

John Herman's address for European American Association's 20th Anniversary



John Herman
Founder/ Executive Director

It's hard for me to believe that 20 years has passed since I first opened the doors of European American Association (EAA).

My dream was to help people in need and without the commitment and hard work of so many cherished volunteers and exceptional people who have added their strength to the foundation of this organization EAA could never have reached the level it now enjoys.

I'm proud to say that today European American Association is an essential part of our community and consists of countless generous volunteers, a dedicated all volunteer Board of Directors, Valentin Vlad, President, Alfred Stefanovich, Secretary, Zelda Robinson, Treasurer and Ion Kerekes, Board Member. EAA currently has over 550+ wonderful employees who assist several thousand clients with Energy Assistance, Food and Senior Homecare.

Now that you know who we are today, I'd like to take a few moments to tell you how we got here and remember some of the incredible people who passed through our doors. It was their energy and dedication which continually recharged my belief that, "We can make a difference in this world" and I would like to take this time to say thank you!

In 1991 the space I envisioned as our office had been neglected for years and was in complete disarray. Thanks to the hard work of great volunteers like Alexandru Bistriean, Daniel Lela, Daniel Hanches, Ioan Curescu and others it was transformed into the headquarters of European American Association.

As I look back at the past 20 years it only feels like yesterday since my good friend, Lillian Quiles and I were working so hard to compose just the right by-laws for EAA to follow. We wrote letters, proposals and completed applications for the Greater Chicago Food Depository, LIHEAP, HUD, Illinois Department on Aging Homemaker Program and our precious 501(c)(3) Federal Tax Exempt status. I only wonder where EAA would be today without the dedication and expertise of such a devoted friend.

EAA has benefited from very committed members in the Board of Directors. One of our beginning Presidents, Florian Buchiu together with Jean Bukiu have been long time friends of EAA and have never failed to rise to whatever challenge they were given, from holding office on our volunteer Board of Directors, to running the food pantry.

Soon after we were approved for the LIHEAP program a wonderful lady and one of our first volunteers, Luminita (Cosma) Spencer had heard about EAA through her church and came to help, so we set up a desk and she began taking LIHEAP applications.

As EAA grew, I ask another good friend Marcella Wittinger to help me with some bookkeeping activities. I am happy to say that some time later Marcella became an Employee and now oversees our Bookkeeping/Human Resource and the bi-monthly payroll for our more than 550

employees. Marcella also created our first website and the motto: "Helping People Survive Today and Prepare for Tomorrow".

In our early years before we could employ someone to administer the office there were a number of compassionate volunteers who kept our office running. At various times Lidia (Bistran) Palcu, Marva Hemphil, Shirley Baker, Consuelo Torres, Lorraine Fritze and others were here to answered phones, write letters, take LIHEAP applications and distributed food from the Food Pantry. Then of course there was Maurice Long with his big heart, and gruff manner, who was almost a fixture at our front desk for many years.

We held our first festivals and thanks to Zelda Robinson, Carl L Amin and Lillian Quiles working tirelessly before the activities we had our first Ad Book completed and were distributed at the festival.

Many of our community events and our Homecare training would not have been complete without the tasty Romanian sausage (mititei) and stuffed cabbage rolls (sarmale) prepared by our long time friend and volunteer Ana Sopt.

This is only a handful of the wonderful stories and names of extraordinary individuals who devoted their time and knowledge to our development. I sincerely wish I could share more, but there are too many to list. To all those who I have not mentioned here especially all our wonderful and dedicated volunteers, please know that I remember you and you should be very proud of the roll that you played in the history and growth of European American Association.

Thank you and may God Bless You all and God Bless America!

John Herman

John Herman
Founder/Executive Director