

ACCESS HISTORY



In 1971, a Loaves & Fishes Program for seniors and shut-ins was started to provide nutritious meals to needy seniors. The program was located in the kitchen of the First United Methodist Church in Medford. The church approved a contract allowing the use of the kitchen and dining room rent-free. But, as state funding became available the church accepted contributions towards the utilities. At its start up 50 meals were prepared each day and any food leftovers were delivered to shut-ins.

The program soon outgrew the church and had received state funding. A new central kitchen and office space was secured at the Herb & Ned's Market on the corner of Almond and East main in Medford. This building was leased and remodeled from money budgeted in the \$221,506 grant proposal approved through the Oregon State Program on Aging. At this new location, 225 meals a day were being prepared for eight congregate meal sites and 65 meals per day were being delivered to shut-ins.

June 1, 1976 — The birth of ACCESS, Inc.

The Rogue Valley Council on Aging (RVCA) was the responsible agency for services to senior citizens. The organization is now known as Rogue Valley Council of Governments (RVCOG). As more program related services came into being, RVCA decided to form a new non-profit to help alleviate some of they're growing responsibilities to seniors. Thus, ACCESS was formed on June 1, 1976.

The articles of corporation were written with ACCESS standing for the following:
Aging Community Coordinated Enterprises & Supportive Services, Inc.

In the original articles, the purpose of ACCESS was "To design and carry out programs of social service to ameliorate disadvantageous circumstances of life encountered by elderly persons in Jackson County, Oregon, and to address particularly the unmet needs of low-income and poor elderly persons; and for these purposes, to engage in lawful activity, none of which is for profit, for which corporations may be organized under ORS Chapter 61."

RVCA would continue to operate the Enid Rankin Senior Center and be for social activities for the seniors.

In 1976, ACCESS leased office space from RVCA and moved into the Enid Rankin Neighborhood Facility to delivered supportive services to the senior citizens. The same staff employed by RVCA continued to serve under ACCESS.

As ACCESS served clients, the organization worked with new partners. The Enid Rankin Neighborhood Facility could now provide rides in two buses courtesy of Boise Cascade

and Wood Products. They gave one bus and provided \$2500 towards the purchase of another one.

In 1977, ACCESS moved to its second location. The Intermediate Education District (IED) subleased to ACCESS, Inc. the use of the former Jackson County Nursing Home in Talent. This facility was used to prepare meals for Loaves & Fishes. The new location provided the work shop and materials location for Project Warm.

In 1980, ACCESS programs included: Wood Program (delivering up to 200 cords of wood a season); Information & Referral; Outreach; Weatherization; and Job Programs.

The Low Income Energy Assistance Program began in 1981. This federal program allowed low-income families in Jackson County to receive financial help for their winter heating bills. Payments varied from \$105 to \$240 depending on household size and income levels. In 1982, 4,200 households in Jackson County received assistance.

The beginnings of food pantries in Jackson County started out as cheese giveaways in the early 1980s. The Ben Cheney Foundation granted ACCESS \$23,230 to set up a food warehousing and distributing program in Jackson County. In 1982, ACCESS became the Regional Coordinating Agency for emergency food distribution from Oregon Food Share.

The ACCESS Medical Equipment Program began with \$20,000 Community Service Block Grant start up money with the goal of becoming self-sustaining.

In 1985 ACCESS became the Community Action Agency (CAA) for Jackson County after receiving the endorsement of Jackson County's Commissioners. The board modified the by-laws to include elected public officials, low income and business partners in their make-up.

A Community Action Agency is an organization created by the federal government to combat poverty in geographically designated areas. CAAs are designated to promote the participation of the entire community in the reduction or elimination of poverty. The goal is to "help people to help themselves" achieve self-sufficiency. From its roots in the 1964 "war on poverty" to its current goal of providing a hand up, not a hand out, the philosophy of eliminating "the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty" remains the key concept that motivates CAAs today.

In 1991, the ACCESS offices were housed on Hawthorne Street in Medford next to the American Red Cross building. In 1994, the organization purchased the Vendall building and lot next door. It was appraised at \$680,000.

In 1992, the Housing Department was created. It became part of the Community Development Corp. In 1996, Barnett Townhomes was created to provide 82 units of affordable housing.

In 1994, ACCESS became the official Southern Oregon sponsor of Junior Achievement (JA). This program partners with local businesses and community volunteers to deliver economic and business programs to over 5000 kids in the Rogue Valley each year. JA brings the real world to students, opening their minds to their potential.

The Talent kitchen had closed and all the Loaves & Fishes meals were being prepared in Josephine County and brought to Medford each day. There was a need for a large commercial kitchen to be built.

In early 1998, ACCESS hired Shaw & Snow & Associates to conduct a capital campaign for a new central kitchen. The campaign raised \$2.1 million and ground was broken for the new Community Kitchen next to the main ACCESS building in winter of 1998. No federal or state monies were used.

The kitchen opened in May of 2000, and the building was officially named and dedicated in 2002 in honor of the Olsrud family. The official name is the Olsrud Family Nutrition Center.

Also in 2000, Sherm and Wanda Olsrud responded to the holiday need for emergency food by donating a truckload with over 35,000 pounds of food. The Olsrud Family, including Steve and Linda Olsrud, continue this annual tradition.

In 2002, ACCESS purchased the Lear Way building for \$725,000. This building is currently used by the weatherization and energy programs. It was that same year that the organization was the recipient of the generosity of Boise in the donation of the refrigerated truck for a new Food Rescue Program.

In 2015, ACCESS served the following low income families and individuals, seniors, and people with disabilities:

- 257 families with weatherization services
- 6,395 households, representing over 16,000 individuals, with energy assistance
- 989 families with rental assistance for housing
- 8,656 families with food assistance
- 339 seniors & people with disabilities with outreach & referral services
- 3,000 people who borrowed medical equipment

ACCESS was chosen as one of the 24 non-profit agencies in 15 communities in the United States for the shared award of nearly \$93 million in Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF). ACCESS was awarded a grant of 2 million dollars a year for 3 years to help veterans

In Jackson County alone, the Department of Veteran Affairs expects the total homeless veteran population to rise from 241 to 462 if nothing is done to help them.

The Department of Veterans Affairs is committed to using SSVF to prevent homelessness and produce successful outcomes for Veterans and their families. This is a program that works, because it allows VA staff and local homeless service providers to work together to effectively address the unique challenges that make it difficult for some Veterans and their families to remain stably housed.

ACCESS is fortunate to have this opportunity to work with our community and help get Veteran families off the streets and into a home. With this funding we have an opportunity to make a huge difference in their lives.