

## **“Dove Celebrates 35 Years Strong**

In July, 1970 the idea that is Dove was born. Over the last 35 years the organization has grown, been rearranged and improved. But the basic goal of helping people to help themselves has remained. Though there continues to be a large number of people to serve the success stories are in abundance to show that Dove, Inc. does accomplish its goals. The communities that Dove serves are stronger and healthier as a result.

We would like to ask you to help us celebrate. Each month in *DoveTales* we would like to focus on a five year period of Dove's illustrious history. If you have special memories as a volunteer, a community/church member, an employee or one of those success stories please let us hear from you....”

### **Below are the articles as appeared in the *Dove Tales* Newsletter.**

It is difficult to put into words the emotions that flow through me when I think about Dove being 35 years old. I was already on a mission to save the world and was looking for a place to put my faith to work. My church, Central Christian Church, was one of seven churches that formed a group to find a way to act on our faith in our own community. Dove was the door that was opened and changed my life and the lives of my family forever.

I remember the sewing classes at Mueller Park Frontier's building and Central Christian Church teaching young girls and adults. At First Christian Church, young women from Progress School, learned sewing skills. Cooking classes were held at Central Christian and Longview. Tutoring for youth was at St. Teresa, adults were tutored at Central Christian and later at the Dove House on E. Locust St. There were all kinds of recreational activities for the youth summer programs. Jessie Price held a basketball clinic in 1971 at Westminster Presbyterian Church.

Dove had a Story Hour at Central Christian, Longview and after 1972 at the Dove House. Later it developed into a structured learning program for 3 and 4 year olds and Third United Methodist Church provided space and later Prairie Avenue Christian Church housed Pre-School for many years.

The community people and the volunteers we recruited were wonderful. Tears were shed as we saw the struggles of our new friends but a lot of laughter was shared as we learned and listened to the community people. They taught us more than we could ever teach them.

In 1972, the Mother-To-Mother Ministry became a program of Dove. It was sponsored by the national office of the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ. I was Coordinator of Mother-To-Mother until 1991. This program had a great impact on my life. The friendships developed over the years with the volunteers were a gift from the heart. It gave volunteers an opportunity, to put a name and face on poverty which changed lives forever. We had such fun and an opportunity to become advocates on behalf of women that deserved better than they received. We went to the State Legislature together, to the Decatur Housing Authority together, to the City to complain about slum landlords together and many other places to be a voice with folks that had no voice in our society. We had Christmas parties, Easter egg hunts, picnics in the park along with having fun together in our homes.

In 1975, Dove hired Fred Spannaus and me to be paid members of the staff. I coordinated the Mother-to-Mother program, recruited volunteers and Fred was the VISTA supervisor. The VISTAS were an extraordinary group of young people that gave Ray, Fred and I new energy. They were involved in Dove programing as well as several external programs.

I am deeply humbled just thinking about the past 35 years. I received far more than I gave. I was fortunate to have two wonderful young men, Ray Batman and Fred Spannaus who encouraged and turned me loose to live my dream at Dove in Decatur, IL. I loved every moment of my work and the volunteers who were always willing to do one more thing. Thank you Dove for giving me this opportunity.

~ Sue Simcox

**From October 2005 Dove Tales**

The Founders of Dove asked two significant questions about their community back in the early '70's: "What is the need" and "What can we do to help" and then they set out to help. Little by little the number of volunteers increased, allowing the Dove Program to grow. Not only were the volunteers wanting to help, but they were wanting to learn about the people they were helping. Both the volunteers and the recipients learned about each others differences and similarities and understanding developed and friendships grew.

In 1975 Dove became the sponsor for the VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) Program in Decatur. VISTAs worked at CHIC, Legal Aid, the Food Co-op, East Side Housing and Dove. Some of these agencies have disbanded and other have mushroomed over the years. It was an exciting time to be involved. All of the agencies were small, "grass roots" organizations with very little money, space or staff, but lots of energy, ideas and compassion. Board members of these organizations worked hard to find staff, furniture, and funding. They were people who had vision.

Rob Erney and I arrived in Decatur in 1975 as VISTA's to start a Youth Program for Dove. We shared the basement of the Dove House with Fred Spannaus, the VISTA supervisor. With a folding table, a telephone and two folding chairs we set out to become a part of the community. Neighborhood schools opened their doors to us, allowing us to use their gyms for after school programs and to put sign up sheets in the hallway to recruit kids. Neighborhood churches also provided space for programs. After speaking to Sunday School Classes, youth groups, and Millikin Students, we often came away with volunteers willing to share their time and talents with the children of "The Dove House", often bringing their own supplies to make programs work. By the end of that year someone donated an old wooden conference table, which doubled as a ping pong table (with the help of two empty coffee cans, a stick and coffee can lids used as paddles). It didn't take long to make that basement into a place where people liked to be.

In addition to developing and running the Youth Programs, Rob worked 10 hours a week with the Decatur Boys Club and I worked 10 hours a week with Cooperative Extension. There never seemed to be a shortage of children and by the end of the year the Dove Youth Program received more VISTAs. It expanded into two satellite offices working out of Mueller Park and the Salvation Army and we continued to work closely with the Boys Club.

In 1976, we were forced to finally clean up the 2<sup>nd</sup> story of the Dove House so that Ray Batman and Sue Simcox could move their offices upstairs to make room for the new RSVP director. The RSVP program recruited volunteers to operate the Dove Recycling Program and gradually expanded into the well known program it is today. By this time we were having to move our staff meetings out of the basement and into the living room of the Dove House to accommodate the growing staff.

Around 1977, the Boys Club became the "Decatur Boys and Girls Club" and they moved into a new building on Jasper Street which could accommodate a number of youth programs at the same time. The constant work of coordinating space for programs and transportation to satellite sites were no longer needed and Dove start the process of phasing out the Youth Program.

As the '70's ended, there were whispers of addressing the problems of domestic violence, but that came about as the '80's came in, so someone else will have to write about that. I cherish the life long friendships and the many wonderful memories of that time and it's a thrill to see what Dove has become today - different programs, different people, but the same compassion and commitment.

~ Jan Hoerbert

**From November 2005 *Dove Tales***

Over several months in 1979, a group of women came together to better understand the issue of violence against women and to look into local incidences of domestic violence and sexual assault. Discovering that family violence definitely occurred throughout Macon County, but that little specialized response existed, these volunteers sought training and committed themselves to providing a hotline for victims. Forming as the Committee Against Domestic Violence (CADV), these early visionaries included nurses, social workers, mothers, teachers and survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence.

As CADV grew, they saw a need for funding, staff offices, and safe houses or shelter. Dove had formed 10 years earlier and had earned a reputation for accomplishing positive change through the efforts of church members and VISTA volunteers as staff - all coordinated by Ray Batman, Sue Simcox, and Fred Spannaus. Discussions between CADV and Dove led to an agreement in 1980 that Dove would sponsor the Domestic Violence Program and that the advisory council for this Dove Program would be CADV.

We grew quickly in 1980 - 1981, thanks to offers of space from several churches and the YWCA. In a Dove tradition, our first office - open for victims to walk in for support, was in a windowless basement room in a church. First Presbyterian Church gave us this space, where our first individual client cases and files were opened. Our 24-hour hotline was transferred to volunteers' homes and back to the office by on-call CADV members. Support groups opened and systems advocacy was initiated.

In 1982, we secured our first state funds through the Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Staff grew and our offices moved again, this time into space in the Catholic Charities building. Because safe shelter is such a priority, we reached out for assistance and received a generous commitment from the Junior Welfare Association, who paid the rent for a full year on an apartment that served as our first actual shelter space. On the second floor of an older home, it was a confidential location and could accommodate a family or 1-2 women at a time.

In 1984, we made another big move: this time into our first building to serve as shelter and work space, allowing 24-hour staff on site and several desks and phones. Still a secret location, this shelter at 312 S. Edward Street, served us well for more than three years. Needing an office open to the public for legal advocacy and counseling, we again found ourselves at the YWCA. Our office on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor was small but three legal advocates worked from there for three years. To say that it was not quite accessible to everyone was an understatement! When we remember the trips up and down those steps, we realize how much younger we were.

1985 was a great year for us. A new program director was hired. Barb Mills arrived to shepherd us forward. By 1986, the program was earning a reputation for excellent victim services and strong court and law enforcement advocacy. As many of you know, Barb led the program until 1998, when cancer claimed her life.

The moving stopped in 1987 when Dove moved all staff and offices into a shelter at the former St. James Convent on East Clay Street. Services have expanded to include drug and alcohol education, parenting support, legal advocacy, information and referrals and staffed offices in DeWitt, Moultrie and Shelby Counties.

~Cluney John

**From December 2005 *Dove Tales***

The second half of the 1980's was a period of significant growth. After passing through a critical period, Dove spread its wings in many directions – facilities, structure, financial systems, community visibility, geographic area, and reaching out to other agencies locally and nationally.

By 1985 Dove was at a crossroads. Long-time program directors Ann Clements and Pat Curley, who provided masterful leadership to the RSVP, Youth and VISTA programs, left for new careers elsewhere. Dove had long since outgrown its space; it was located in five different locations, all cramped and inadequate. Gut-wrenching internal conflicts led to reorganizing the Youth Program and separating the local sexual assault program from Dove's control.

In early 1986 Ray and Nancy Jo Batman were persuaded to return to Decatur from an eight-year sabbatical in Effingham County. Their first assignment was to create a structure for community support. Ray took on the job of creating a sustainable fundraising effort, and Nancy took control of the moribund newsletter. Their work bore fruit that feeds the organization to this day.

Dove leaders searched for property to replace the office on East Locust and the deteriorating domestic violence shelter on South Edward, and they viewed dozens of unsuitable dogs. At the suggestion of Sr. Glenda Bourgeois, they took a peek at the vacant St. James Convent on East Clay and instantly fell in love with it. Being a great delegater, the then-executive director asked Ray to launch a capital campaign to purchase and renovate the 10,000-square-foot facility. In short order the money was raised, and Dove moved most of its operations onto Clay Street (The former Youth Program, rechristened as the Community Services Program, remained on Locust Street for a few more years).

Bucking the trend of domestic-violence providers at the time, Dove widely publicized the location of its new shelter. As a result, the DV program grew exponentially to meet the need: the numbers of women and children served soared, and a project for abusers was added to the mix. Many in the community thought that Dove was only a DV program (“I know the D stands for domestic and the V for violence,” we often heard. “But what do the O and E stand for?”).

In view of the rapid ascendancy of the DV program, it was a constant challenge to assure staff and volunteers in other programs that they were incredibly important to the community and to the organization. The Community Services Program began the grinding task of developing neighborhood groups, and it succeeded far beyond any late-80's dream. RSVP's Recycling Center became a mainstay of the tree-hugging crowd, and the program developed award-winning intergenerational projects. The surviving “Core Programs” from the 70's (Mother-to-Mother, PreSchool and the Clothing Room) continued to flourish under the care of Sue Simcox.

When Dove commemorated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1990, it was on another growth spurt. It purchased the former Catholic Credit Union building adjacent to the convent, making room for Community Services and a Finance Department (now headed by Ray Batman), and opened a satellite DV office in Clinton.

For the first time the organization began intentionally building formal associations with similar groups. At the local level Dove took a lead role in the formation of the Human Service Agency Consortium, a still-thriving association of all local social service organizations. And on the national scene Dove was instrumental in the formation of the Interfaith Community Ministry Network, which linked local faith-based organizations.

~Fred Spannaus (Executive Director of Dove, 1988 - 1997)

**From January 2006 Dove Tales**

"In the early 1990's a friendly, caring, young woman named, Linda Staff came to Clinton, working for Dove, Inc. I was employed by the DeWitt County Human Resource Center, when Linda arrived, Dove had rented an office from the Center for a Dove base. The office was small but Linda looked at it like it was a palace. Linda was from Decatur, Illinois and did not know her way around Clinton, so I took her around to help her get acquainted.

Linda was a real collector, of items she perceived could be used by women or children escaping an abusive situation, and soon her office had boxes and supplies stacked shoulder high on 2 walls. She also confided in me that she got lost every time she got a block off of the Clinton Square. Linda often baked on the week-end or at night and brought some of the goodies in for us to sample, she always said she couldn't cook but she loved to bake, always doubting it was any good. When Victory Baptist Chapel in Clinton sold their building they gave a lot of things to Dove out of the parsonage, Linda was delighted to receive the items knowing someone would need them sooner or later.

Linda had a caring heart and worked hard to fit into the community and develop Dove programs and it did grow and she and Dove moved on to a new location downtown. Linda became special to a lot of people in Clinton and is still a friend to this writer. We need more caring people like Linda Staff who will reach out to the less fortunate, and Dove did, they found Rita Etherton."  
~Myra Stroud, (of Clinton) a friend of Linda and Rita

"My very 1<sup>st</sup> client I advocated for at Dove, asked me to be her 'coach' when she delivered her child. This was a very exciting experience to take part in the miracle of birth, supporting my client."

"I remember being cautious when going into Barb Mills' office, never knowing if she had her two cockatiels out of their cages. They would sit on Barb's shoulders and peck at her jewelry she was wearing. If the birds were feeling energetic, they would fly out into the reception area, causing some of us to run and hide as we batted our arms in the air!"

~Two of many memories from Teri Ducey, Domestic Violence Program Director

**From February 2006 *Dove Tales***

I remember when I started working at Dove. I felt like I finally found my niche. Becoming a Community Organizer seemed so right. I was already doing the work in my own neighborhood on a volunteer basis and having a wonderful time. Now to get a salary for the same thing, was intoxicating. I found the quarters were cramped but adequate. Co-workers were helpful and a joy to be around. Dove, Inc. felt like being “welcomed home” every morning when you came to work. Three months later Community Services and BABES moved into what had become “Building C”. We had space and we had our own building to house our departments, we were set. Things were moving right along with workable and usable space. I took the position of Director of Community Services which meant I had my own office. Things couldn’t get much better than this, I thought. Then the RSVP Children’s Clothing Room moved into the basement! That proved to be a good fit too, with all of us working together in our offices, and clothing room that once served as someone’s home. It was cozy and welcoming. We were moving right along, with all departments at Dove utilizing the entire space in one way or another.

Well, that came to an abrupt halt on June 17, 2003 when a fire broke out in our precious Building C. The Children’s Clothing Room had to close, Community Services went back to Building B, and we made the best of cramped quarters. When we were given the go ahead to look for a more suitable home we were elated! Lo and behold we quickly found 702 E. Wood St. which was within walking distance to Building B! Seemed like a good fit! When we moved, RSVP and BABES decided to move with us and that also seemed like a good fit. Our new home and family fit well into the 702 building, as if we were meant to be here. And that is where you will find Community Services, BABES, and RSVP today. Just call us, you’ll know exactly who is there!

~Francie Johnson, Community Services Director

**From March 2006 *Dove Tales***

#### Reflection of the Christmas Basket Drive

Every year I am overwhelmed with the generosity of our community during the Christmas Basket Drive. Each year we are seeing an increase in the numbers of families needing our help and through a good deal of faith, the outpouring of donations keeps pace with our demand for toys and food every year. Numerous groups step up to the plate to purchase toys and food for our families to make sure they have a family Christmas worth remembering. Which brings to mind something that happened in 2003 that warmed my heart. We had a donation from a Mother that talked to her twins about their birthday party. Together they decided to ask the twins' friends to bring a toy for the children we serve, instead of gifts for their birthday. From that party alone we received two garbage sacks full of toys! When informed about where the toys were going, some of the children brought two & three extra gifts! Generosity such as this is what makes us realize how blessed we are when even young children in our community are being taught to think of others.

~Francie Johnson, Community Services Director

#### Reflections on Youth Democracy Day

On May 11, 2005, 2,200 youth, ages 10 - 21, and caring adults from throughout Illinois converged on the Illinois State Capitol for the first Youth Democracy Day, an educational and civic engagement project designed to help youth experience and learn about democracy in action. This event was sponsored by the Chicago Area Projects and the Illinois Council of Area Projects. They brought together these youth from more than 45 CAP and ICAP affiliated community organizations from north, central, and southern Illinois. All of the participants wore white tee-shirts with the state seal on the front and stating why they were at the Capitol, on the back. We were amazed at the massive sea of white shirts on the east steps of the Capitol, and those that spilled over into the blocked off street. The weather was extremely hot and humid that day, but the young people stood proud, representing their perspective cities and programs. The youth delegation from various Area Projects had an opportunity to meet their state representatives and senators face to face and advocate for issues that are important to them and their home communities. Community Services / Decatur Area Project Board took eight youth, from our neighborhoods, to participate in this event, which is on its way to becoming an annual event. Rep. Bob Flider took time out of his busy day to have a very informative meeting with the youth delegation from Decatur and answer their questions. Many of the youth have studied the Illinois Constitution in school and now had a chance to see first hand how this constitution works on the legislative level. They brought their concerns to the table and asked, "What about us?" Some of the issues the youth of our state are concerned about include obtaining resources to support youth-oriented activities, after-school initiatives, community service projects, juvenile justice, work experience, innovative educational programs, civic and government engagement projects, health education, life skills, and multi-cultural understanding initiatives. Youth Democracy Day emphasizes and recognizes young people as resources and partners in building a brighter future for all of our citizens. Making the Youth Democracy Day an annual event will help develop the next generation of educated voters and community leaders in Illinois.

~Francie Johnson, Community Services Director

#### **From April 2006 *Dove Tales***

Last month's Dove Tales ended seven months of reflecting back on the 35 year history of Dove. The history of Dove is stories of people. People wanting to share and make a difference in their community. People wanting to help others out of overwhelming and difficult situations. People wanting to make things better for their neighborhoods. Thanks to everyone who shared a story. Thanks to everyone who has been a part of the story.

#### **From May 2006 *Dove Tales***