

The

Semcac Review



Volume 11, Issue 2

November 2010

Executive Director Wayne Stenberg reflects on his first six months



It's hard to believe that six months have gone by since being hired as Semcac's new Executive Director. Though I've been in this chair for a short period of time, I am thoroughly convinced that we have some of the hardest working staff in Southeast Minnesota. I've had the unique opportunity to visit with many of our funding partners and have already experienced a major audit, programmatic monitoring of two of our larger programs and have reviewed ongoing reports. Each time I find staff being recognized for their quality work, fiduciary responsibility and outstanding performance. It has been a great pleasure to be leading such an excellent organization.

Semcac continues to look to the future with anticipation as we see our 45th year as a Community Action Agency approaching. Through the creation of a new strategic plan, we are focused on preparing for the next five years. This process was initiated in the fall and will end with a final product in December 2010. These key meetings have provided stakeholders the opportunity to discuss best practices, funding concerns, delivery vehicles and ongoing services. We truly believe

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Poverty in Minnesota

In September, the U.S. Census Bureau released 2009 data from the American Community Survey (ACS). The census-like survey is sent in 1-year and 3-year increments to random households within a locality to record information about populations between each 10-year census. ACS 2009 is a 1-year survey and therefore only displays information about cities or counties with populations of 65,000+. None of the counties in Semcac's primary services area have populations that reach 65,000. However, there is still valuable information to be gathered from the 2009 data release.

Most notable is that as a nation, we have experienced the largest year-over-year increase in poverty rate in recorded history, from 13.3% in 2008 to 14.3% in 2009, and the highest poverty rate since the mid-1990's.

In 2009, 71,157 Southern Minnesotans lived in poverty. This is

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Visit www.semcac.org to view the agency's website, read current Semcac news and sign-up for e-news.

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Semcac volunteers recognized for outstanding service

Multiple Semcac volunteers were honored for their services this summer.

Two Retired Senior & Volunteer Program (RSVP) volunteers were acknowledged as their respective counties' 2010 Outstanding Senior Citizen. Joe Clifford from Caledonia (Houston County) and Sheila Rislove from Rushford (Fillmore County) then competed for the title of the state's Outstanding Senior Citizen. Winners in each county are chosen for their commitment to community service since reaching the age of 65. The Outstanding Senior Citizen award is sponsored by the Minnesota State Fair, the Minnesota Federation of County Fairs and the Minnesota Board on Aging.

Joe Clifford has been a member of Sem-



Executive Director Wayne Stenberg (left) and Joe Clifford, Houston County's Outstanding Senior Citizen

cac RSVP for the past 5 years. During this time, he has recorded over 3,000 hours as a volunteer driver for Semcac Transportation, driving senior citizens and others to their appointments. Mr. Clifford also volunteers at the Caledonia Senior Dining site and helps with the county's fluorescent bulb recycling program. He volunteers with his church and has been instrumental with the local Boy Scouts, 4-H and FFA, where he has helped students earn many awards.

Sheila Rislove has been volunteering through Semcac RSVP for 20 years. She has been especially active with activities at the local elementary school, including coordinating or assisting with projects such as Battle of the Books, Pen Pals, a manners program and a 5th grade reading program. She also helped spearhead a project to create "Care Bags" for Fillmore and Houston counties' Sheriff's deputies to give to children that are removed from their homes or involved in auto accidents. The Care Bags

may include crayons, books, stuffed animals, toothbrushes and toothpaste, a small treat, and Ms. Rislove's special touch—a child-size afghan that she has crocheted. Deputies have recognized that the Care Bags helped to soothe a scared child and reassure them that they are going to be ok. Ms. Rislove volunteers with her church and several other community activities as well.



Sheila Rislove, Fillmore County's Outstanding Senior Citizen

The Outstanding Senior Citizen was announced at the state fair on September 2. Ninety-one seniors represented 51 counties at the program. Though neither Semcac RSVP volunteer was chosen, both were wonderful representatives of Semcac and their communities.

Another notable recognition this past summer was that of the Jorgenson family from Dodge County. Audrey Erwin, manager of Semcac's Dodge County Food Shelf, nominated Jim, Marette, Bailey, Tyler and Addelea Jorgenson for the United Way of Olm-



Members of the Jorgenson family receiving the award from the KTTC news team.

sted County and KTTC's "10 Who Make a Difference" award. The family received the award on June 23. They have been dedicated volunteers for several years, ensuring the food shelf is able to serve as many as 50 families each day. Marette also developed ways for the food shelf to function more efficiently after it was moved to Kasson last fall. The Jorgensons also participate in the annual fundraising concert for the food shelf.

New income guidelines for Energy Assistance Program

Semcac's Community Development Department is preparing for another busy season as unemployment and poverty levels remain high.

New income guidelines became effective October 1, 2010 for the Energy Assistance Program. To qualify for assistance, household earnings must be at or less the following amounts based on household size:

For more information on

Household Size	3-month Income
1	\$5,655
2	\$7,395
3	\$9,135
4	\$10,875
5	\$12,615

income guidelines or the Energy Assistance Program, see Semcac's website at www.semcac.org or visit your local Semcac Contact Center.

Minnesota Weatherization programs outperform expectations

As of September 30, Weatherization Assistance Program providers in Minnesota, including Semcac and other Community Action Agencies, have weatherized 9,112 Minnesota homes—surpassing the halfway point in the state's goal of completing 17,000 homes with the funding from the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Semcac Weatherization has completed 543 households with ARRA funding to date.

Minnesota's weatherization providers were allocated \$132 million in ARRA funding. The state has repeatedly been acknowledged for high performance. Last spring, Minnesota was named a Top 5 performer in the nation for Weatherization. Minnesota's ranking of 8th in the nation on the



State Energy Efficiency Scorecard, according to the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy, was partially attributed to its use of ARRA funds to improve energy efficiency. Nationally, Weatherization ranked 9th out of about 200 federal programs in the number of direct jobs funded through ARRA last quarter. For comparison, Highway Planning and Construction ranked 7th.

Minnesotans are seeing a return on this investment as well. A study by the University of Minnesota Extension reveals the following statewide impact of weatherization programs:

- * For every dollar spent on weatherization programs, an additional \$1.09, on average, of economic activity is created.
- * For each direct job funded by the program, an additional 0.77 jobs, on average, are generated in the state.
- * For every dollar earned by weatherization workers, another \$0.86, on average is earned by other workers in the state.

Executive Director reflects on first six months *Continued from page 1*

that we are creating a road map to success as we chart out our ongoing goals and maneuver through the anticipated pitfalls that await us over the next few years.

Even as the agency is being proactive, we are also deeply aware of the challenges that loom upon the horizon as budget shortfalls approach reality. This may be true, but I believe in the leadership of the Board of Directors, our collective skills and the excellent services that we provide for the region. I am certain that together we will create new initiatives, forge strong relationships and continue to maximize our efforts as we continue to assist people to achieve or maintain independence.

Poverty *Continued from page 1*

equivalent to 11.2% of the region's population, slightly higher than the state average of 11%. In 2007, this figure for Southern Minnesota was 9.7%.

The Rochester Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which includes Dodge, Olmsted and Wabasha counties, fared much better with an overall poverty rate of 7.1%, down from 7.5% in 2008. The 2009 poverty rate for La Crosse MSA, which includes La Crosse County in Wisconsin and Houston County in Minnesota, was less optimistic at 11.8%.

Semcac's programs have experienced more demand due to the economic crisis and rise in poverty. For instance, the number of households visiting our four food shelves has gone up by 22% since 2008, and households receiving utility assistance has increased 27%. In times of high need, it is important that Semcac and other service agencies work together and function at the highest possible capacity.

Preparing youth for the future

Thanks to support from the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation, Semcac is piloting a new program called *Next Step: Career and College Prep*. The program is modeled after one currently running at Western Community Action. Using an interactive curriculum, students in grades 9-12 will explore their own skills, values and passions to connect them with future careers.



Students will then research what steps they need to take to fulfill

their own career goals. With the assistance of instructor Dawn Lubahn and volunteer mentors, students are connected to resources that support their personal and professional growth. Classes are held after school for 90 minutes one night per week for 18 weeks.

Semcac has pilot projects planned for Mabel-Canton and Fillmore Central high schools. The program is scheduled to begin the week of November 29. Semcac hopes to partner with a funding source that has shown interest in sustaining and expanding the program after this pilot.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer mentor or know a student in Mabel-Canton or Fillmore Central schools that would benefit from Next Step, contact your respective school counselor or Lisa Hermanson at (507) 864-8236 or lisa.hermanson@semcac.org.

Need for homeless prevention exceeds funds

Due to extremely high usage over the past 18 months, Semcac's Family Homeless Prevention program now has very limited funds. The program is no longer able to take referrals for people requiring emergency rental or mortgage assistance. Those in need of mortgage assistance will be particularly impacted as Semcac has no other programs to prevent foreclosure.

There is, however, another option for renters. The Homeless Prevention & Rapid Rehousing Program, funded by the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act, is expected to operate through mid-2011 and can provide financial assistance and stabilization services to keep those at imminent risk of becoming homeless in their current rental housing or rehouse those that are homeless. Eligible households lack financial resources and support needed to obtain housing or remain in their housing and have no other appropriate housing options identified but must be able to provide evidence of future income.

The Rural Housing Assistance and Stability Program is an option for those already experiencing homelessness. This program provides eligible households with a security deposit and the first monthly payment for rental housing.

For more information on either of these programs, contact your local Semcac Contact Center (locations at www.semcac.org).

Head Start retiree's family led her to Semcac



Teacher Penne Lee retired last spring after a notable history with Semcac Head Start. Penne's family has had three generations of women involved with teaching for Head Start. Her daughter, Mindy Hofner, was a Head Start parent in Blooming Prairie when she learned of an employment opportunity as a bus rider, which acts as a chaperone during Head Start bus rides. Mindy later became a bus driver and eventually a Head Start teacher in Kasson. When she needed a substitute teacher, Mindy called her grand-

mother and Penne's mother, Joyce Varne, who was 70 years old at the time. Ms. Varne subsequently substituted for Head Start for 5 years.

Then about 10 years ago, Penne was substituting for local school districts, conducting vision and hearing screenings, and working with Homebound in Austin, when Mindy again needed a substitute teacher in Kasson. Mindy called Penne, who had a bachelor's degree in education with an emphasis on early childhood. Penne enjoyed Head Start so much, she finished the school year in Kasson. The next year she became a full time Head Start teacher in Austin, where she remained for 9 years.

When asked why she stayed on with Semcac Head Start for so many years, Penne replied, "Because it's the best job in the whole world...you can really make a difference." Penne stated that she particularly enjoyed the fact that all of the employees at Semcac work together for a common cause: "to help people, and when you walk into the main office, you're surrounded with positive people buzzing around, and it rejuvenates you to work on your own tasks."

Penne said she will miss the children and their families the most, along with her coworkers. Penne plans on spending lots of time with her grandchildren. She also mentioned multiple quilting and scrap-booking projects she plans to complete. Penne looks forward to spending much more time with her husband and playing golf with her son. She has also discussed multiple volunteer opportunities within Semcac....And, it has come as no surprise that this school year, Penne has been a substitute teacher for Head Start in Austin. Her daughter Mindy has been with Head Start for over 16 years.



Dollars & Sense class schedule

The public is welcome to attend Semcac's free financial literacy classes from 5:00–8:00 p.m.

on the dates shown to the right. A meal is provided, and some participants may qualify for childcare reimbursement. The Dollars and Sense classes have become so popular that waiting lists have had to be established for some classes—so call early to reserve your seat!

Date and Location	Contact
November 18 in Austin	Jenni at 507.433.5889
December 2 in Albert Lea	Vicky at 507.373.1329
January 20 in Owatonna	Michele at 507.451.7134
February 3 in Albert Lea	Vicky at 507.373.1329

Semcac “unites” with Winona area

Semcac is now a member agency of the United Way of the Greater Winona



Area. This new partnership opens up further opportunities for collaboration with other United Way member agencies, such as the Women's Resource Center, Winona ORC, Catholic Charities, Family and Children's Center, and many more, to maximize the services delivered to citizens of Winona County. This partnership may lead to more efficient service delivery in the Winona area as well as added solidarity between Semcac and other area nonprofits. Also, as a member agency, Semcac may apply for grant funding in the future.

Semcac is also a member agency of the United Way of Dodge County, United Way of Steele County, United Way of Mower County, United Way of Freeborn County, Northfield Area United Way, Waseca Area United Way, and the United Way of Goodhue, Wabasha, and Pierce Counties.

Thank you to the United Way of the Greater Winona Area's Board and Executive Director Beth Forkner-Moe for adding Semcac as United Way's newest member agency!

Getting to know the Semcac Board...

Lenore Fries, Freeborn County

Board Service: Since April 2010

Sector: Private—Represents Senior Resources of Freeborn County

Residence: Albert Lea

Family: Lenore is originally from Minneapolis, where most of her family still resides. She has a son and a daughter as well as three grandchildren. Lenore's family also includes an older brother, a niece, and three great nieces and nephews.

Occupation: Lenore is retired and enjoying it! She has been a supervisor and an office manager in education, business, nonprofit agencies, and government, including 20 years at Hennepin County Children & Family Services. She has also worked for older adults with special needs and as coordinator of the Family Caregivers Network of Freeborn County.

Community Involvement: Lenore has been involved with Habitat for Humanity, Red Cross, RSVP as a volunteer, church groups, and reporting on emerging trends and issues affecting older adults.

Personal Interests: Lenore's interest include music, travel and family history. Her goal is to sing, dance and laugh more.

Updates from the Family Planning Clinic

- * The Family Planning Clinic is on Facebook! Search “Semcac” and join the fan page for updates and information.
- * School's back in session! The Clinic continues to collaborate with Winona State University. The clinic director is currently working with three student groups this semester on the following topics: Women's Reproductive Health, Increasing Awareness of Semcac Clinic among WSU student population, and Chlamydia Awareness.
- * Holly Fratzke, Nurse Practitioner, is now a certified Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE). As such, she is now able to perform in-depth examinations and collect data after sexual assaults.
- * American Recovery & Reinvestment Act funding for Minnesota Vaccines for Children is allowing the clinic to expand eligibility for the HPV vaccine. Now adults ages 19-26 can receive this vaccine for free at the clinic.



Holly Fratzke, NP

Semcac Board of Directors 2010-2011 Schedule

December 13, 2010	June 13, 2011
January 10, 2011	July 11, 2011
February 14, 2011	August 8, 2011
March 14, 2011	September 12, 2011
April 11, 2011	November 14, 2011
May 9, 2011	December 12, 2011

Meetings are open to the public and begin at 6:30 p.m. in the St. Charles Community Center (830 Whitewater Avenue)

Getting to know the Semcac Board...

Bob Augedahl, Houston County

Board Service: Since April 2009

Sector: Public Official—Houston Co. Commissioner

Residence: Caledonia

Family: Bob is married and a father of three children—son Aaron is a paramedic with Tri-State Ambulance, daughter Lisa works for Gunderson Lutheran, and son Joseph works for Jostens.

Occupation: Bob is retired. His professional experience includes being Mayor of Caledonia for 8 years, Owner/Operator of Bob's Farm and Home Store for 13 years, and a member of Caledonia Fire Department for 15 years.

Community Involvement: In addition to regular County Commissioner duties, Bob is on the building committee for the new Houston County jail. He also attends Workforce Development meetings in Rochester. Last March, he received his 20-year National Registry Emergency Medical Technicians Registration.

Personal Interests: Golfing is one of Bob's favorite past times. He also enjoys hunting and fishing with his two grandsons.



Semcac is now on Facebook!

Check us out at
<http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/pages/Semcac/153987454645176>

Semcac Board of Directors

Dodge County

Klaus Alberts, Jr.
 Beverly Ofstie
 Lyle Tjosacs

Fillmore County

Chuck Amunrud
 Randy Dahl
 Ruth Fallon
 Merle Peterson

Houston County

Bob Augedahl
 John Bashaw
 Larry Connery
 Patty Miller
 DeLorace Reed

Freeborn County

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 Lenore Fries
 Wilma Zoller

Mower County

Janice Ball
 Tim Gabrielson
 Norm Flugum

Steele County

Richard Schaefer
 Mark Schultz
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Winona County

Joe Hoffman
 Mena Kaehler
 Greg Olson
 Deb Spitzer
 Robert Youngerman

Head Start Policy

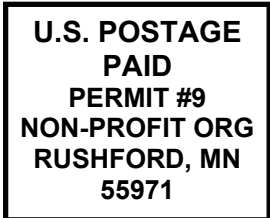
Council Liaison
 Trisha Christopherson

There are currently Board member vacancies in Semcac's service area counties. For more information, please call Executive Director Wayne Stenberg at (507) 864-7741.

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.





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www.semcac.org

(and sign up for e-mail news)

***Administrative Office**—(507) 864-7741

Contact Centers

- *Dodge County (507) 634-4350
- *Fillmore County (507) 765-2761
- Freeborn County(507) 373-1329
- *Houston County (507) 725-3677
- Mower County (507) 433-5889
- Steele County (507) 451-7134
- Winona County (507) 452-8396

Family Planning Clinic—(507) 452-4307

*Food Co-op Site

Please consider Semcac in your annual giving. A giving envelope is enclosed. Thank you!



A United Way member agency

Please send information that you would like included in ***The Semcac Review*** to jennifer.hengel@semcac.org.

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