



In the News

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File photo by Brent Engel, Public Relations Officer

Ring-a-ding-ding

NECAC is getting ready for the Salvation Army bell ringing fund-raiser. Pictured is Randolph County Intake Assistant Tifanie Anthes ringing at the Moberly Walmart during a previous campaign. Story on Page 3.

NECAC touts successes at Annual Meeting



**Dan Page,
President and CEO**



**Mike Bridgins,
Board Chairman**



**Charles McCann,
Installing Officer**

NECAC held its Annual Meeting and Installation of Officers and Directors Dinner on Oct. 28.

NECAC President and Chief Executive Officer Dan Page gave an update on significant progress made during the year and offered praise to board members, staff and volunteers. The agency is celebrating its 60th anniversary in 2025.

For the coming year, Page said "financial health remains a goal" and that he wants to "continue to strengthen" the board.

"While today's meeting is a time of celebration, and we should celebrate the wins, it doesn't mean there aren't difficult days ahead," Page noted. "I trust I can depend on each of you to support my efforts as the entire NECAC staff and I take this agency forward."

Mike Bridgins of St. Charles County was re-installed as board chairman, with Glenn Eagan of Shelby County as vice-chairman and Lowell Jackson of Ralls County as secretary. Trustees are Troy Dawkins of Shelby County, Curtissa Kerr-Hunter of Lincoln County and Mickey Shipp of Macon County.

The guest speaker was Community Action pioneer Charles McCann of St. Joseph, former director of the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) with the Missouri Department of Social Services and a Certified Community Action Professional (CCAP) with the National Community Action Partnership.

McCann, who performed the installation ceremony, has a national reputation for excellence in the Community Action movement. After more than 50 years of service, he is still offering his assistance.

"You have the elements of success – leadership, dedication and compassion," McCann said. "What you do is really, really important."

Also sworn in were the following board members:

Lewis County: Craig Redmon and Simon Thrower.

Lincoln County: Matt Bass and Jere Burkemper.

Macon County: Matt Shoemaker and Jean Jones.

Marion County: David Lomax, Jim Miller and Roy Hark.

Monroe County: David Hays, Tonya Pryor and Harold Long.

Montgomery County: Dave Teeter, Mike Dorlac and Carole Weeks.

Pike County: Tommy Wallace, Lori Smith and Curt Mitchell.

Ralls County: John Wieczorek and Janet Hoyt.

Randolph County: Jason Lowry, Lorna Miles and Mahala Dixon.

Shelby County: Melissa Killen.

St. Charles County: Alex Reichert and Diane Hileman.

Warren County: Fred Vahle, Mary VanBibber and Angie Light.

Board members recognized at Annual Meeting

In addition to being sworn in for the coming year, NECAC Board Members were recognized Oct. 28 by President and Chief Executive Officer Dan Page and Board Chairman Mike Bridgins with certificates for their years of service. Randolph County Board Members Jason Lowry, Lorna Miles and Mahala Dixon were unable to attend.



Lewis County: Simon Thrower.
Not pictured: Craig Redmon.



Lincoln County: Jere Burkemper, Curtissa Kerr-Hunter and Matt Bass.



Macon County: Jean Jones and Mickey Shipp. Not pictured: Matt Shoemaker.



Marion County: Roy Hark, David Lomax and Jim Miller.



Monroe County: Harold Long. Not pictured: David Hays and Tonya Pryor.



Montgomery County: Dave Teeter. Not pictured: Mike Dorlac and Carole Weeks.



Pike County: Curt Mitchell, Lori Smith and Tommy Wallace.



Ralls County: Janet Hoyt, Lowell Jackson and John Wiczorek.



Shelby County: Melissa Killen and Glenn Eagan. Not pictured: Troy Dawkins.



St. Charles County: Diane Hileman. Not pictured: Alex Reichert.



Warren County: Mary VanBibber and Angie Light. Not pictured: Fred Vahle.



Board Chairman Mike Bridgins highlighted the lives and accomplishments of Shelby County Board Member Glenn Eagan and Lincoln County Board Member Jere Burkemper during the Annual Meeting. Bridgins started the recognition two years ago as a way of helping other board members learn about their colleagues.

Shutdown raises concerns at depleted pantry

Demand is outpacing supply at the NECAC Ralls County Food Pantry, and the federal government shutdown has not helped.

The agency is seeking donations to help offset increased use of the facility. Ralls County Service Coordinator Crystal Bliss has seen an increase of 20 to 30 families seeking help in the last month.

"Clients are worried about putting food on the table," she said. "So, they're trying to decide what they're going to spend their money on. Is it bills or food? Is it house payments or food?"

The Ralls County Food Pantry accepts nonperishable canned goods and boxed dinners, but also has refrigeration and freezer space to take non-perishables such as meat and dairy. Bliss said contributions are coming in slowly.

Meanwhile, NECAC Service Centers in Marion, Montgomery and Pike counties are accepting non-perishables. The agency also has food available to clients in Monroe, Randolph, Shelby and St. Charles counties. In other locations, clients are referred to organizations that offer food distribution.



By Brent Engel, Public Relations Officer
NECAC Ralls County Service Coordinator Crystal Bliss looks over a nearly-empty meat freezer.

Counties gear up for bell ringing campaign

Several counties in NECAC's service area are getting ready to help coordinate Salvation Army Red Bucket bell ringing campaigns.

In Pike County, volunteers are being sought from Nov. 17 to Dec. 24 at the Bowling Green Walmart and at the County Market grocery in Louisiana.

"The Salvation Army has enabled me to be able to help a broader scope of people in need," said NECAC Pike County



File photo by Brent Engel
NECAC Pike County Board Member Curt Mitchell contributes during last year's Salvation Army Red Kettle campaign.

Service Coordinator Penny Dixon. "The needs pop up in the most unexpected times. Anything from water bills, utility deposits, people traveling that have run into issues or even foster families that have had problems in their households. The biggest need we have is for volunteers. Without them we will not have these funds to help people."

Randolph County volunteers will ring from Nov. 15 to Dec. 18 at Walmart, Bratchers Market and Westlake Ace Hardware in Moberly.

"Red Kettle Bell Ringing through Salvation Army is a great way to give back to your community, whether it be through volunteering your time for a two-hour shift to ring the bell or making a donation," said NECAC's Tiffanie Anthes. "Every bell rung spreads a little holiday cheer to those in need!"

NECAC does not oversee the program in Lincoln County, but staff from there will ring at the Troy Kroger from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Dec. 4.



By Brent Engel, Public Relations Officer
Bowling Green Mayor Jim Arico seeks help from NECAC's Tina Alvarez during an Oct. 16 poverty simulation

Simulation is an eye-opener

Pike County community leaders and business people took a walk in someone else's shoes for a few hours on Oct. 16.

NECAC staged a poverty simulation at Second Baptist Church in Bowling Green. The activity forces participants to deal with barely being able to scrape by from week to week.

"This was a unique, interactive way to deepen understanding of the realities that many families face each day," said NECAC Pike County Service Coordinator Penny Dixon. "It was an opportunity to help make a difference in the lives of our neighbors."

For Bowling Green Mayor Jim Arico, the message came through clearly. He discussed the experience in his weekly column for The Pike County News. Arico portrayed a 40-year-old single man with a 20-year-old daughter, a nine-year-old challenged son and a young granddaughter.

"Even though I was role playing, the impact of my frustration was extremely demoralizing, and I lost all self-esteem," he wrote, adding that over the course of the two-hour event he "became bitter, not better."

Arico said the simulation reinforced his belief that it's "good to help those in need."

Weatherization is showcased



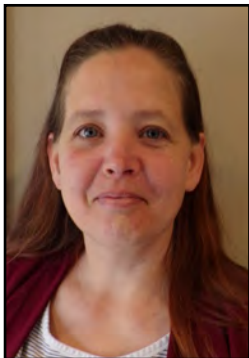
By Brent Engel, Public Relations Officer

Lawmakers, stakeholders and the media got a chance to see the benefits of weatherization during October. NECAC showcased the program at the Linda and Jerry Lillard home in Hannibal, left. At right, NECAC Weatherization Crew Leader Kenny Chastain cuts insulation sealant for placement at the home of Vincent Valenti in O'Fallon. Aimee Gendusa-English of the National Community Action Partnership was among those who got a first-hand look at the work. "NECAC is one of our leading weatherization providers," she said. State Rep. Mark Matthiesen, R-107, of O'Fallon, said weatherization makes sense. "Lately, we've seen utility bills get higher and higher," he said. "And, if the first step — an affordable step — is helping people winterize their homes to make sure they're not losing that energy that they're paying for to heat or cool their homes, it just helps every homeowner save money that they need to put for other uses, like food or medicine."



Employee Spotlight:

Ellis knows what clients are going through



Ellis

Empathy is vital if NECAC is to help clients.

Housing Assistance Counselor Stacy Ellis can relate to those who seek services because, as a mother of five, she's been there herself.

"I like working at NECAC because I like to help people and have been in the same place as the people I help at one point in my life," she said. "I know how it feels to struggle to provide for my family."

In her job, Ellis is keenly aware of America's housing crisis.

"My position is important because I am a guide to navigating a complex system for those who need affordable housing," she said. "I help individuals and families find and secure housing and maintain long-term housing stability. Affordable housing, good living conditions and availability are what we need to see more of as a whole for everyone."

A home is more than just a place of shelter. Where we live influences every aspect of our lives."

Ellis is gratified when clients "achieve housing stability and use it as a foundation for self-sufficiency and improved" lives.

"I think part of what makes us human is the desire to help others and be seen as useful," she said. "It is not uncommon to want to repay the help we have received."

Book donation aids literacy effort

The Maurices women's clothing store of Hannibal donated more than 1,000 books to NECAC on Nov. 4.

The agency is partnering with Mission 180 to distribute items, which were donated over the last month by Maurices' customers. The collection includes stories for all ages and interests. Pictured loading the books, from front to back, are NECAC's Carly Lambert and Stephanie Dunker, and Maurices store manager Rhonda Fortmann.



By Brent Engel, Public Relations Officer

Monroe hours reduced

The NECAC Monroe County Service Center at 314 N. Washington in Paris will be open Tuesdays only until further notice.

Hours will be 8 a.m. to noon and 12:30 to 4:30. Walk-ins will be accepted and the facility's food pantry will be available. Shelby County Service Coordinator Lisa Blickhan is staffing the facility.

At other times, clients who call the office at 660-327-4110 will be referred to the service center closest to the area in which they live.

NECAC announced in September that it was temporarily closing the Monroe County facility due to a manpower shortage.



Mike Bridgins,
Chairman of the Board



Dan Page,
President & CEO



NECAC is contractually required to publish the following: "This program is funded 100% at \$100 with federal funds received from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as provided by the Missouri Department of Social Services, Family Support Division."