

CHANGE Inc. of Weirton celebrates 25 years

WEIRTON — CHANGE Inc. will be celebrating 25 years of service in 2008.

This community action agency was founded in 1983 with the goal of helping individuals in need become self sufficient. Since its start, CHANGE Inc. has continued to serve residents of Hancock, Brooke, Ohio, and Marshall counties with a variety of community programs. It has also adopted several federal programs which are accessible by Ohio and Pennsylvania residents, allowing the agency to play an active role throughout the Tri-State Area.

Chief Executive Officer Judy Raveaux stated CHANGE Inc.'s Health Care Center provides medical service to anyone regardless of residence, insurance level or income. She also noted the agency provides domestic violence services

which include a shelter as well as an advocacy program aimed towards removing individuals from violent situations.

Raveaux reported the agency also has an After School Center for children ages 5 to 15. This operates from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. on school days and is located at the CHANGE Inc. office on West Street. According to Raveaux, this program has activities as well as homework help for children while providing them with a safe environment following school.

Joyce DeStefano, the housing program supervisor for CHANGE Inc., listed several home loan programs offered by the agency. The first is the On Site loan program. This provides funding for repairing and replacing septic tanks.

DeStefano stated there was also a HELP loan which

yielded a 3 percent interest over an eight year period.

"This goes toward fixing life threatening situations," she said. "Funds can repair items such as poor roofing, bad electrical work, and faulty plumbing or foundation work as well as other issues that pose immediate safety concerns."

In addition to these loans, she reported there was a First Time Homebuyers loan that provided up to \$10,000 for the purchase of a home to income eligible first-time homebuyers in Hancock and Brooke counties near the City of Weirton.

Raveaux noted that CHANGE Inc. offers transportation services for clients who need a ride to work. She stated this program also works in cooperation with transportation systems in Steubenville for the same purposes.



CHANGE Inc.'s West Street location also houses its After School Center for children ages 5 to 15. This program has activities and homework help while providing a safe environment and alternative to children being at home alone. Staff Photo