Kevin Adee/Terry Murray, 1st Vice-Chairperson
Public Official

Thomas Bakk
Public Official

Helen Budisalovich
Community Sector

Marcia Campbell, 2nd Vice-Chairperson
Private Sector

Thomas Cvar, Treasurer
Private Sector

Kristine Edstrom
Community Sector

Mike Forsman
Public Official

Sue Hakes/Jan Hall
Public Official

Julie Hejny
Community Sector

Lorraine Hill
Community Sector

Jeremy Hurd/Brad Jones
Public Official

Jeff Kletscher, Secretary
Public Official

Bob Larkin
Private Sector

Andra Lilienthal
Community Sector

Mark Mandich
Public Official

Cherie Averill Manner
Private Sector

Lisa Mount
Community Sector

Keith Nelson, St. Louis County Alternate
Public Official

Donald Niemi
Public Official

Les Northrup
Private Sector

Laura Perry
Private Sector

Thomas Proulx
Public Official

Steve Raukar, Chairperson
Public Official

Nathan Sager
Private Sector

Peter Schneider
Community Sector

Pete Stauber
Public Official

James Varichak
Private Sector

Dana Waldron
Private Sector

Isabelle Westman
Community Sector

AEOA strengthens communities by providing opportunities for people experiencing social and economic challenges

ARROWHEAD ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AGENCY
2014 ANNUAL BUDGET
TOTAL ANNUAL BUDGET AS OF 6-30-14 = $31,970,053

“Unfortunately, many Americans live on the outskirts of hope—some because of their poverty and some because of their color and all too many because of both. Our task is to help replace their despair with opportunity.”—LBJ State of the Union Address, 1964

Winning the War on Poverty. According to State Demographer, Susan Bower, “No question, there has been significant progress in reducing poverty in Minnesota. Across the state, the poverty rate overall is 11%—almost half what it was in 1960 at 21%. One of the biggest beneficiaries…has been the 65-and-older group: poverty among older Minnesotans dropped from 39% to 8%.”—Cynthia Boyd for MinnPost (4/30/14).

50 Years of Community Action
A high school drop-out and faced with on-going emotional abuse, I left home at 17. I got into drugs and drinking. In 1981, I met my husband, Ray. Ray’s family background was similar to mine. Neither of us really knew how to be parents, but we loved our kids and kept them fed and clean. Neither of us wanted them to experience childhood like we did.

Following a pre-school screening, Jacob, my oldest son, was referred to Head Start. He had some speech problems and gross motor delays. Parents are expected to volunteer in Head Start. I was shy and anxious around people and had to have my three-year-old, Quentin, in tow. Both the teacher and the assistant encouraged me. They helped me feel like I had something worthwhile to say and do with the children. When some of the children responded positively toward me, I felt great. I got so hooked on volunteering that I was in the classroom every day for the next three and-a-half years.

During those years, I attended workshops and improved my knowledge of child development. I became a Policy Council representative. In 1990, with the help of Head Start, I earned my GED and began to think about going back to work. I didn’t want to give up my volunteering at Head Start. In the spring of 1991, a Head Start aide job opened up. I applied and was hired. While working for Head Start, I earned my Second Setting Child Development Associate (CDA) Certificate as an Infant/Toddler Teacher in 2002. I am still a Toddler Teacher today.

I have 27 years of Head Start experience. For 23 of those years, I have been a Head Start employee. Jacob and Quentin are very successful young men. Both joined the Navy. Jacob is out of the service and going to the University of Minnesota, Duluth, for his masters in business and getting a degree in chemical engineering. Quentin is still in the Navy, a Communications Officer, First Class Petty, on a submarine. He has three wonderful children and a great wife. Head Start changed my whole life and the lives of my family. Head Start helped our family realize the difference we can make in the world.

**From Head Start Mom to Head Start Employee—“We Owe All of This to the ‘Head Start’ My Whole Family Received”—Deb Fort**

At the beginning of the year, Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency (AEOA) and KOOTASCA Community Action entered into a unique partnership for shared services, culminating in common Executive Director services. AEOA and KOOTASCA had entered into this partnership after an on-going basis of evolving need. This partnership began in 2013 with sharing the delivery of Housing services and continued with the joining of AEOA’s Financial Services Department. This multi-layered partnership has allowed both organizations to maintain their identities, while enjoying the benefits of a “non-merge.” This partnership has allowed for increased service provision through both AEOA’s and KOOTASCA’s service regions, while reducing administrative and other staff costs utilized to enhance the Community Action mission. For this partnership, AEOA was given a “Promising Practice” award from MinnCAP.

**Promising Practice—A Partnership to Share Costs and Maintain Services**

The Minnesota State Legislature approved $3 million in bonding for the first phase of the AEOA and Range Mental Health Center (RMHC) state-of-the-art human service facility to be built in the city of Virginia. St. Louis County sponsored the request and is the recipient of the funds because State bonding requires a public entity to receive the award. AEOA and RMHC serve thousands of people across northeastern Minnesota each year and represent the largest non-governmental human service delivery systems in the Arrowhead Region. The new facility will serve as a regional hub, built for the community, fostering innovation and consolidating services.

**$3 Million in State Bonding Money to Support AEOA and Range Mental Health Center Facility**

"We have a corroding plumbing system. We have a patchwork electrical system. We have computer cable strung like Christmas lights throughout the building."

—Excerpt from Harlan Tardy’s Comments to Minnesota House of Representatives Bonding Committee

As a grantee of MNSure and the BlueCross and BlueShield Foundation of Minnesota, AEOA was the lead organization in Community Action regional efforts to help uninsured Minnesotans enroll in health care coverage. In the MNSure effort alone, over 1,000 people were helped from December, 2013, through June, 2014.

Emily and her husband have three children and have been without health insurance for a number of years. "I am so excited that my children will finally be able to see a doctor—not only if they are sick, but for well child check-ups too."

**AEOA Leads Regional Community Action Coalition Assisting Minnesotans to Access Health Care Coverage**