

# 'Mr. Community Action' retires

## Glenwood Tolson, 95, began serving southeast Iowa in 1965.

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MOUNT PLEASANT - After 47 years on the Southeast Iowa Community Action board of directors, Glenwood Tolson is retiring.

Henry County Supervisor Marc Lindeen said Tolson resigned at the beginning of the year.

"He said it would be impossible for him to continue on," Lindeen said.

"I've given it up because of my health and my age," Tolson said in a recent interview.

Tolson, 95, said he has health problems, although he was not specific. He said he is confined to his home.

"As we get older, we sometimes develop problems in our lives that make us stay home," Tolson said.

Community Action was developed through the directive of President Lyndon Johnson. The board consists of three elected officials, three people using the services provided by the board and three people who provide those services.

"As elected officials, we helped them out in the past," Lindeen said.

One such thing the board did was help combine all the services under one roof. Tolson worked to see that get done.

He knew the building where the Henry County branch of Southeast Iowa Community Action is currently located, which at one time was a bowling alley, was soon to become available.

Tolson approached the supervisors seeking help to acquire the building. The board purchased the building and gave it to Community Action with the stipulation it would go into the county's hands if the social services agency came to a point where it didn't need the building.

Because of Tolson's work to get the building, it was named the Tolson Community Action Center.

Lindeen said originally one of the county supervisors was to be on the Community Action board. Instead, Tolson was chosen to fill the position. But since Lindeen was on the state Community Action Board, when Tolson resigned Lindeen was the logical choice to fill the position.

Community Action includes a variety of programs, from Head Start and weatherization to energy assistance.

"The board I will serve on is in Burlington," Lindeen said. "Tolson will still sit on the local board."

Tolson was on the southeast Iowa regional board of directors for 47 years.

Southeast Iowa Community Action executive director Sharon Ford said an open house will be held in Tolson's honor in May during Community Action Week at the Tolson Community Action Center. She said this will be the first of several ways the agency will honor Tolson for his years of work.

"He has been with the agency since 1965, when we incorporated," Ford said. "We refer to Glenwood as 'Mr. Community Action.' "

Ford said Tolson represented the group in regional meetings in Kansas and Nebraska, and served as president of the Community Action Board of Directors in Des Moines. Tolson attended national conferences and received the national award for Volunteer of the Year.

"He has gone way above and beyond what most board members have," Ford said.

Ford said Tolson made a point to visit all four county offices and spend time in the classroom at the Tolson Community Action Center.

"When we had work with a project that needed to be done, he was there pitching in," Ford said.

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