Legislature established FPSP (Family Planning Special Projects Program) providing low-income, high-risk individuals pre-pregnancy family planning services.

- **2012** July 1, 2012 Family Health merged from OTWCA to Mahube-Otwa CAP.

- **2014** Began utilizing Practice Suite as an electronic health record software. In March, 2014, Mahube-Otwa Family Health was designated as an “Essential Community Provider.”

MISSION:
Provide services that improve and enhance an individual’s reproductive health & wellness.

FAMILY HEALTH

Family Health clinics are vital to the provision of reproductive health as they often serve as an entry point into the health care system for young women, men and low-income people.

Mahube-Otwa Family Health is an Essential Community Provider that provides community education to area schools, community groups and organizations.

A Legacy of Service to our Communities:

Since 1965, Mahube (now Mahube-Otwa) has supported and empowered some of our most vulnerable populations, including those in the dawn of life (children), those in the twilight of life (the elderly), and those who are often in the shadows of life (the needy).
The Board of Directors recognizes the importance of having visibility in each county of the service area. Therefore, since the early years, the Agency operated an office in each county.

In 1969, Mahube opened an office in Mahnomen, with Claryce Adams as the office manager and Colleen Johnson as outreach worker. The office was located east of the First National Bank, in a building owned by Bert Ness. Around 1975, Mahube moved their offices to a building on South Main Street that was formerly the Midtown Motel. In 1979, the Agency offices were moved across the street to a building that had been occupied by the Wilcox Lumber Company for many years. In 1984, Mahube offices in Mahnomen moved to 123 Monroe Avenue West. This building had been vacated by Bob’s Market and had been used previously as the ASCS office.

In February 1995, Mahube moved to the present location at 118 West Madison Avenue. This building is owned by the Mahnomen School District and was constructed with funding received from the MN Dept. of Education, to create early childhood partnerships with school districts. Mahube-Otwa manages all of Mahnomen County agency services from this location. The Agency also operates a Head Start center at this site.

As early as May 1968, Mayor Don King of Park Rapids requested that Mahube Community Council, Inc. locate offices in Park Rapids. Beginning in June 1969, a building was leased from William Guida for Mahube services in Hubbard County. Office locations during the early years included 305 South Main Avenue, currently the home of Park Salon Hair & Body Works. The first outreach worker in Park Rapids was Doris Irey. In July 1980, Mahube offices and services were moved to 120 North Main, which was the old clinic location. This location provided space for a Head Start center to operate in the basement of the building.

In January 1990, the Park Rapids office moved to its new building located at 120 North Central Avenue. This site offered space for all administrative services in Hubbard County, as well as staff offices and a Head Start center. This site was constructed with corporate funds as a result of approval by the Board of Directors indicating their interest to provide high quality, visible services in Hubbard County.

Currently, the Hubbard County offices for all programs continues to be located at 120 North Central Avenue. The Park Rapids Head Start center moved to the Frank White Education Center in 2001, and operates collaboratively with school district early childhood programs. The Frank White Education Center was renovated as a result of funding received by Mahube from the MN Dept. of Education and the McKnight Foundation. Other Head Start locations are at the Nevis School and the Laporte School. Child care is also operated in conjunction with family child care providers located in Hubbard County.
When Mahube-Otwa took responsibility to operate in Otter Tail and Wadena Counties, the Board recognized the importance of having a physical presence in those counties. Otter Tail Wadena Community Action previously operated an office in New York Mills, MN and a smaller office at 125 Lincoln Avenue in Fergus Falls.

In order to operate in a high quality and professional atmosphere, the Board authorized purchase and renovation of office space in Fergus Falls. In November 2012, the Agency purchased building space at the City Center Mall located on Cavour Street in the heart of downtown Fergus Falls. Renovation was immediately started and completed in May 2013. The Otter Tail County office is located at 128 West Cavour and houses staff that provides services in all Agency program areas. The Family Planning Clinic is also operated at this location. This office offers meeting room space for community meetings and special events.

Community Action had never operated an office in Wadena County prior to Mahube-Otwa taking over the service area. Once the Agency was funded to provide services in Wadena County, the need to secure professional space was identified. In June, 2012 a lease was signed with Debi Ebner-Tougas to rent an office building located at 311 Jefferson Street South in Wadena. This space had previously been an insurance office and is accessible directly off Highway 71 in Wadena. All Agency programs are operated from this location.
The main office of Mahube Community Council, Inc. was first located at 200 East State Street in Detroit Lakes, MN. This office space was initially leased from Becker County in 1966 and remodeled to accommodate expanded services in 1969.

In 1972 the Agency leased the old Buy Rite Building, located at 518 Summit Avenue. Once remodeled, this building was large enough to accommodate expanded services, Board meetings, employment services and the office of the Community Development Corporation.

In May 1980, the Agency purchased the “Ole Lind” Lund boat building on Highway 59 South, which was remodeled to accommodate several offices and a large garage to house the weatherization materials and refrigeration for commodities. The Head Start program was located in several places around Detroit Lakes including Grace Lutheran Church, the Boys and Girls Club, the Technical College Annex, the Audubon-Lake Park School and the Frazee School.

Recognizing the need for increased space and additional Head Start centers, the Board approved plans to construct a new complex located at 1125 West River Road. In August 1997, Agency offices and Head Start classrooms were moved to this location. The Agency continued to operate Head Start centers at the Audubon-Lake Park School, the Frazee School, the Technical College and the Holmes Community Center. Child care is also operated in conjunction with family child care providers located in Becker County.

In 2009, the Agency expanded the Detroit Lakes office, adding 3,100 square feet to accommodate a large meeting room and an indoor large motor room for Head Start.
The Promise of Community Action

Community Action changes people’s lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.
Poverty is not an accident. Like slavery and apartheid, it is man-made and can be removed by the actions of human beings.

- Nelson Mandela