

## Mr. Community Action Glenwood Tolson

After 47 years, Glenwood Tolson decided to retire from the Board of Directors of Community Action of Southeast Iowa located in Burlington Iowa. Having reached 95 years of age Glenwood decided that due to his health it was time to spend more time at his home in Mount Pleasant, Iowa.

Glenwood was a founding member of the Board of Directors of Community Action of Southeast Iowa. He has served continuously on the Board 47 years and has served as president of the Board for thirty-eight years. Glenwood was active for many years on the state committee of Community Action Board Members where he served as President for several terms. Glenwood attended many Regional, National Community Action and Head Start Conferences. The National Association awarded Glenwood the Jayne Thomas Volunteer Recognition Award in 1999.

One of the things that make Glenwood extra special is his personal involvement in helping people in need. Whenever someone was in need, he was there to help them move, find housing, paint, make repairs, provide transportation or whatever was needed. He asks nothing in return of the people he helps except that they try to help others when they are able. A lot of his volunteering goes unnoticed by others because he does it quietly, on a one to one basis.

Glenwood was instrumental in getting the Henry County Board of Supervisors in southeast Iowa to donate a building for the Community Action Neighborhood Center and two Head Start Classrooms in Mount Pleasant. He led a team of volunteers to remodel the facility twenty-seven years ago. In recognition of his commitment, the agency has named the center the Tolson Community Action Center.

At the age of 95, Glenwood is still busy. Even though he has retired from the Board of Directors he is a member of the local Community Action Advisory Committee. Glenwood not only devoted time to Community Action but is also very active in the community. He is a member of the American Legion, the Second Baptist Church as a deacon and treasurer, the local ministerial alliance and various men's prayer groups. In 1981, the Mount Pleasant Iowa Chamber of Commerce awarded him the Outstanding Citizen Award. When the award was presented to him they stated, in part, **“Although he has done so much to contribute to the community, his greatest attribute is his love—his love of the Lord and his love of people”.**

Glenwood is definitely one of a kind. He knows no stranger and treats everyone the same. As a minority citizen in a predominantly white community he has led the way to break down racial barriers. Glenwood moved to Iowa from Missouri when he was 20 years of age. He attended Iowa Wesleyan College and received a two year teaching Certificate. However, he was not allowed to teach in Iowa at that time due to his race. One of his first full time jobs was to chauffeur a Caucasian doctor. While traveling through the country he encountered discrimination and segregation. Thus he developed a commitment to treat everyone equally and with respect.

During the past 47 years it was not unusual to see Glenwood at a meeting during the day dressed in his overalls because he worked that morning and didn't have time to change. Then later that same day you would see him dressed in a suit at another event doing what he does best – making new friends.

He is definitely a role model for children and families in the community. He was married for sixty-nine years to his wife Aileen who passed in 2009. He is the proud father of four children. His interest in the agency's Head Start program reflects his philosophy that children are our future and that they need our love and guidance. Glenwood could often be found in the classroom enjoying a snack and some conversation with the children.

To sum it up, Glenwood Tolson is a great man. In Southeast Iowa we refer to him as **Mr. Community Action**. His commitment to the agency has been unconditional since its inception forty-seven years ago. However, much of his most important work goes unrecognized since it is done one on one.