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SHORT HISTORY OF ELM CITY CENTER

By
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Elm City Center began in 1959 when Robert Manlove, a counselor with the Illinois Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, met with Jacksonville educators Robert Blazier and Harry Emerick. They began to plan to rehabilitate people toward community living. Soon Jackie Hanback joined in working with them. From their discussions came the concept of the Elm City Center we know today.

By using volunteers and school classrooms during the summer, they began teaching vocational and daily living skills to 8 individuals. We became a 501(c)3 organization on May 27 1971.

In 1959 the first space was rented above the Times Theater. There were many moves until in 1974, the City Council voted \$40,000 in revenue sharing funds for Elm City to buy the WJY TV building on West Walnut. Today, Elm City sits on 14.5 acres with approximately 100,000 square feet under cover.

The Social Center was originally on East State Street but in 1995 the Illinois Power Building was purchased. In 1998, the Social Center was named for Clyde L. York, a long time supporter and member of the Board. The Social Center was open Monday – Friday in the evenings. Individuals could go to cooking class, play bingo on Wednesday nights, watch TV, play pool, use the computers, exercise, do crafts, play cards or board games. Staff was on duty to serve drinks and free meals were offered several times a month. Recently, because of the governor's indecisive budget we had to close the Social Center. It is our hope to reopen soon on a limited basis.

Morgan County Housing has 3 brick homes and a 10 unit apartment complex that were especially built for Elm City Center Individuals. We also work with people who have their own apartments throughout Jacksonville.

In 2012 we opened our first CILA residential program for people who moved from JDC once it closed. We currently have two more homes getting ready to open. Our plan is purchase 2 additional homes in 2014, for a total of 5 homes.

The Main campus houses the offices, warehouse, docks, vocational training and classrooms. There are several training kitchens where individuals can learn cooking

skills to help them live independently in the community. Vocational training is an important part of training for our individuals and one they enjoy the most. We contract with area businesses to provide paid work and a paycheck for our individuals. The products we assemble for them are sold throughout North America. People are taught appropriate work habits including: appropriate dress, proper procedures for calling in, putting in for time off, appropriate break room behavior, quality assurance of product, and work skills needed to complete a variety of tasks. They have the opportunity to learn to bale, mow, janitorial skills, collate product, shrink wrap, shred paperwork, etc.

In the classrooms individuals learn academic, social, leisure, communication, and independent living skills. Volunteering is something most of our individuals like to do. It helps to improve their self-esteem, teaches them to give back to the community and involves them in the community in a positive way. We have had several 4H groups, involved yearly in the Morgan County Fair, an active Aktion Club, several Relay for Life Teams, our individuals bag the sand for the Relay for Life luminaria's, Salvation Army bell ringers, involvement in hat and diaper making for overseas, sending packages to soldiers, gathering food for the food bank, decorating trees for Festival of Trees, making blankets, raising money for the Raptor Center and gathering school supplies for those in need. We are very proud of our Volunteer efforts by our Individuals and by the Staff.

In 50 years, the Center has only had 3 Executive Directors – Mr. Perry Hensley for 1966 – 1968, Ms Betty J. Teaford from 1969 – 2001 (was Administrative Assistance to Hensley from 1968 – 1969), and our current Director Tom Frederick who began in July 2001 and continues to this day.

We have many people to Thank for making Elm City Center what it is today: First off Robert Manlove, Robert Blazier, Harry Emerick and Jackie Hanback for their vision in getting Elm City Center started.

In 1968 and 1969 when payroll required borrowing money, Mr. Arthur French, who was head of Farmer's State Bank, was there helping, encouraging and supporting the Center.

The Cody family for years at Christmas time had a party for our Individuals. They served drinks and cookies, sang carols and even had Santa. This was an event our individuals really looked forward to. Their continued involvement in the Center is greatly appreciated.

Every year we have a golf tournament to benefit the Social Center. The golfers who continue to return every year, the businesses that support us by being hole sponsors, towel sponsors or prize donators are all greatly appreciated. We couldn't do it without them.