

Building Bridges

The History of Mary J. Treglia Community House

By Marcia Poole

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At 3 p.m. Thursday, April 7, 1921, the Community House¹ opened in second-floor rooms of Edwards & Browne Coal and Lumber Yards at Fourth and Steuben streets in the Eastside area of Sioux City unflatteringly known as “East Bottoms.” Housing was cheap, but life was lonely and treacherous.

The Community House’s mission? To help Sioux City’s struggling foreign-born become U.S. citizens and build better lives in their new homeland.

There was little doubt help was needed. A survey funded by the local Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) revealed that many Eastside immigrants and their U.S.-born children “lived very much to themselves and had little or no contact with any other group.”² Many could not speak English. Many could not read or write. As a result, they had little hope of achieving U.S. citizenship and rising above poverty, prejudice, and isolation.

“Twenty-seven children of a certain nationality, born in this country, could neither speak nor understand English when they entered the public schools. It was necessary to place them in a room by themselves until they were somewhat conversant with the language. This amazing situation emphasized the need of providing some opportunity for the foreign born to meet and mingle with other groups if they and their children were to take part in community life.”³

In 1915, almost 18 percent (14,635 people) of Woodbury County residents were immigrants.⁴ By 1921, when Sioux City’s population was 71,227, YWCA social workers counted 21 nationalities in the community.

The Eastside was home to many newcomers, including families from Russia, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Greece, Syria, Armenia, China, Denmark, France, Germany, Bulgaria, Mexico, Norway and Sweden. They lived alongside Native American and African American residents. Most other parts of Sioux City were segregated.

¹ According to minutes of the first “Governing Committee” meeting, June 6, 1921, the Community House’s original name was “Sioux City Community Club.”

² Author unknown, “History of Mary J. Treglia Community House” (manuscript: late 1970s, p. 1).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Marcia Poole, “Building Bridges to Better Lives” (Betty Strong Encounter Center exhibition text: Jan. 3, 2017).

The Eastside extended from Fourth Street north to about Seventh Street and from Highway 75 (Lewis Boulevard) west to about Steuben Street. Separated from the business district to the west by two blocks of railroad tracks, the Eastside was lined with dirt roads, frame row houses (some without indoor plumbing) mom-and-pop stores, lumber-and-coal yards, warehouses, freight depots and the aging Lincoln Elementary School at Sixth and Morgan streets.

Neighborhood churches included Mount Olive Baptist at Fifth and Morgan streets; Holy Resurrection Russian Orthodox at Seventh and Morgan; and Church of the Annunciation Roman Catholic, known as “the Italian Syrian Catholic Church,” at Eighth and Chambers streets. Anderson Park, about 1.5 square blocks, was at Seventh and Chambers.

Through the Eastside the flood-prone Floyd River “wound like a lazy snake...until a spring thaw or heavy rain uncoiled it.”⁵

Eastside anxiety

Jobs drew immigrants to Sioux City. For most that meant working for the railroads or more likely at the nearby Sioux City Stockyards, a sprawling, smoky, smelly industrial site where Cudahy, Armour and eventually Swift were the dominant meatpacking muscle. Other employers were smaller packers, poultry processors, rendering plants, soap companies and serum manufacturers.

Recurring labor strikes took a terrible toll on packinghouse families. World War I (1914-1918) pushed up hourly wages, but post-war conditions declined and common laborers were abundant.

In November 1921, the big meatpackers imposed a 10-percent wage cut. Meatcutters and Butcher Workmen of North America voted to strike. Cudahy and Armour brought in strikebreakers to keep their plants operating.

Some 1,400 strikers and sympathizers, including men, women and children of diverse ethnicities, were involved in demonstrations that sometimes grew violent with rock-throwing, fistfights, stabbings and shootings. When the strike ended on Feb. 2,

⁵ Jerry Leslie, “Run-Down, Flood-Prone Bottoms Now ‘Boomtown’” (The Sioux City Journal, June 15, 1973, p. A6).

1922, more than 1,000 workers wanted to return, but only a few hundred were taken back. Strikebreakers had taken their jobs.⁶

Another source of Eastside stress? The looming threat of Floyd River flooding. “This danger of high water was perhaps the reason for the low real estate costs and was also responsible for a fatalistic belief in the minds of the people that complete destruction to their property was within the range of reason,” Mabel Hoyt noted in her Community House history.⁷ Hoyt (1902-1987) was a longtime Sioux City educator, and community and civil rights leader. She was a volunteer Community House teacher for 36 years.

Anderson Park, at Seventh and Chambers streets, was a reminder of how horrific Floyd River floods could be. In 1921, the City Council named the park in memory of Andrew G. Anderson, a 38-year-old Swedish immigrant, husband, and father, who drowned after saving 27 people in the 1892 Floyd River flood.⁸

How can Sioux Cityans help?

After World War I, it became increasingly clear that Eastside immigrants needed help in their struggle to learn the English language, achieve U.S. citizenship and rise above poverty, prejudice, and isolation. They needed a place to meet, learn, play, and enjoy life together.

In 1921, the local YWCA formed an Americanization project. The non-profit brought in assistance from its national organization to assess Sioux City immigrants’ needs and how they could be met.

Based on interviews with immigrants,⁹ the YWCA regional director concluded that Eastside residents badly needed a community house that offered free instruction in citizenship and English-as-a-second language. A community house also could provide free opportunities for socialization and a range of services, including nursing care for children.

⁶ Marcia Poole, “The Yards: A Way of Life” (Sioux City Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center Association, 2006, p. 86).

⁷ Mabel F. Hoyt, “History of Community House Sioux City, Iowa” (manuscript, c. 1938, p. 4).

⁸ “Name Park for Flood Hero: Andrew Anderson Honored by City Council (The Sioux City Sunday Journal, July 3, 1921, p. 12).

⁹ According to Hoyt, there is no record of how extensive the YWCA survey was.

To be most effective, the community house should be located on the Eastside and run by a non-religious group. The local YWCA responded by turning over the project to the Sioux City Women's Club whose membership came from various sections of the community and represented Jewish, Catholic and Protestant faiths.

Newspaper accounts listed founders only by their husbands' names. Unmarried founders were known as "Miss." The Community House's founding members were: Mrs. William Milchrist; Mrs. H.P. White; Mrs. R.H. Burton Smith; Mrs. F.L. Hutchins; Mrs. T.B. Hutton; Mrs. Walter Frane; Mrs. J.L. Browne; Mrs. R.J. O'Donnell; Mrs. Elias Wahlstrom; Mrs. Emil Marx; Mrs. Richard Zwemer; Mrs. Leonard Manley; Mrs. H.H. Krummann; Mrs. Oscar Ruff; Mrs. James Keefe; Mrs. Winnifred Sloan; Miss Grace Atchison; and Miss Margaret Manley.¹⁰ Cora Milchrist, former Hopkins School principal, was chairperson.

"These ladies devoted hours of service to the cause, helped teach the women American ways of dress, of cooking, and of thinking. These board women also helped sell this neighborhood house idea to citizens of Sioux City who were at that time unaware of its existence.

"Much of the success of this early period was due to Mrs. Milchrist...Her enthusiasm in the days when faith in the venture was essential, and her loyalty to Miss Anderson, the secretary (director), in her struggle to establish Community House, was responsible in a large measure for the settlement house weathering the early storms of uncertainty," Hoyt wrote.¹¹

What is a community house?

The origin of the community house or "settlement house movement" can be traced back to the "Industrial Revolution in England when men and their families went to large manufacturing centers for work. Overcrowding, health hazards and the almost complete segregation of the poor from the privileged resulted."¹² The U.S. settlement house

¹⁰ Cora Milchrist, "A History of Community House," (Cornerstone-laying speech, April 22, 1933).

¹¹ Hoyt, p. 3.

¹² Georgia V. Schieffer, "Mary J. Treglia Community House" (thesis for Master's in Social Work, University of Iowa, May 1984, introduction).

movement followed England's. Chicago's Hull House, founded by social worker Jane Addams, was among the most well-known.

In Sioux City, Mary J. Treglia later would explain: "...The neighborhood or settlement house...provides comfort and understanding to persons who have lost security and hope. It gives outlet to the idle youth and chances of expression to those who are gifted but unnoticed. It offers refuge from humdrum existence. It provides contacts between those who are in favorable social and financial circumstances and those who are struggling against physical privation and lost spiritual morale. It is the one place that the unemployed who seek physical maintenance and the emotionally perplexed who need peace of mind can go and feel that their interviewer has a sincere and sympathetic interest in the solution of their problems. The underlying principle of the true neighborhood house is human service...."¹³

Many helping hands

Members of various Sioux City clubs helped create the Community House's first home. "The memory is very vivid of the first meeting to look over the rooms selected," Cora Milchrist recalled almost 14 years later. "They were cheerless, bare, covered with dust, but they offered possibilities and suited our needs. We had no funds, no furniture; but we did have an abundance of faith...

"Many clubs, fraternal organizations and private individuals responded to our S.O.S. call for the necessary furniture and so splendid was the response that in a surprisingly short time those desolate rooms were transformed...a great excitement prevailed."¹⁴

Bookshelves were installed and the Sioux City Public Library established a branch at the Community House with 300 new books and a \$100 budget for more. Volunteers offered to help teach citizenship, English-as-a-second language, and music classes. Other volunteers contributed time and skills to help open the Community House and begin its programs.

A "baby station" was planned. It would be staffed by the Organized Welfare Bureau, a Sioux City non-profit that offered public nursing, and child welfare and family services.

¹³ Mary J. Treglia Annual Report, 1932-33, p. 1 (cited by Schieffer, p. 19).

¹⁴ Cora Milchrist, "A History of Community House" (Cornerstone-laying speech, April 22, 1933).

Early fundraising efforts included individual donations and an April 9, 1921, home products sale by the Girls Friendly Society at the Chamber of Commerce Building at Sixth and Nebraska streets. Sioux City department stores and commercial houses donated products to be sold for the Community House cause.¹⁵

The YWCA contributed the first-year's salary for the director, social worker Dorothy Anderson, who arrived in early 1921 from University of Minnesota. Anderson lived at the Community House and "launched the program." She was a "unique personality – good looking, intelligent, vivacious. She had a love of music and beauty in all forms," according to Hoyt.¹⁶

Anderson faced an enormous challenge.

"These were early pioneer days and the growing process of Community House was not simple. Centuries of prejudice between creeds and nations could not be suddenly overcome. It took a great deal of diplomacy to have Jews and Gentiles work together, to have Mohammedans and Christians sit at the same table, and women in clubs exchange recipes for Irish stew and Italian spaghetti," according to Hoyt.¹⁷

Opening day draws crowds

Plans for the Community House's Thursday, April 7, 1921, opening were widely publicized. Dorothy Anderson and a public-health nurse went door-to-door, inviting neighborhood residents to participate. Recognizing universal values, Anderson asked the immigrants for "handicrafts and curios from foreign lands." The treasures would be displayed in an opening-day exhibit of images and crafts from countries that had representation living in Sioux City.¹⁸

Additionally, opening-day music would be performed in "Albanian, American, Bohemian, Bulgarian, Canadian, Chinese, Croatian, Danish, English, French, German, Greek, Herzegovinian, Holland, Hungarian, Indian, Irish, Italian, Jewish, Lithuanian,

¹⁵ "Sell Home Products to Aid Community House" (The Sioux City Journal, April 9, 1921, p. 11).

¹⁶ Hoyt, p. 23.

¹⁷ Hoyt, p. 2.

¹⁸ "Costumes and Handiwork of Foreign Lands for Community House Opening" (The Sioux City Journal, April 3, 1921, p. 21).

Macedonian, Mexican, Montenegrin, Norwegian, Polish, Rumanian, Russian, Serbian, Slovak, Swedish, Swiss, Syrian, Welsh.”¹⁹

Sioux City newspapers promoted opening day. Handbill invitations also spread the word. A demonstration of baby-care basics would be offered from 3 to 4 p.m. Refreshments would be served. Admission would be free. All people were invited.

Eastside residents learned that the Community House club rooms would be available daytime and evenings for free lessons in piano, violin and other instruments with the goal of forming an orchestra.

Classes in millinery, sewing and art would be offered. Clubs and story hours would be organized for girls and boys. Residents would have opportunities to hold their own meetings and organize clubs. A visiting nurse would care for the sick. At the heart of Community House life would be English-as-a-second language instruction, U.S. Government classes and assistance with the citizenship process.

The publicity push worked. On April 7, hundreds of Eastside residents and people from throughout Sioux City and the area climbed the non-profit’s rickety stairs. In fact, so many people came to the opening it was necessary “to receive them in installments.” Twenty-three-year-old Mary Treglia was among the visitors. “I was impressed,” she recalled 19 years later.²⁰

As promised, the Community House’s opening day showcased the neighborhood’s cultural diversity. “C. Hassan smoked the Turkish hookah. Shorty Avgianakis played the lyra. Syrians played the (minjayrah) and the (mizmar) and danced while the Rumanians dressed in striking black and white embroidered costumes, sang and danced,” *The Sioux City Journal* reported.²¹

‘Hull House on a smaller scale’

A series of parties acquainted even more Sioux Cityans with the Community House. Interest spread. Programs and services boomed. Each evening, learning and

¹⁹ “Very First Handout for Community Center” (printed in the Livestock Record, 1921).

²⁰ J. Hyatt Downing, “Bloomer Girl: Little Italian Lass Who Could Best the Boys at Their Favorite Games Devotes Life to Community Service” (The Sioux City Sunday Journal, Oct. 13, 1940, p. 1).

²¹ “Community House Grows; Proves to Be Hull House on Smaller Scale” (The Sioux City Journal, Nov. 24, 1921, p. 14).

socialization filled the rooms. Each Thursday morning, mothers brought their babies to be weighed and measured by doctors and nurses.

The welfare of Eastside children sometimes called for the Community House's translation bureau's skill. Such was the case of a baby of immigrant parents who had been bitten by rats. The baby contracted a disease that could not be treated in Sioux City. "The parents needed to understand that the baby needed to be taken to Iowa City University Hospital for treatment...the intervention saved the baby's life and clearly showed that the services of the Community House were of great value...."²²

Eastside children flocked to the after-school playtime program managed by Junior League members. During the Community House's first summer, Girl Scout and Boy Scout troops were organized. Boy Scouts attended a three-day encampment at Stone Park. Girl Scouts went on several all-day picnics.

The Scouts distributed Americanization pamphlets to Eastside residents and invited them to free night-school classes offered at the Community House by the Board of Education. In 1922, Girl Scouts went in twos to babysit children so mothers who had become U.S. citizens could go to the polls and vote.

Junior activities fostered future leaders for youth organizations, including Boy Scouts, Royal Score, Flying Eagle and Hawkeye clubs. The Athletic Club obtained gym privileges at nearby Lincoln Elementary School and went beyond sports with presentations on varied topics and movies.

Programs were planned to commemorate patriotic occasions, such as Flag Day, Constitution Day, and Armistice Day. Guest speakers covered a range of topics on the path to citizenship. Among the speakers were local judges and Mrs. Max Meyer, chair of the State Citizens Committee of the League of Women Voters.

Evening citizenship classes were offered for men who worked during the day. For people who could neither read nor write, classes in primary subjects were necessary before they could begin civics instruction.²³

²² Schieffer, p. 13.

²³ Hoyt, p. 10.

“To these classes there came for instruction a Russian priest, an Italian who worked in the slaughter room at the packing house, a Mexican worker on a railroad section gang, a German boy who had recently graduated from a German university, a woman who had been a photographer in a little village in Denmark, an Armenian who had seen his family annihilated in a Turkish massacre. These sat around in night school classes and, in the exchange of experiences and philosophies, broke down barriers, and caught new ideas,” according to Hoyt.²⁴

Representatives of Sioux City men’s organizations held meetings with neighborhood men to help determine how they could help. The organizations included High Twelve, Lions, Rotary, Kiwanis, and Chamber of Commerce.

Some 400 people attended the Community House’s April 7, 1922, anniversary event. They celebrated with music, a playlet, acrobatics, Italian opera songs, a Syrian dance demonstration, and a “Highland Fling.”²⁵

The Community House was furthering its mission, but funding was a constant concern. Mr. Browne, the landlord, said rent could be paid when funding was available. “He had faith...We were heartened too by the co-operation promised by interested citizens,” according to Cora Milchrist.²⁶

Creditors were sympathetic, but the Community House Board knew bills must be paid for rent, electricity, gas, office supplies and other essentials. The Sioux City Women’s Club held fundraisers, such as “tag day” when volunteers collected donations at busy Sioux City street corners. The “tag” was a small U.S. Flag that donors attached to their coats. (The Oct. 22, 1921, “tag day” netted \$2,330.²⁷) By November 1922, the Community House began receiving Community Chest Fund support.²⁸

Mary Treglia gets involved

²⁴ Hoyt, p. 3.

²⁵ “Celebrate Center Birthday” (Sioux City Journal, April 8, 1922, p. 7).

²⁶ Milchrist, p. 2.

²⁷ “Drive for Funds Begins” (The Sioux City Journal, Oct. 22, 1921, p. 13).

²⁸ “Budget Drive This Week” (The Sioux City Sunday Journal, Nov. 29, 1922, p. 14).

The Industrial and Business Girls' Club, later known as "Alpha Sigma," was among the early Community House groups. Started in 1921 by volunteer Mary J. Treglia, the club focused on educational interests and various classes for young working women. At the time, Mary was employed as a "public relations committee of one" for the Master Plumbers Association.

The club met three evenings a week, but Mary wanted to do more at the Community House. "...the thing got hold of me, I saw so much maladjustment, so many square pegs in round holes...."²⁹

Needing additional staff to handle the Community House's growing programs and services, Director Dorothy Anderson "engaged a woman from Minneapolis to help. She didn't come so I threw up my job with the plumbers...and went to work, seriously, as a social worker in September 1922," Mary told a *Journal* reporter in 1940.³⁰

To draw isolated women to the Community House, Dorothy Anderson and Mary Treglia "went knocking on doors to contact those who would become the first members of Women of All Nations Club. Most of the women could not speak English and had no direct contact with the outside world. They reluctantly entered this new experience but soon realized that others shared their problems. They exchanged recipes, listened to good music, laughed with each other and developed a spirit of courage as well as a more optimistic outlook on life," according to Schieffer who credits the description to Hoyt."³¹ Women of All Nations Club would last for decades.

Mary traveled to New York in 1923 for training in immigration and naturalization at the New York School of Social Work. There, she increased her knowledge of newly arrived immigrants' needs and laws governing arrival, detention and departure. She did field work at Ellis Island. She thought about that experience for years.

"I think, especially, of the end of the day when immigrants and social workers alike boarded the lower deck of the little steamer that plied its way between Ellis Island and Manhattan.

²⁹ J. Hyatt Downing, "Bloomer Girl," (The Sioux City Sunday Journal, magazine section, Oct. 13, 1940, p. 1).

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Schieffer, p. 10 (paraphrased from Mabel Hoyt, p. 4).

“The officials occupying the upper decks of the steamer had an unrestricted view of the Manhattan skyline. The Statue of Liberty, with its promise of freedom to the ‘huddled masses yearning to be free,’ looked much different when seen through the chicken wire enclosures which fenced in our lower deck....”³² In 1924, Mary took additional training at University of Minnesota.

Dorothy Anderson resigned in late 1925. Mary was appointed Community House director (the position then was known as “secretary”) in December 1925.³³ Arlone B. Kinkaid, a volunteer, would be appointed Mary’s assistant in 1928.³⁴ Mary urged all Sioux Cityans to welcome the diverse post-World War I newcomers by volunteering services and donating materials and money to the Community House.

“...Miss Treglia soon gained the confidence of the people of the district and built up a reputation for an ability to handle difficult cases...a steady stream of individual cases was presented for her advice and consideration. The problem of an adolescent girl...the unadjusted marital relations between husband and wife, the question of securing employment, the discipline problem between foreign born parents and Americanized children...all were part of the important work of the secretary,” according to Hoyt.³⁵

Italian immigrants’ daughter

Mary Joanna Treglia was born in Sioux City on Oct. 7, 1897, to Italian immigrants Antonio Jr. and Rose Leveroni Treglia who married in 1889 in Jersey City, N.J. Along with other family members, the Treglias were among the first Italian immigrants to settle in the Sioux City area.

Antonio went into a fruit and confectionery business, first with his brother, Emanuel, at 813 Fourth St.; later for himself at 309 Pierce St.; and still later at 422 Pierce St. (the Richardson Block).³⁶ Rose worked with her husband at all locations.

³² Editha K. Webster, “Miss Mary Treglia to Air Views on Immigration Before Senate Group in Hearing at Washington” (The Sioux City Sunday Journal, Nov. 20, 1955, p. 31).

³³ “New Secretary Social House Is Appointed” (The Sioux City Journal, Dec. 31, 1925, p. 9).

³⁴ “History of Community House, Sioux City, Iowa” manuscript (c. 1938, p. 3).

³⁵ Hoyt, p. 4.

³⁶ Rose Treglia obituary (The Sioux City Journal, Dec. 13, 1945, p. 8).

Antonio died less than two years after Mary's birth. In 1901, with \$20, Rose opened a store on the southeast corner of Sixth and Douglas streets where she sold confectionery (sugary treats) fruits, canned goods and her "famous" boiled ham.

The streets were young Mary's playground where she excelled at baseball. "...in growing she continued to throw a baseball farther and learned to slide into home base with the dexterity of a Ty Cobb."³⁷ In 1911, Bobby Black signed Mary to work as an umpire.³⁸ Black came to Sioux City in 1888 to play for the Cornhuskers. After retirement he organized and managed area teams, including Bobby Black's Bloomer Girls.³⁹

Mary earned money umpiring men's games in Iowa, Nebraska and other states. Her services were much in demand. Before games, she demonstrated "power-pitching" and catching, even catching a ball thrown from an airplane.

Multi-talented, Mary graduated from Sioux City High School⁴⁰ where she played violin in the orchestra and piano for public performances. (The High School was renamed Central High School in 1924).

Active in theater, or "dramatics" as it was called, Mary played the lead character in "A Cup of Coffee" on Nov. 22, 1915.⁴¹ She also appeared in "A Cup of Tea" that week. Both shows were presented at Cathedral Hall to benefit the newly established Italian and Syrian Mission at Eighth and Chambers streets. Numerous other Sioux City fundraisers were held toward the financing construction of a church at the Mission site.

Mary volunteered with the Catholic Women's League which played a key role in the Italian and Syrian Mission's life. This was, perhaps, her earliest social work experience – an experience that gave her insight into Eastside needs. The Mission helped immigrants, mainly children, adjust to American ways. Five English-as-a-second

³⁷ Downing *ibid.*

³⁸ "Bobby Black Makes 'Find'" (The Sioux City Journal, June 11, 1911, p. 30).

³⁹ Dan Desmond, "Veteran to Make 'Comeback'" (The Sioux City Journal, May 22, 1932, p. 2 Sports).

⁴⁰ "Sioux City Girl in Movies" (The Sioux City Journal, Aug. 22, 1920, p. 12).

⁴¹ "Baby Stars in Aid Play" (The Sioux City Journal, Nov. 23, 1915, p. 8).

language classes, civics lessons, and girls' domestic and boys' domestic classes were held at Lincoln School, at Sixth and Morgan streets.⁴²

Plans were created by noted architect William L. Steele for Church of the Annunciation, also known as the "Italian Syrian Catholic Church" on the Mission site. The church was dedicated on Sept. 17, 1916. The Mission had begun with two children. The church opened with a congregation of about 200 members. Less than five years later, many of those 200 would be involved at the Community House.⁴³

Fluent in Italian, Mary served as an interpreter for the Draft Board and received a citation for meritorious work. Her name was entered on the U.S. Navy Patriot Roll for effective recruiting among "Sioux City Italians."⁴⁴

Mary in the movies

In 1919, with World War I over and the Spanish Influenza epidemic easing, Mary and Rose went to California. The often-cited reason for the trip was Rose's waning health and the need for warm weather. However, there's more to the story. A young, vibrant woman was spreading her wings. An Aug. 22, 1920, *Journal* story filled in details. She and her mother spent late 1919 through spring 1920 in Hollywood. Mary admired motion pictures and the people behind them, but she never dreamed she would become an actor herself.

"...She went to Hollywood with a longing to see how the pictures were made, to catch a glimpse of a real star in person and to know something of their life, not possessing the slightest idea that she was to wear the makeup herself and stroll beneath the strong lights of the studio...."⁴⁵

Mother and daughter stayed in a hotel where Mary met an "old gentleman, actor" who lived in the same hotel. He told Mary she would make a good "type" actress. "He showed her how to apply the makeup and directed her to a motion picture service bureau where she could register for a position...

⁴² "Working with Italian and Syrian Children at East Side Mission" (The Sunday Sioux City Journal, July 4, 1915, p. 8).

⁴³ "Dedicate Church Sunday" (The Sioux City Journal, Sept. 14, 1916, p. 16).

⁴⁴ "Sioux City Girl Wins Honor" (The Sioux City Journal, Jan. 14, 1919, p. 8).

⁴⁵ "Sioux City Girl in Movies: Curiosity Attracted Mary Treglia to Hollywood" (The Sioux City Journal, Aug. 22, 1920, p. 12).

“Within a week she was called and applied with 1,000 other people for parts in a mob scene for Metro company. She received \$3 a day at the start. With many others she was to take part in a Hindu scene. Her face was painted with brick-colored stuff and she was furnished with a costume by the wardrobe keeper. Then the company needed seven exact types and there were a thousand to choose from. Mary has black hair, blue eyes and an olive skin and her Latin descent marks her as a foreign type.

“The technical director who made the selection of the seven types was an English major (military) who had seen service in India and knew what he was looking for. He chose Mary Treglia as one of the seven and she played a Hindu part for three weeks with a raise in salary.

“Then a Spaniard took her to the Kosmic company, where she played Hindu again. She received \$10 a day doing ‘types’ and played in a Hope Diamond serial and in the ‘The Price of Redemption’ with Bert Lytell as star. There is a little more money in ‘types,’ she says, because it is more work to make up.”

The newspaper story continues with Mary describing movies from the “inside” – the shooting schedule, music that gets actors “in the mood,” the set, lighting, studio lot, on-location sites and the “really wonderful” people.

“...The lights used in photographing are very strong, so strong that we wear dark glasses when not being photographed. If we didn’t, our eyes would be blood-shot. You have noticed how the star seems to stand out in the picture. That is because of the lights which are concentrated there.”

Mary belonged to the Hollywood Studio Club where she was friends with actors Zasu Pitts and Helen Eddy. Her California experience also took her up and down the California Coast playing baseball with Bobbie Black’s Bloomer Girls.

Mary apparently was relishing her California experience, but Rose was growing homesick for Iowa. They came back to Sioux City. Mary told the reporter she didn’t know if she would return to Hollywood and the movies. She had offers but hadn’t accepted any. She never would. Perhaps it was her devotion to Rose that kept her from returning to Hollywood. Show business, however, would influence her future role at the Community House where theater and the arts thrived.

In Sioux City, Mary was hired by the Master Plumbers Association. She wanted to learn more about the business, so she and Rose traveled to Albany, N.Y., where one of Rose's brothers lived. They stayed about three months "and again Iowa pulled us back and again we began looking for a store."⁴⁶

It was 1921, the Community House project was under way and Mary went to the opening. She quickly got involved and ultimately would devote the rest of her life to helping others build better lives.

Community House flourishes

Under Mary's leadership, programs and services were organized into four major divisions: adult education; immigration and naturalization; recreational activities and clubs; and casework and counseling.

Operating six days a week, the Community House hosted some 65 organized groups and attracted an average of 2,000 people a month. Jobs were found for the unemployed. Interpreting services were offered in Armenian, Bohemian, Chinese, Danish, French, German, Greek, Italian, Hebrew, Yiddish, Bulgarian, Lithuanian, Mexican, Norwegian, Persian, Polish, Rumanian, Russian, Spanish, Syrian and Swedish. Meals were served one evening a week.

Each Wednesday, Women of All Nations Club met to instruct mothers in altering old clothes and sewing new ones. Their children were cared for while they were in class. Multi-cultural clubs for boys and girls, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts were mainstays of the Community House. "By this method the children are kept off the streets and from possible undesirable companionship," Mary wrote. "The rudiments of etiquette also are included in the instruction."

The Industrial and Business Girls Club held its first annual banquet in January 1923. The program included Syrian dance, Asian dance, and piano performances.⁴⁷

Junior League members taught kindergarten and held dance classes for the neighborhood's young people. The playroom hosted daily activities for youth groups. Public speaking, music, lectures and athletic teams enriched the scope of the

⁴⁶ J. Hyatt Downing, *ibid.*

⁴⁷ "Club Women Are Interested in History Drama" (Jan. 14, 1923, p. 16).

Community House experience. The library had several thousand donated books, mostly in English but also in other languages. *The New York Times*, *Popular Mechanics* and a dozen or so other periodicals were available.

At its outset, the Community House did not have regularly scheduled and organized programs specifically for men. Neighborhood men became involved by participating in Americanization classes and by attending social events planned by groups such as Women of All Nations Club.

When men did organize, they generally did so to work on a specific problem. The East Side Improvement Organization, for example, formed in 1931 to clean up the neighborhood's appearance. They pushed for an end to prostitution and the demolition of abandoned buildings.

To ensure all Eastside residents were served, Mary, Rose and other volunteers visited every home in the neighborhood in fall, winter and spring. Reaching out and promoting programs and services was paramount to serving people in need. Many families did not even know they were invited to participate in Community House programs let alone find support as they struggled with problems.

Mary was masterful at public relations. Through newspaper stories and columns, public speaking engagements, and participation in numerous non-profit local, regional and national organizations, she made sure the public was well informed about immigrants' ongoing struggle. Her message emphasized that "a settlement house, because it is situated in a district populated by people of low economic income, always has its finger on the pulse of social unrest..."⁴⁸

Flood drives out Eastside families

Among the most trying times were Floyd River floods. On Sept. 18-19, 1926, the Floyd unleashed a flood that rivaled the 1892 disaster. It rose 19 feet above normal. Families were awakened in the night and forced to flee. The Community House opened its doors to them until the water rose so high it was unsafe to remain there.

"Arrangements were made with Mayor Gilman to have the Municipal building thrown open to the refugees and at 1:25 (in the afternoon) all automobiles on the streets were commandeered to assist the police in removing the victims from the community house

⁴⁸ Hoyt, p. 4.

and vicinity. More than 400 men, women and children were taken to the Municipal building and the Jewish Community Center, where they were taken care of until Sunday afternoon, when a large number were sent to various clubs and other emergency relief stations that had been established."⁴⁹ Children cried as they were separated from friends.⁵⁰

The Community House took the lead in repairing the Eastside's massive physical damage. It also was called upon to rebuild morale among the many people who had suffered losses."⁵¹ Clearly, the Community House was essential to the neighborhood's well-being.

In November 1926, Mrs. Robert Munger drew up the Community House's Articles of Incorporation. The document was passed by the Board of Governors and filed at the Woodbury County Recorder's office in January 1927. At that time, the Community House Board of Governors officers were Frances L. Ford, president; Blanche N. Davidson, first vice president; Helen Gertrude Saxon, second vice president; Margaret O'Donnell, secretary; and Eloise Ruff, treasurer. Officers held three-year terms.

Daily life went along smoothly and hectically until Milton Perry Smith spoke to Mary about a *real* community house.⁵² Years later, she recalled it was Smith who first encouraged Community House leaders to build a new home for the non-profit.⁵³ Smith was Sioux City Commissioner of Parks and Public Property and son of pioneer Sioux City physician Dr. William Remsen Smith.

Depression and condemnation

As the Great Depression took hold in the early 1930s, participation in Community House classes and programs grew. Each day brought some 250 people for classes, clubs, recreation and social services.

⁴⁹ "Aid Is Given Flood Victims" (The Sioux City Journal, Sept. 20, 1926, p. 1).

⁵⁰ "Sioux City Refugees Spend Night at Municipal Building" (The Sioux City Journal, Sept. 20, 1926, p. 10).

⁵¹ Hoyt, p. 4.

⁵² J. Hyatt Downing.

⁵³ J. Hyatt Downing.

Girl Scouts increased to three troops. Brownies grew from eight to 36 members. A Big Sisters program had started. Dozens of clubs and groups for boys and girls were flourishing.

“A new activity was the creation of expanded dramatic clubs, including a joint club for boys and girls. The program was so effective that the Community House groups played a major role in the progress of dramatic presentations in the city during this time. Activities centered not only on recreation but on development of talents, social manners and behavior, proper nutrition and diet as well as educational advancement,” according to Schieffer.⁵⁴

Community House programs and services were thriving. But the 1604 Fourth St. home was strained beyond capacity, stirring anxiety that the rickety stairway and creaky second-story floor would give way under all the weight. In 1931, it was condemned.

Mary and board members wrestled with the question of whether the Community House should be shut down. They concluded that the consequences of ending its services and programs were “too terrible to consider,” Mrs. Milchrist wrote.⁵⁵

However, finding a new home in an existing building in the Eastside was unlikely at best. Was the dream of funding and building a new home within reach during the Great Depression? The Community House had only \$700 in its building fund. It did, however, also have “seven million prayers,” Mary often said.

A building committee was appointed: Stella Sanford, chair; Mary Treglia; Eloise Ruff; Mrs. J. E. Fitzgerald; Cora Milchrist; Mrs. J. L. Kennedy; Mrs. W. K. McGregor; and Frances Ford.

“In spite of 1932 marking one of the worst depressions in history, Miss Treglia and the building committee pushed forward into one of the most interesting chapters in the history of Community House in which an ingenious scheme for financing the building was conceived and executed,” Hoyt wrote.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Schieffer, p. 17.

⁵⁵ Milchrist, p. 5.

⁵⁶ Hoyt, p. 5

The “scheme” started with this idea: obtain the three lots at Sixth and Morgan streets where the old Lincoln School had been razed.

Lincoln School was originally Peabody School, a six-room frame structure at Third and Prospect streets, situated beneath the Elevated Railroad.⁵⁷ It was built in 1883.

Great Northern Railroad bought the building and lots in early 1905 to accommodate its Sioux City terminal. The Sioux City School District bought the building back and moved it to Sixth and Morgan in summer 1905 to ease “overcrowding” in the district. Improvements were made and two rooms were added. In 1909, its name was changed to “Lincoln School.”

After months of bitter neighborhood protests, the Sioux City Board of Education closed Lincoln School in November 1930. The building was deemed unsafe. Students were bused across railroad tracks to Hobson, Irving and Franklin schools.

Parents were furious about losing their neighborhood school where teachers and administrators were familiar with families’ diverse challenges. The blow was softened when plans for a new Community House building emerged.

Three lots for \$800

Milton Perry Smith addressed the Sioux City Board of Education at its Feb. 6, 1933, meeting at the West Hotel. Several Community House representatives, including Mary Treglia and civic leader Stella Sanford, accompanied him. Smith asked the Board to deed the three Lincoln School lots to the City which then would deed the property to the Community House for construction of a new building.⁵⁸

Smith explained that the City Council believed closing Community House would be a loss for the entire city. As for financing the project, Smith said government relief labor could be used if building materials were furnished by the Community House board.

“The project will go far to keep boys off the streets and in a good environment. I have watched the work in the past and it is a builder of character,” Eloise Ruff told the Board of Education.

⁵⁷ “School Will Be Moved” (The Sioux City Journal, Sept. 27, 1904, p. 5).

⁵⁸ “Site for New Community House Discussed at School Board Meet,” (The Sioux City Journal, Feb. 7 1933, p. 6).

Mary explained the importance of continuing Community House services and programs for the neighborhood. Representatives of union labor and unemployed neighborhood residents had volunteered to help with construction.

After the Community House advocates made their case, the Board of Education said it would consider the request.

On Tuesday, Feb. 21, 1933, *The Journal* reported that the Board of Education approved the sale of the three lots to the City of Sioux City for \$800. On the advice of the Board's attorney, George H. Bliven, the \$800 would be used to buy property for Longfellow, Roosevelt, and Bryant schools.

An outpouring of volunteer labor and donated materials made it possible to begin excavation work immediately. Details of the building plan and schedule soon would be worked out. Initially, the building was to be one story with a high-ceiling basement for the gym. The plan would expand to two stories.

Shovels, wheelbarrows and 'seven million prayers'

Ground was broken on Feb. 26, 1933. The next day, the bank that held the Community House's building fund closed. Despite the loss, Mary once again pointed out that the Community House still had "seven million prayers" and an outpouring of community support.

Volunteer workers began excavating with shovels and wheelbarrows furnished by the City. By the first week in March, basement excavation was near completion.⁵⁹ Construction proceeded, thanks largely to recycled materials.

C. F. Lytle donated stone from the old Iowa building. The City provided crushed concrete salvaged from aging streets for the basement walls. Fred Davis contributed materials from the H. A. Jandt residence which occupied a quarter block on the northeast corner of Sixth and Jennings streets. Men on unemployment-relief crews were tearing down the house. Some \$1,200 worth of material was salvaged for the Community House project, including iron stair railings and fireplace fixtures.

"...Because of high taxes during this period many of the old homes were being torn down. At the suggestion of Miss Treglia and the committee, the carved woodwork and the beautiful mahogany doors of the old Davidson home were donated to this new

⁵⁹ "Basement Excavation of New Welfare House Near Completion" (The Sioux City Journal, March 2, 1933, p. 5).

Community House...Lumber, brick, electric light fixtures, radiators and plumbing from 13 razed homes were utilized...The City architect and electrical inspector with the cooperation of the master electricians donated their services and many of the laborers furnished by County relief work projects lived in the Community House district and gave many hours without pay.”⁶⁰

Mary dug through recyclable building materials in dump heaps. “That marble on the counter in the main reception room came from a dump. James F. Toy gave us a check for \$1,000 and the rest came in dibs and dabs. We did everything...we haunted old buildings which were being wrecked. We begged and cajoled. But we got our building,” Mary told a *Sioux City Sunday Journal* reporter in 1946.⁶¹

Sioux City businessman Arthur Sanford donated \$400 worth of building materials. John Naughton, who supervised erection of the Frances Building, directed the purchase of materials for the new Community House.

Cornerstone ceremony

The cornerstone was laid on April 22, 1933. Speakers included: Bishop Edmund Heelan, of the Sioux City Diocese; Rabbi Theodore N. Lewis, pastor of Mount Saini Temple; Rev. J.J. Davies, pastor of Whitfield Methodist Church; Sioux City Mayor W. D. Hayes; Judge Robert H. Munger; Judge Ralph A. Oliver; Mrs. M.P. Summers, Board of Education member; Mary Treglia; and Frances Ford, president of Community House.

Frances Ford laid the cornerstone. The Monahan Post Band played. Mrs. J.E. Fitzgerald, a Building Committee member, led “The Pledge of Allegiance.”

Cora Milchrist presented a brief history of the Community House and its accomplishments: “Under its roof more than 20 nationalities have been brought together, have learned the art of neighborly kindness one toward another, have learned, that due to the democratic nature of our government the naturalized American Citizen is placed on the same plain (sic) enjoys the same privileges as those who are born under our Flag,” she told the crowd.

⁶⁰ History of Mary J. Treglia Community House, author unknown, p. 3.

⁶¹ J. Hyatt Downing.

The Sixth and Morgan building would have much more space. "...it will no longer be necessary to close the doors because there is not sufficient room for all those wishing to enter. It is distressing to turn boys and girls away which all present quarters have compelled us to do and see them waiting on the stairs, hoping to hear a little evening program," Milchrist said.

The founder ended her speech by expressing gratitude for the co-operation and generosity of Community House's many friends. "We appreciate them and are relying upon their co-operation in this effort to secure a 'Bigger and Better Community House' – a house which represents to so many the social and recreational pleasures most necessary...to a happy, normal life."

At the cornerstone-laying event, a "Buy a Brick" fundraiser was launched with the goal of raising \$6,000. A week later, more than \$2,500 had been raised. A tag day on Saturday, April 29 "netted a neat sum to be added to the building fund."⁶² The Orpheum Theater sponsored a benefit matinee of "The Desert Song" for three days for the Community House cause.⁶³

'Help Fight Hard Luck'

Mary Treglia was re-elected "executive secretary" at the Executive Board's September meeting in Frances Ford's Warrior Hotel apartment. Mary reported that 2,719 men worked 21,753 hours since March on Community House construction.⁶⁴

As work on the new building rapidly progressed, essential services continued and Mary completed requirements for her Bachelor of Arts from Morningside College. The employment office increased its hours to assist out-of-work people. It now operated 1 to 6 p.m. daily.

Helping immigrants find jobs was at the core of Community House services in the 1930s. "In 1931, Mary began a campaign to find jobs for unemployed workers in the neighborhood. Her 'Help Fight Hard Luck' campaign received the cooperation of industrial plants and businesses. ...Treglia even convinced the newspaper to publish

⁶² "Buy a Brick' Campaign Proves Success for Community House" (The Sioux City Journal, April 30, 1933, p. 5)

⁶³ "Orpheum Divides Profits with Community House" (The Sioux City Journal, May 18, 1933, p. 9).

⁶⁴ "Social Center Board Elects" (The Sioux City Journal, Sept. 18, 1933, p. 6).

the case histories and advertise the worker's abilities. The plan was successful, and from August 1931 to April 1932, 782 unemployed workers found jobs through the Community House effort."⁶⁵

By October 1933, anticipation was building. Soon the new two-story, buff-colored brick Community House would be ready. Program and recreation plans were taking shape.

Two one-act plays were in rehearsal to be presented as part of the building's formal dedication. The first play, "Yarn," was under the direction of Betty Newton. Theodora Picard, Thelma Smith and Catherine Cardiello were among the cast members. Cepha Pasek was directing the second play, "The Worm Turns." Francis Wadedo, Jane Pelelo, Leo Thraen and Nina Shkurensky comprised the cast.⁶⁶

By mid-November, the building was about 85 percent completed. Plastering was finished but only part of the building was equipped with heat. That didn't stop activities from moving in. The Brownie pack was the first organization to meet at Sixth and Morgan.⁶⁷ Even before the holiday season, some 200 people were participating in activities in the new building each day.

Milton Perry Smith reported Community House progress to the City Council in November. Most impressive? Many of the 3,877 men who worked on construction of the new building were donating their services.

Likewise, with just two paid staff (Mary Treglia and Arlone Kinkaid) the Community House depended on 103 volunteers who assisted with 42 separate activities.

So much had been accomplished in the 12 years since the Community House opened. Thousands of people of all ages had been helped - with Mary leading the way. Her work did not go unnoticed by the greater community.

Honoring Mary Treglia

Mary was awarded the Distinguished Community Service Honor by the Kiwanis Club at its annual dinner on Jan. 4, 1934, at the Martin Hotel. One-hundred-fifty people

⁶⁵ "Treglia, Mary and the Mary Treglia Community House" (www.siouxcityhistory.org).

⁶⁶ "Plan Plays for Ceremony at New Community House" (The Sioux City Journal, Oct. 11, 1933, p. 14).

⁶⁷ "First Meeting Is Held in New Community House" (The Sioux City Journal, Nov. 15, 1933, p. 16).

attended the event where Judge Robert Munger lauded the social worker for “carrying the message of Americanization to thousands of Sioux City children and their parents.

“This woman,” Judge Munger continued, “is noted for her outstanding service and courageous leadership. She has ever been a source of friendly advice to young and old who have gathered about her. She is known for her kind heart and her deep understanding. She has been instrumental in the establishment of new homes for dependent boys and girls.”

Mary accepted the award with humility: “I sincerely hope that inspired by this honor, I shall in future years become really worthy. I thank you from the bottom of my heart.”

On Feb. 15, 1934, Mayor W.D. Hayes, several City Council members, and well-known figures in the City’s business and professional life, gathered at the new Community House to pay tribute to Mary and Councilman Milton Perry Smith. In recognition of the leaders’ work, a photo portrait of each was unveiled and would be placed in a prominent area of the building.⁶⁸

Speakers, which included Community House leaders and Board of Education members, described how construction had begun less than a year before and how the building had taken shape largely through volunteer labor. Without donations of labor and equipment, the project’s cost would have added up to almost \$80,000.

In brief presentations, the speakers described the struggle to fund, plan and build Community House’s new 10-room home that also boasted a gymnasium and playroom.⁶⁹

The grand opening was postponed until Frances Lincoln Ford, who had been the organization’s president since 1925, was well enough to attend. However, she did not recover from a three-month illness. She died on March 21, 1934, at a Sioux City hospital.⁷⁰

“All who had worked with her may be forgiven for asking in their helplessness why she had to lay down her work so soon after seeing her vision materialize. A beautiful

⁶⁸ “Tribute Is Paid Social Worker: Councilman Smith Also Honored at Community House Fete” (The Sioux City Journal, Feb. 16, 1934, p. 12).

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ “Death Calls Mrs. W. Ford” (The Sioux City Journal, March 23, 1934, p. 14).

bronze memorial tablet was placed on the foyer wall in her memory of ‘unselfish and loyal unceasing service to the Community House,’” Hoyt said.⁷¹

Color, warmth and beauty

By late March, Community House programs were operating in the new building. Night School classes gathered in the lobby. People studying for their citizenship exams also met in the lobby where they sat on carpenters’ benches and discussed questions that might be asked at their tests. When heating was installed, Mary and Arlone no longer had to wear heavy coats at work.⁷²

Decorator Jack McKelvie’s plan for the interior was praised as “full of creative satisfaction...his plan of decoration was full of color, warmth and beauty. The woodwork in the lobby was painted a lovely vivid blue.”⁷³ McKelvie was a Davidson’s department store employee who taught classes in home decorating. Woodwork in the westside classrooms and the library was painted a copper-colored red.

Louise Ashley, in charge of Community House art classes, painted stars on the floors of the Americanization classrooms. She designed tiebacks bearing emblems of various nations for the curtains. In the library, Ashley, a graduate of Rockford College and the American Academy of Art, Chicago, painted symbols of the arts. The staff room emphasized the color and design of peasant art.⁷⁴

In spring 1934, the American Association of University Women (AAUW), under the direction of a Sioux City Public Library staff member, sorted and catalogued Community House books. The library had grown thanks to donations of used books. New books were purchased using a AAUW fund. Magazine subscriptions and used periodicals, including *Time*, *Reader’s Digest* and *Fortune*, were donated.

Programs flourished in the new building which brought a library, gym, nursery, club rooms, and well-equipped kitchen to daily life. Girls from the National Youth Administration (NYA), a New Deal agency that provided work and education for

⁷¹ Mabel Hoyt, p. 6.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

Americans 16-25 years old, and adults from the Works Progress Administration (WPA) provided supervision and assistance with programs and activities.

Back on the baseball diamond

On May 18, 1934, Mary again was in the spotlight. Some 3,000 baseball fans turned out at Stockyards Park to watch the Sioux City Cowboys take on the Omaha Packers in the Western League's season opener. It was the first Minor League baseball game Sioux City had seen in several years.

Mary was asked to pitch the first ball. It was a strike! The Cowboys went on to beat the Packers, 5-4.

Twenty years before, Mary had opened the season at Mizzou Park. "...Mary Treglia threw the first ball and Eddie Hahn swung at the breeze...." Sioux City advanced to win the pennant.⁷⁵

As always, *The Journal* ran the non-profit's weekly column, "Community House News." Only now, springtime news pointed to the Sixth and Morgan building. Alpha Sigma was resuming its Monday evening meetings in the club room. Mary and Arlone would report on the Kansas City social workers' conference they attended. Names of new volunteers were listed in the column. Senior and Junior Dramatics Clubs were in rehearsal for one-act productions. The Senior Art Club, Men's Social and Community Club, and Women of All Nations were putting down roots in the new building. The first student art exhibits were showcased.

As opening activities were bustling on the upper floors, Men's Club members were laying the gym floor and preparing it for finishing.

Mary and the Board had dared to dream and the dream was coming true. The Community House moved into the new building with a cash outlay of \$4,500 and donations of building materials amounting to \$10,000.⁷⁶ But disaster once again was brewing.

Another Floyd River flood

⁷⁵ "Indians Beat Battlers" (The Sioux City Journal, April 22, 1914, p. 10).

⁷⁶ Hoyt, p. 3.

“...There had always existed the danger of floods in the spring and the fall in the Sioux City region of the Floyd River Valley. In some years the water would rise, but stay within the riverbanks, and the next year the rise would be of such a degree that the whole area would be flooded and it was necessary for police and rescue workers to patrol the district in outboard motor boats, from Fourth Street to 27th Street.”⁷⁷

On June 7, 1934, a torrential downpour triggered flooding on the Floyd River as well as Perry Creek and the Big Sioux River. *The Sioux City Tribune* called it the “worst catastrophe of nature here since the memorable flood of 1892.”

Mary described its impact: “All the day and night of the 7th the Community House was completely marooned. We stood helplessly by and watched the water rise and ruthlessly destroy things that represented years of sacrifice and materials that were a source of pride to those who owned them. Meals were prepared for refugees over an electric plate since there was no gas.”⁷⁸

The Community House distributed clothing to 265 persons; 2,000 typhoid fever inoculations were given. The agency assisted the Red Cross with case work and distribution of chloride of lime to disinfect homes and other buildings. The Red Cross established headquarters in the Community House during the emergency set-up.⁷⁹

“... When everything looked bright and promising and the Men’s Club had just finished sanding the new floor, the June flood of 1934 came in all its fury. The water surrounded the House like a lake and touched the four-foot level on the walls. The newly sanded floor bulged so that the boards could be seen sticking up through the water. When the waters receded, the gym presented the most unpleasant and saddest picture one could imagine. For days the stench was almost unbearable. Men from the city carried out all the flooring that had been laid such a short time ago.”⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Hoyt, p. 4.

⁷⁸ Schieffer, p. 16.

⁷⁹ Schieffer, p. 16

⁸⁰ Hoyt, p. 6.

After the 1934 catastrophe, Mary was determined that the Community House should fight to secure Floyd Valley flood control. Almost every year, floods “brought heavy losses of property and untold suffering to hundreds of people in the neighborhood.”⁸¹

The Community House began holding meetings with neighborhood and area residents and government officials to develop flood-control plans. But it would be 24 years until planning would be completed.

A hand up for the unemployed

In the Community House’s second decade another massive problem faced neighborhood residents: the Great Depression. Many lost their jobs, leaving them in some cases without even basic needs. A schedule of special classes for unemployed people was launched in autumn 1934.

- Mondays: Business English; make-up; public speaking; and shorthand;
- Tuesdays: Advanced shorthand; bookkeeping;
- Wednesdays: Business English; expression; English; sewing;
- Thursdays: Advanced shorthand; bookkeeping; public speaking;
- Fridays: Make-up; beginners’ shorthand; and sewing;
- Saturday: Expression

On Oct. 15, 1934, Mary delivered a speech on KSCJ radio. Promoting the Community House’s mission was an ongoing objective. “The purpose of the Community House is serving the needs of the neighborhood and promoting better citizenship among the foreign-born population. Its clientele represents a cross-section of the entire community.”⁸²

The Community House was non-sectarian and non-denominational, she told the radio audience. Governed by a 21-member board, the Community House’s programs were divided into three phases: service, education and recreation.

Mary long had dreamed of starting a nursery school at the Community House. In 1935, that dream came true when Isabel Robinson, the State Supervisor of Emergency Nursery Schools in Iowa, approved a progressive pre-school plan for the Community House. The nursery school would serve 50 children for morning and afternoon sessions.

⁸¹ Hoyt, p. 7.

⁸² “Goal of Social Center Given” (The Sioux City Journal, Oct. 16, 1934, p. 7).

The plan included “subtly carried on” instruction in habits and nutrition needs of the mothers.”⁸³

The Journal ran a photograph and feature story on the Community House’s WPA nursery school, describing it as “one of Miss Treglia’s pet projects.” The photo showed 10 children in line for their daily dose of cod liver oil. “The pupils have an enviable attendance record. Neither low temperature nor high water interferes with them.”⁸⁴ The photograph shows: Lena and Tony De Fozios; Sam and Virginia Guidice; Leon and Donald Hair; Catherine Pope; Arthur Hitt; Alexis Gratcoff; and John Bucchichico.

The Community House ended its well-baby clinic due to inadequate space. The clinic was transferred to the Visiting Nurses headquarters at City Hall, sponsored by the Junior League. Still, many positive things were happening in 1935, including Women of All Nations’ softball team victories and Judge Munger’s party for naturalized citizens. The NYA boys were repairing the flood-damaged gym floor so more activities could resume and thrive.

Theater and sports thrive

On March 28, 1935, the “first annual” Community House basketball tournament drew teams to the gym to compete for the Community House Cup. Two silver loving cups, one donated by Thorpe Jewelry, were permanent trophies. The winning team kept the Community House Cup until the next tournament. Participating teams were Hobson Hall, Community House Aces, East High Hi-Yy, Central Hi-Yy, Community House Athletics and A.Z.A.⁸⁵

On May 14, 1935, the Community House’s All-Nations softball team defeated A.Z.A. at Anderson Park, 4 to 0, with Ukeness pitching a one-hit game. Elukivich was the catcher. The All Nations team was organized by Nick Chudilowsky, 1712 East Seventh St., as business manager, and Cecil Means, 604 Morgan Street, as field manager.⁸⁶

⁸³ Hoyt, pp. 7-8.

⁸⁴ “WPA Nursery at Community House” (The Sioux City Journal, March 13, 1936, p. 8).

⁸⁵ “Cage Meet at Civic Center: Eight Teams Entered in Community House Tournament (The Sioux City Journal, March 27, 1935, p. 19).

⁸⁶ “Community House Wins Game 4-0” (The Sioux City Journal, May 15, 1935, p. 26).

On Friday, May 17, 1935, the curtain lifted on two one-act plays and a musical skit presented in the gym. For the first time, the Community House had theatrical curtains and a cyclorama. Proceeds from the evening's performances helped pay for the cost of hanging the curtains. The first one-act served up a comedy about a young married couple and two mothers-in-law. Betty Newton, Frances Peterson, Cepha Pasek and Raymond Fisher were the actors. Mabel Hoyt directed the show.

The second one-act, "Time and Tide" by Otis Roark, was a comedy satire about bridge players. Betty Newton, who was head of the Community House dramatics dept., directed. Mrs. Perry Gleissman, Marcella Larson, Cepha Pasek and Betty Newton were cast members.

A musical skit featured old country songs and Italian dance in native costume by Angelina Stabile. Josephine Stabile was the accompanist. James Short, a versatile Black dancer, performed a tap dance. Raymond Fisher directed the skit.⁸⁷

Experimental Theater had flourished since the Community House's early years. Now in the new building it had a permanent home with theatrical equipment, including footlights, floodlights, border lights and spotlights. Four or more public productions were presented each year. Plays were chosen to appeal to varied interests among neighborhood residents and Sioux Cityans who financially supported theater at the Community House.

Experimental Theater met monthly to review new plays, discuss stage make-up and other theater topic, and to present one-acts. The group attracted talent and audiences from throughout Sioux City."⁸⁸

Protect these people – now!

In early March 1936, the Floyd River again rose to destructive levels. Experienced in flood preparation, women in neighborhood homes "began to carry the canned goods from the basements and attempted to pile the furniture and bedding as high as possible in anticipation of the flood which was to follow the heavy winter snows."⁸⁹

⁸⁷ "Community House Notes" (The Sioux City Journal, May 13, 1935, p. 5).

⁸⁸ Hoyt, p. 8.

⁸⁹ Hoyt, p. 7.

By Saturday night, March 7, some 200 families were forced to abandon their homes. The Community House was open through the night but because its plumbing had to be disconnected to prevent back-up, it could not house families.⁹⁰ Instead, the Community House worked with the Red Cross to provide beds and food to families at the YWCA.

Eastside families had been patient as the City dragged its feet on flood control. In the March 10, 1936 *Journal* Mary lambasted City leaders: "...The City ought not to allow prevailing conditions to exist year after year. It should do something to protect these people – and do it now."⁹¹

Flood-control work was at a stand-still. Several plans had been tried. The city had spent \$2,300 on the project; \$157,000 in WPA funds had been used up. At first it seemed that these combined efforts were successful, but the flooding persisted. More radical measures were needed to harness the Floyd.⁹²

Many Eastside residents owned their homes and most of their capital was wrapped up in their houses, Mary pointed out. "Their homes mean just as much to them as more pretentious homes in other residence districts mean to their occupants. Yet, under present conditions, every spring they have to worry over the possibility of flood. All too often the possibility becomes reality and they have to move out to save themselves and their families. Of course, this means serious damage and heavy expense."⁹³

How much more damage and disruption would it take until something was done? The 1936 flood brought more questions than ever, and Mary Treglia was pleading for action.

"In the near future there will be meetings at the Community house and the YWCA to enable East Side residents to give public expressions to their feelings and to launch

⁹⁰ "Further Rise Expect in Floyd River" (The Sioux City Journal, March 10, 1936, p. 1).

⁹¹ "Flood Refugees Wonder How Long City Will Tolerate Floyd River Rampages" (The Sioux City Journal, March 10, 1936, p. 8).

⁹² "History of Mary J. Treglia Community House" p. 4.

⁹³ "Flood Refugees Wonder How Long City Will Tolerate Floyd River Rampages."

some sort of a movement promising more substantial results than conversation and blueprints.”⁹⁴

Four weeks later, the Sioux City Chamber of Commerce announced members of the Floyd River Committee: Edward C. Palmer, chair; H.A. Jacobsen; G.F. Silknitter; Arthur Sanford; and Mary Treglia. “The committee will act as a liaison group between the City Council and the WPA in an effort to lessen flood perils and improve conditions in the Floyd River district.”⁹⁵

On Wednesday night, April 15, 1936, 350 Eastside residents showed up at what *The Journal* called “a protest meeting” at the Community House. “Because they said, the city council has repeatedly tabled the project, sponsors of the meeting appointed a committee to bring pressure to bear on the council for the resumption of the work. A member of that group will be present at every open meeting of the council to carry out the lobby program of the protester.”⁹⁶

Committee members were the Rev. Albert Conlin, assistant pastor of St. Joseph’s Catholic Church; the Rev. J.H. Patton, pastor of Mount Olive Baptist Church; Frank LaScala; Frank Stabile, Jr.; Steve Brienzo; L.W. Peterson; Russell Rich; Mrs. M.W. Baldwin, executive secretary of the Sioux City Humane Society; and Mary Treglia.

The city and WPA met with neighborhood residents at monthly meetings to report progress on flood control and to answer questions. Yet, the worst was yet to come.

Activities needed more than ever

Eastside residents increasingly turned to the Community House. New activities were added to old ones in Fall 1936. Programs included music, nutrition, handiwork, and social times. Parents of preschool children studied parent education.

The Alpha Sigma Club resumed Monday evening dinner meetings. Women of All Nations Club met Wednesday evenings. A recently organized men’s club came back. Boys’ clubs for all ages included “The Aces,” “The Owls” and a metal work group.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ “Floyd River Group Named” (The Sioux City Journal, April 9, 1936, p. 2).

⁹⁶ “Ask Action on Flood Project” (The Sioux City Journal, April 16, 1936, p. 1).

Joseph Waddington and James Karr of the WPA recreation department supervised boys' clubs and gym activities.

Louise Ashley again led the Senior Art Club. Mrs. Louis Seek organized a junior art group. Eva Knight led the Leisure Hour Club and the Girls Homemakers. Doris Nichols, Florence Stebbins and Beulah Shaffer of the WPA recreation group were in charge of crafts, dramatics, dancing and games. Arlone Kinkaid, Community House assistant director, handled training and supervision.

There were groups for ping-pong, metal tapping, plastic work and stamps. Three dramatics organizations were meeting: the Community House Theater; the Community House Players; and the Children's Theater. Lucille LaValliere supervised.

The Community House had two Girl Scout troops and a Brownie pack; Eva Courey and Hazel Barnes were leaders. Merle Brooks was the preschool head teacher. A well-baby clinic returned thanks to Junior League sponsorship.

Adult Education Department night classes offered instruction in the English language, reading, writing, Americanization work for citizenship papers and discussion of current topics. Mabel Hoyt was in charge of the classes, assisted by Frances L. Peterson. Staff teachers were Alice Swan, Ida Frerich, Martin Fisher, Paul McKenna and Bud Tilton. The Board of Education assigned Mabel Hoyt, Caroline Kriege and Miss Ashley to classes at the Community House.

Swan and Frerich taught afternoon classes in English, reading, writing and citizenship. Margaret Dueschle taught daily clothing classes. Caroline Kriege taught Tuesday-night nutrition classes.

Dances for young people, 14 years and older, were offered from 8:30 to 10 p.m. Fridays. The WPA recreation department provided orchestra music. All people who registered for activities received membership cards, assuring them of free admission to entertainment events.

The following months brought more badly needed services, including high school-level and homemakers' classes; medical services after 6 p.m. for homeless people when other agencies were closed; meals and food staples; and assistance with rent and utilities. The library now held 3,231 books and magazines on an array of subjects, maintained by the AAUW.

Many Community House programs continued to grow, including the Italian Club, Women of all Nations, Alpha Sigma, sewing classes, art classes, Men's Club and the playroom group which brought in new faces each year.

The attendance for 12 months 1936-37 was 42,774. By 1941, the annual attendance would grow to 69,913.

Eastside activism

An Eastside protest began on Sept. 6, 1939, when the Board of Education ended busing to Franklin and Hobson schools. Parents reacted by keeping their children (116 pupils) home. They demanded busing be resumed for kindergarten-through-second-grade children who had to cross railroad tracks to get to school.

A delegation of parents presented its case to the Board with the repeated declaration that they would not send their young children back to school until they were given bus service. As the dispute went on, Mary helped work out a solution and presented it to the Board.

A group of businessmen would provide temporary bus service to Hobson and Franklin until December. The Board would then authorize Mary to use a school system-owned bus for the children's transportation. Mary would negotiate directly with the operator of the bus or obtain the use of a privately owned bus.⁹⁷ The solution was approved and the children returned to school.

Out of the busing issue, the "East Side Civic Club" organized. It met on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month at the Community House.⁹⁸ Florence LaScala was named chairman. The club raised 35 percent of the cost of the first month's bus service. The businessmen, who remained anonymous, paid the balance. The club planned to survey the district to determine the number of children between ages 4 and 16. A committee of four men was named to see that only eligible children rode the bus.

Another contentious school issue for Eastside parents? Lunchtime. Children were not allowed to eat lunch inside school buildings. Instead, they walked home for lunch despite weather conditions and dangers, such as railroad tracks. Parents demanded

⁹⁷ "Bus Proposal Gets Approval" (The Sioux City Journal, Sept. 26, 1939, p. 1).

⁹⁸ "Parents of Old Lincoln District Set Meeting Days" (The Sioux City Journal, Oct. 6, 1939, p. 19).

that their children be allowed to take lunch and eat at school.⁹⁹ The Board of Education decided to “extend the privilege” of eating at school to children living 12 or more blocks from school.¹⁰⁰

Another push for action to help low-income residents came on Sept. 23, 1940, when Mayor David F. Loepp and Mary led a discussion of a plan to establish a Sioux City housing authority. The agency would work in cooperation with the Federal government to build low-cost rental homes. A meeting was held the following evening in the Community House to select speakers and locations for meetings throughout the city.¹⁰¹

Meanwhile, Community House activities were flourishing. February 1940 attendance was 5,466, an increase of 1,251 over February 1939.¹⁰² March 18, 1940, marked the opening of the Community House Basketball Tournament. Twenty clubs registered to play: Major AA; Albertson’s; Skaggs; Old Home; Tony Giambruno Confectionery; Bronson; Nugget Tires; Mann Sports; Wincharger Comets; Perasso’s; minor AA; Smithland Ramblers; West Side; Hinton; Cossacks; Cecelia Park Merchants; A.Z.A.; First Covenant Church; Salvation Army; and Peters Park. The 1939 tournament had drawn just 13 “quints.”¹⁰³

The Community House’s monthly magazine, *Vox Pop*, was published “by and in the interest of the Community House clubs to foster a spirit of unity and friendship to serve as a medium of ideas.” Editor-in-chief was Lucille LaValliere. The publication had artists, a proofreader, reporters appointed by participating clubs, assembly staff, a subscription department and distribution staff. Thirty-three groups were represented in the December 1940 issue.¹⁰⁴

Citizenship students shine

⁹⁹ “Lunch Question Is Studied by East Side Club” (Nov. 23, 1939, p. 12).

¹⁰⁰ “Parents Will Call On Board” (Sept. 15, 1939, p. 6).

¹⁰¹ “Discuss Plans for Building Low Rent Residences Here” (The Sioux City Journal, Sept. 24, 1940, p. 9).

¹⁰² “Community House Activities” (The Sioux City Journal, March 14, 1940, p. 11).

¹⁰³ “18 Quintets in Tourney Here” (The Sioux City Journal, March 17, 1940, p. 1 Sports).

¹⁰⁴ “Community House Activities” (The Sioux City Journal, Dec. 8, 1940, p. 26).

Adult education and citizenship classes continued to be core services. Nationalities changed as the Eastside changed. In 1940: "A young Swede who brought a letter to class the other night telling how his brother...had been drafted into the first compulsory army of Sweden since the days of Napoleon; a Mexican who has walked to the Community House every Tuesday and Thursday night all through the winter from South Sioux City; an Italian; a Greek who possesses all the personality, charm and philosophy of a modern Plato; a Chinese boy and a young Jewish Rabbi.

"Visitors to the classes were impressed with the extent of the knowledge possessed by the students. One of these, Mrs. Pratt, said: 'Any native-born American who listened could not help but feel humble in the face of the utter devotion and sincere loyalty to the United States on the part of these new citizens who recognize the blessings which sometimes some of us who are born here take for granted.'"¹⁰⁵

The Board of Education continued to provide teachers Mabel Hoyt and Caroline Kriege. Additionally, Alice Swan and Mrs. Merle Brooks of the WPA Adult Education program, and Lillian Gillette, of the WPA Recreation Dept., taught night school.

By 1940, interpreting services were offered in the following languages: French, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Lithuanian, Polish, Hebrew, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Armenian, Greek, Romanian, Syrian, Bohemian, Mexican, Croatian, and Yiddish. "This service proved useful not only to individuals but the business community as well," according to the Mary Treglia Annual Report, 1939-40.

A source of hope

A Community House Christmas party took place just after the Dec. 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor. Adult education teacher Alice Swan wrote a letter-to-the-editor about the event as a source of hope.

"...Across the waters nation is fighting against nation; neighbors are grabbing at each other's throats; and the lust for power among so many individuals seems to have shut from all human hearts that 'peace on earth' for which man has prayed since ages began. Will it come? Can it come – when all around us the clouds of war have gathered so thick and black? When men, women and little children awake each day to untold

¹⁰⁵ Schieffer cites "Mary Treglia Annual Report, 1939-40," pp. 10-11.

horrors and sufferings which war brings, and to the pangs of hunger and starvation which follow in its wake?

“Yet in one little corner of our own city, that took place which puts hope and courage into the darkest soul. Here, seated all in one room, festive with Christmas decorations, were about 75 people who represented many different countries of this world...the spirit of Christmas reigned.

“Those from Italy, Russia, Greece, Assyria, and from many other corners of the earth sat together and enjoyed to the fullest the spirit of a real Christmas...Here under the guidance and influence of the director, Miss Mary Treglia, neighbors from all the world joined hands. For it is this love for all humanity, and the appreciation of good in all mankind, which has made Miss Treglia the wonderful influence that she is today. Not only at the Community House is this influence felt, but it has gone far beyond our own community, city and state. Here is the real spirit which Christ came to bring to us all.”¹⁰⁶

Adapting to change

Wartime rationing, assisting the Red Cross, and helping families whose fathers and other loved ones were serving overseas challenged the Community House. Another change? Mothers who went to work outside the home.

“...The ability of Community House and its leaders to adapt to these new demands contributed to its success,” according to social worker Schieffer. “The need to constantly review the services required by the community had enabled it to overcome the odds and survive where many others had failed.”¹⁰⁷

“...Nursery school playrooms and playgrounds were put into use as providers of childcare; the residents of the area depended on these services more than ever. It was important to give the users of these services as much stability as possible and the Community House became an oasis of pleasant, free attitudes when contrasted with the upheaval of the world....”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ “The Mail Bag: Christmas Spirit Triumphs” (The Sioux City Journal, Dec. 25, 1941, p. 12).

¹⁰⁷ Schieffer, p. 24.

¹⁰⁸ Schieffer, p. 26.

Juvenile delinquency-prevention activities aimed at keeping youngsters off the streets and encouraging good manners and socially acceptable behavior. Gym classes, tether ball and basketball were popular. Dancing, dramatics and craft groups provided relaxation and fun. The January 1942 attendance was 6,165.¹⁰⁹

The Community House was active in defense preparedness. At a Feb. 3, 1942, Community House meeting, Mary was named temporary chairman of Precinct 21 of the Civilian Defense Organization.¹¹⁰ At other meeting sites, firefighters demonstrated ways to extinguish incendiary bombs. "Blackouts" were practiced at the Community House; everybody was instructed on how to react when all lights were turned off.¹¹¹

In August 1942, 15 young women, all Alpha Sigma Club members, volunteered for fall 1942 services when one-third of Community House work was devoted to the war effort, including Red Cross first-aid training, home nursing classes, sewing and knitting.¹¹²

In September 1942, the Community House was designated an affiliate of the National Institute of Immigrant Welfare. This connection kept the Community House informed of changes in alien status, including travel restrictions. All information was free.¹¹³

Approximately 150 people representing 14 nationalities registered for 1942 fall and winter citizenship classes. Classes were held at the Community House; Greenville Public Library, 220 S. Fairmount St.; Booker T. Washington Center, 722 W. Seventh St.; and St. Joseph Mission, 414 S. Howard St.

A haven for overlooked service personnel

¹⁰⁹ "Community House Activities" (The Sioux City Journal, Feb. 15, 1942, p. 21).

¹¹⁰ "3 Precincts Hold Defense Meets; 2 More Tonight" (The Sioux City Journal, Feb. 3, 1942, p. 9).

¹¹¹ "Community House Activities" (The Sioux City Journal, Jan. 9, 1942, p. 12).

¹¹² "15 Community House Workers Are Signed Up" (The Sioux City Journal, Aug. 25, 1942, p. 2).

¹¹³ "Alien Service Bureau Set Up" (The Sioux City Journal, Sept. 27, 1942, p. 24).

Mary and Stella Sanford deeply appreciated the U.S. military. But they saw African American servicemen based at the Sioux City Air Base shamefully treated as “strangers in a white man’s town.”¹¹⁴

Determined to support the servicemen with a place for rest, relaxation and recreation, Mary and Stella found a location: the first floor of a two-story building at West Seventh and Bluff streets in autumn 1942. The WPA and USO provided funds for renovation, maintenance, and an attendant. Sioux City Art Center staff painted a mural depicting a pastoral scene on three walls of the social center. Davidson’s Department Store employee Jack McKelvie decorated the interior. Donations of furniture helped. Mary had faith contributions would continue.

By mid-October 1942, a bus began bringing servicemen from camp to the center where they enjoyed food, snacks, books and easy chairs, darts, cribbage, piano, jukebox music and dancing. “...All of us who helped create their service center consider it a means of expressing our appreciation for what those boys and men are doing for our country,” Mary said.¹¹⁵

A *Journal* story about the social center was written by artist West Bonnifield who taught classes at the Sioux City Art Center and the Community House. Bonnifield came to Sioux City in 1940. The son of an Iowa pioneer family, the Ottumwa native studied at the Phoenix Art Institute in New York; the Chicago Art Institute; and the American Academy of Art in Chicago.¹¹⁶ He was a student of famed sculptor Alfonso Iannelli.

The Community House attendance climbed to 91,149 for the year ending in March 1943, an increase of 21,236 over the preceding year. Stella Stanford was elected president of the Board.

‘The world needs leadership’

The WPA was liquidated in June 1943. The program, under Secretary of Commerce Harry Hopkins, had created jobs for more than 8.5 million unemployed people, beginning in April 1935. WPA workers were exceedingly helpful to the Community

¹¹⁴ West Bonnifield, “Service Center for Negro Soldiers” (The Sioux City Journal, Nov. 15, 1942, p. 29).

¹¹⁵ West Bonnifield, “Welcome Sign Hangs Out at – Service Center for Negro Soldiers” (The Sioux City Sunday Journal, Nov. 15, 1942, p. 26).

¹¹⁶ “Arts Program to Entertain Soroptomists” (The Sioux City Journal, April 12, 1942, p. 22).

House and other non-profits. But WWII created jobs and ended the need for the program. Hopkins was born at 512 10th St., Sioux City.

Summer 1943 attendance increased by more than 4,000 over the previous year. As the war wore on, Mary promoted the need for leadership. She addressed Morningside College students, women faculty and guests on the topic at Morningside College's Agora Club leadership dinner on Oct. 15, 1943, at the Mayfair Hotel.

"When viewing leadership, one must consider whether it has merit, not whether it has been accepted by society. Leadership is intangible: it is felt, rather than seen. Leadership can emerge from where it is least expected. Leadership need not involve large areas to be effective. Leadership creates a respect for human values. The world needs leadership today more than ever in history – leadership which has courage to stand up for its convictions; leadership which can survive disillusionments all of us must undergo in a realistic situation when we see how many selfish, personally ambitious people there are in the world."

Four special guests were in the audience: Dr. and Mrs. Earl A. Roadman, Lillian Dimmitt, and Dean of Women Alva Tolf who eventually would take a key role in the Community House's very survival.¹¹⁷

George Murphy was among leaders the Community House helped to shape. Murphy grew up in the Eastside, attended Lincoln School and was among "the most faithful visitors at the Community House" when it was at 1604 Fourth St.

In September 1944, Murphy returned to Sioux City after serving almost five years in the Navy and earning Chief's rating. He had been stationed at Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941.

His service included convoy duty with the invasion army in Africa and nine months in the South Pacific. He earned campaign ribbons for pre-Pearl Harbor service and for service in the Asiatic-Pacific and North Africa. His ribbons carried five stars, denoting participation in five major engagements. An eye disease that threatened his vision forced him to return to the United States. *The Journal* reported his story, highlighting his

¹¹⁷ "Mary Treglia Sees New Need for Leadership" (The Sioux City Journal" Oct. 26, 1943, p. 7).

Eastside roots.¹¹⁸

It did not go unnoticed that *The Journal* referred to Murphy's boyhood neighborhood as "what used to be known as east bottoms." Mary objected to the term "East Bottoms." It was offensive. She expressed her resentment in October 1944 after an attorney in a district court trial used the term "Sioux City's bottoms." Her protest was published in *The Journal's* Oct. 1, 1944, editions.

"...It is regrettable that in war time a district that has exceeded its quota of men for the armed services should be publicly maligned as one steeped in crime that its young people should be labeled embryo criminals and that its homes should be described as places of quarrels and drunkenness. To indulge in such statements is to use rabble rousing tactics to win one's cause. According to records in the county attorney's office, a minimum of cases came from this district. The east and south sides have had the lowest rates of juvenile delinquency for a period of years...The east side has produced many outstanding citizens, enlisted men and officers, professional men and women, businessmen and women and law enforcing officers...."

Gains and a great loss

Changing social conditions and the need to constantly adapt to those changes meant staying relevant. Mary reported on that effort at the Community House's April 1945 annual meeting. Her report revealed work in the areas of "...return veterans' rehabilitation, certificates of registry, naturalization, advice to men in military personnel, child welfare problems and counseling of various kinds...There was excellent cooperation with the department of immigration and naturalization at Omaha in assisting with several difficult problems which concerned clients as well as the referral of students to Community house for further training...."¹¹⁹

Mary commended Briar Cliff College volunteers' "valuable service." She praised consultants under the joint sponsorship of the Red Cross and Board of Education. She described adult education and nutrition classes. Women of All Nations Club marked its

¹¹⁸ "Negro Cook Wins Chief's Rating" (The Sioux City Journal, Sept. 17, 1944, p. 24).

¹¹⁹ "Community House Work Emphasizes Changing Social Trends, Problems" (The Sioux City Journal, April 11, 1945, p. 9).

23rd anniversary. New Board members were elected, including Alva Tolf, Morningside College's women's dean.

Total attendance for the year was 70,482. In addition to thanking the Board of Education and various people, the Board expressed appreciation for the cooperation of *The Journal* and *The Journal-Tribune*.¹²⁰

Mary's mother, Rose, died at the age of 76 on Dec. 13, 1945, at the Sydney Apartments, 10th and Pierce streets, where she and Mary lived. Rose's funeral was at the nearby Cathedral of the Epiphany. Burial was at Calvary Cemetery off Military Road.

In Rose's memory, Mary established the Rose Treglia Golden Age Club in 1947 for people 60 and older. The club offered opportunities for men and women to make friends and discover new activities. They met for a potluck lunch and activities once a month. Hobby shows, arts-and-crafts, dramatics, song fests and work sessions on a mimeographed monthly news bulletin were some of the club's early activities.

The club began with 12 members. By 1966, more than 60 people would be registered. Throughout the years, Sioux City Quota Club hosted an annual party for the Golden Age members during either the Thanksgiving or Christmas season. The parties usually were held at a downtown hotel ballroom and offered entertainment.¹²¹

Twenty-fifth anniversary

World War II ended in 1945. That year, Community House boys started the Teen Canteen. Returning servicemen supervised the project, giving the boys more direction and support than they had had for some time.

In 1946, the Community House celebrated its 25th anniversary. Needs that compelled its beginning had not diminished. They had expanded into other areas.¹²² Mary continued to lead the way.

On Sept. 8, 1946, *The Journal* named Mary a Woman of Achievement, adding to a long list of local, state and national honors for social work leadership. A full-page story honored her and described a routine day at the Community House:

¹²⁰ Ibid

¹²¹ "Senior Citizens Keep Active in Clubs Here" (The Sioux City Journal, May 15, 1962, p. 2).

¹²² Schieffer, p. 24.

“Children, three of them, played jacks on the immaculate floor of the Community house reception room. An odor of fresh bread and meat balls, pungent with seasoning of another land, designated that the kitchen was nearby. A little girl practiced scales laboriously under patient tutelage of a volunteer teacher. Three women of as many nationalities visited and hummed ‘Swing Low Sweet Chariot’ and other folk music from time to time when the piano was silenced.

“Miss Mary Treglia, executive director of the center and today’s Sunday Journal Woman of Achievement, waved from her office desk, greeting an Armenian gentleman seeking the library. Almost simultaneously she scribbled a pass to the poolroom downstairs to a group of teen-agers.

“Mrs. Amy Shaffer, one of the trio chatting there, summed it all up, quite simply, in low spoken words: ‘She is our meat; our bread, our water. She is our all.’”¹²³

In 1948, 17 nationalities were represented at the Community House.

Post-war challenges

The Community House pushed forward amid post-WWII challenges of the polio epidemic, Cold War tension, and McCarthyism. It had the help of 40 volunteers and the support of community groups. The Sioux City Junior league donated its former lending library of more 500 volumes to the Community House library. The AAUW, which had founded the library, turned it over to Community House that year.

In December 1949, Mary was called to help identify victims of one of Sioux City’s greatest tragedies: the Dec. 15 Swift meatpacking plant explosion. Woodbury County Coroner Dr. James Christiansen and Dr. G.E. Barr pronounced the victims dead. Detective Roy Landers was in charge of identifying bodies. He was assisted by the Red Cross and Mary who knew many Swift employees through their Community House participation.¹²⁴

The Swift explosion received intense news coverage. Mary believed the news media played a key role in “creating community morale, promoting civic progress, and in focusing attention on social problems which need solution.” On Oct. 6, 1950, she

¹²³ “Mary Treglia Honored for Community Service” (The Sioux City Sunday Journal, Sept. 8, 1946, p. 4, sec. 2).

¹²⁴ Robert F. Coats, “Swift Explosion of 1949, in Which 21 Died, Long Will Be Remembered By Sioux City” (The Sioux City Journal, July 25, 1954, p. 174).

stressed the importance of a free press in her article written for National Newspaper Week. She praised *Journal-Tribune* publications for helping to promote social understanding.

“...News stories of juvenile delinquency no longer mention names. Geographic areas are described by direction rather than by derogatory labels. Generalizations about nationality groups are not considered good journalism.

“The generous amount of space allotted civic enterprise has helped to promote welfare measures – brought about flood control projects, encouraged the establishment of nursery schools, social centers, recreational activities and adult educational programs.

“A free and responsible press’ is an instrument for social progress and must constantly be aware of its mission in maintaining the American heritage. In these days of confused thinking and emotional hysteria – the responsibility of the press cannot be over-emphasized.

“All citizens must vigilantly see the truth. A newspaper which honestly reports the news and through its editorials, discusses fully and fairly the issues of the day, can help immeasurably in the process of developing intelligent citizens to whom democracy will have a real and vital meaning.”¹²⁵

Morgan Street summertime fun

A portion of Morgan Street was blocked off for a street dance on June 30, 1950. About 300 people of all ages shared in the fun. The dance was the first event in a series of community night programs sponsored by the Community House and the City’s Public Recreation Department. Neighborhood children decorated the site for the evening which kicked off with a picnic supper at Anderson Park. Records were played over a public address system for the dance which included square dancing called by Jayne Yates. The community night programs were held every two weeks.¹²⁶

Annual Community House festivals also drew crowds. On April 18, 1951, about 200 people shared dinner and enjoyed performances of dances from “Siam, Syria,

¹²⁵ Mary J. Treglia, “A Free Press and Your Community” printed during National Newspaper Week (The Sioux City Journal, Oct. 6, 1950, p. 10).

¹²⁶ “Community House Outdoor Dancing Proves Popular” (The Sioux City Journal, July 1, 1950, p. 6).

Hawaii, Sweden, Scotland, Ireland, Greece, Bolivia and Argentina.” An interpretive dance of a “Negro spiritual” and a square dance were part of the event aimed at promoting understanding of the many nationalities involved in Community House life.¹²⁷

Sanford Center connection

On Sunday, June 17, 1951, Sanford Center at West 17th and Geneva streets was dedicated. The total \$100,000 cost was a no-strings-attached gift from Stella and Arthur Sanford’s Stellart Foundation to further interracial understanding and better community living.

Named in honor of its benefactors, Sanford Center was an outgrowth of the Booker T. Washington Center, established in 1933 in sparse rented space at 712½ W. Seventh St. Mary Treglia and Stella Sanford helped Elonza Trosper set up the Center’s programs. Mary Treglia was the unpaid administrator and adviser. In 1945, the Center moved to somewhat better quarters at 922½ W. Seventh St. Now, Sanford Center was celebrated as among the most modern community centers in the country.

The Journal reported: “As one enters the new center, one sees on the north wall of the entrance a marble plaque which acknowledges the inspiration furnished by Miss Treglia and Mrs. Trosper in the program of building this new center:

Sanford Center

*Given to the people of Sioux City by Stella and Arthur Sanford to
further interracial understanding and better community living.*

This building was inspired by the ideals and work of

Mary J. Treglia, administrator, and Elonza B. Trosper, director.

Dedicated by the Honorable Guy M. Gillette, United States Senator,

June 17, 1951.¹²⁸

Changing times

The Community House always was adapting to changing social issues and the needs they created. Mary addressed Woodbury County Rural Women about significant

¹²⁷ “Second Annual Fest at Community House Draws 200 Persons” (The Sioux City Journal, April 19, 1951, p. 26).

¹²⁸ Park Rispalje, “Sanford Center Here Fulfills Dream” (The Sioux City Sunday Journal, News Feature Magazine, p. 1).

changes that were making society “far less close-knit in character than it was a generation ago.

“One child in eight does not live with both parents. Twenty percent of mothers with children younger than 18 work outside the home. The number of children born to unmarried parents had increased by 80 percent since 1940.

“Divorces, which a few years ago, showed their greatest number among childless couples, were gaining in 1950 among couples with children,” she told the group at a Mayfair Hotel tea.¹²⁹

The path to citizenship also had become slower and more complicated. Fear of subversives fueled new laws that confused and frightened aliens, especially older people. In a 1953 syndicated column, Harry Boyd, who grew up in Sioux City and became editor of *The Cedar Rapids Gazette*, commented on the National Federation of Settlement Houses and Neighborhood Centers’ annual report. He quoted a *New York Times* story about it:

“A ‘climate of distrust and fear’ created by the investigations of Senator McCarthy and by the passage of the McCarran-Walter immigration act has ‘heightened intercultural tensions’ in the settlement house areas...

“People in the neighborhoods are afraid to join anything...newspaper reports of people losing their jobs because of such associations (with groups that seemed progressive and constructive but have since been listed as subversive) and questions that they themselves have faced, create a kind of timidity and fear that is quite out of keeping with the traditional American freedom which all cherish.”¹³⁰

A McCarran Security Act provision required aliens to register each year. In 1951, the registration deadline was midnight, Jan. 11. Nine-hundred-three aliens were living in Sioux City or its immediate area. Approximately 250 had registered at the Community House by the deadline. Aliens also could register at the Post Office.

“Although the deadline for registration was midnight Wednesday, some aliens were unable to fill out registration forms because they had misplaced previous registration

¹²⁹ “Farm Women Pick Officers” (The Sioux City Journal, Sept. 26, 1951, p. 5).

¹³⁰ Harry Boyd, “My America (The Sioux City Journal, Feb. 19, 1953, p. 6).

numbers. These unregistered persons were urged to stop at the Community House within the next two days.

“Miss Mary Treglia...an experienced adviser on immigration matters, said registration of the 250 persons here moved quickly and efficiently because of widespread and effective publicity and the efforts of Community House staff.

“Many of the registrants already have taken out preliminary citizenship papers...The registration act applied to all aliens, whether they had registered in 1940 or not.

“At least 22 countries were represented by aliens...They included England, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, Lebanon, Syria, Denmark, Norway, Lithuania, Mexico, Sweden, Austria, The Netherlands, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia...Jamaica, Greece, Poland and Latvia.”¹³¹

‘The aliens are afraid’

Mary Treglia explained the burden the McCarran Act put on these people in a Jan. 25, 1953, *Journal* story reported by Jerry White:

“But I don’t understand. Why is this? What have we done?”

“Those are the words that Miss Mary Treglia hears many times. The speakers are aliens, who must register with the government before the month ends. Miss Treglia, her assistant Jayne Yates, and volunteers from the Venture Club, a Sioux City service club, have helped about 130 aliens to register under provisions of the McCarran immigration bill.

“These persons must report their alien registration number, full name, registered name, residence, marital status, birthday date and place of entrance into the United States.

“If they do not register, they are subject to deportation.

“‘The aliens are afraid,’ Miss Treglia said. ‘Some of them cannot understand. They have been here 50 or 60 years and they have been good Americans. Now they think they must register like criminals.’

“One woman complained recently to Miss Treglia: ‘I have raised three sons. They have fought for the United States. All three have won Purple Hearts. I am their mother – can I be a criminal?’

¹³¹ “Signup of Aliens Totals About 250 from 22 Nations,” (The Sioux City Journal, Jan. 11, 1951, p. 16).

“This woman and other aliens have been confused by radio and press reports about the McCarran act. The law was a campaign issue during the general election and the resultant publicity did much to confuse the aliens.

“They go to the Community House for advice and aid. They respect Miss Treglia.

“A neighbor recently told an alien: ‘We’re going to send you back to where you came from.’

“The alien said, ‘Oh, no, you’re not – I’m going to see Miss Treglia and she won’t let that happen.’

“Some of them cannot speak or read English, so linguists are employed by the Community House to help break the language barrier.

“The alien registration must be repeated every year. After the registration, the aliens are given identification cards. These cards must be carried at all times by aliens. They are subject to arrest if they do not have the card when it is requested.

“‘Aliens have been set apart from the rest of Americans by these regulations,’ Miss Treglia explained. ‘The natural citizen does not have to carry an identification card – the natural citizen cannot have his home searched without a warrant as can be done to aliens – the natural citizen does not have to be afraid.’

“Many aliens are trying to become citizens, Miss Treglia reported. Some of them are unable to obtain their citizenship papers because of loss of records.

“‘Others have difficulty in becoming citizens because of new regulations,’ Miss Treglia said. ‘The law now prescribes that an alien must be able to read and write English before he can become a citizen. Some persons who have been here 50 years are now past the learning stage. They know their mother tongue and how to write their name. That used to be enough - not now - not now.’”¹³²

The push for citizenship fueled an increase in adult education needs. The year 1952-53 brought record enrollment. Five levels of reading and writing were taught, including a special class for illiterate people. Citizenship, sewing and nutrition classes were offered. The Board of Education co-sponsored these classes for 20 weeks. Community House staff and volunteers taught classes the remainder of the year.

¹³² Jerry White, “McCarran Act Confuses, Frightens Aliens, Says Head of Community House” (Sioux City Journal, Jan. 25, 1953, p. 26).

At the March 25, 1953, board meeting, Mary reported that more than 200 people with alien status had been assisted with registering, processing and citizenship papers.

Three sections of the adult education department were held in Casa Maria, a small house next to the Community Center recently donated by Stella and Arthur Sanford. A special training course had been set up for Briar Cliff and Morningside College students. Attendance for the month was 7,873.¹³³

Sioux City had been spared from Floyd River flooding for several years. But the reprieve was about to end.

Lives lost and mass destruction

On June 8, 1953, Floyd River flooding was back with a vengeance. Forty-five people died. Damage added up to \$23 million. The Community House and its Eastside neighborhood were slammed. Casa Maria survived but was extensively damaged. Flood water filled the Community House basement where the gym, arts-and-crafts shop and heating plant were located. Mud was left behind.

After Casa Maria was cleaned, a first-aid station and National Red Cross case-work office were set up in it. Community House workers assisted the Red Cross, handling 90 percent of the cases. "...The entire community backed the efforts of Community House as did many individuals. Services and money were donated to further the disaster relief."¹³⁴

The Floyd had flooded 62 times since 1870.¹³⁵

The Community Chest's emergency building fund, headed by Arthur Sanford, raised money to rehabilitate the Community House and two other flood-damaged agencies: Salvation Army's Springdale Center and Wall Street Mission. The combined damage to the three was an estimated \$50,000.

¹³³ "Community House Aids Many Aliens" (The Sioux City Journal, March 25, 1953, p. 13).

¹³⁴ Schieffer, pp. 28-29.

¹³⁵ Robert Gunsolley, "Harnessing of Floyd One Reason For 3-Day Celebration," (The Sioux City Journal, Oct. 14, 1964, p. 44).

By July 31, the emergency fund had raised \$38,225 for repairs, equipment, and materials replacement. Arthur Sanford said the amount was substantially less than needed. Community Chest funds would have to cover the shortfall.¹³⁶

Finding a way back

The Community House summer program was cancelled due to flood damage. But playground recreation was held from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday for children and young adults in cooperation with the City's recreation department.¹³⁷

In early November 1953, the Community House and Wall Street Mission held open houses to show visitors impressive rehabilitation. Tours, teas, exhibits, and programs were offered at both agencies by staff, board and club members.¹³⁸ At last, programs could resume.

The 1953 flood re-ignited work toward a plan that would, at last, control the Floyd. The Army Corp of Engineers completed a feasibility study in 1956. A bill containing authorization for detailed planning was passed by Congress in 1956. However, President Dwight Eisenhower vetoed the bill because it contained other projects that were not authorized. Not until 1958 would a Floyd flood-control project be approved.

At the April 7, 1954, annual meeting, Mary was reappointed executive director. Jayne Yates was reappointed activities director. A resolution thanked press and radio media for cooperation during 1953.

Mary reported that an afternoon English class was launched for night workers. A whopping 8,314 persons participated in Community house activities in March 1954. In the past year, individual counseling services in 12 categories had been given to 6,778

¹³⁶ "Donations Swell Community Chest Emergency Funds" (The Sioux City Journal, July 9, 1953, p. 18). A final report on dispersal of \$38,938 in emergency building funds following the 1953 Floyd River flood was made at the Community Chest Board of Directors meeting at the Martin Hotel. Three agencies were recipients. Salvation Army Springdale Center was destroyed in the flood. The money was used to buy a bus to transport children and adults from that area to other facilities rather than rebuilding. Wall Street Mission received \$13,010. The Community House received \$22,428. Money went for repairs, equipment and materials replacement. (reported in The Sioux City Journal, March 24 and May 15, 1955).

¹³⁷ "Community House Activities" (The Sioux City Journal, Aug. 19, 1953, p. 12).

¹³⁸ "Society and Women's Activities" (The Sioux City Journal, Nov. 8, 1953, p. 15).

people. The categories ranged from filing of naturalization petitions to insurance assistance.¹³⁹

Mary reduces her workload

In summer 1954, Mary underwent surgery and was advised to work only part time. The Dec. 15, 1954, *Journal* announced that Community House Board member Alva Tolf would resign her position as Morningside College's dean of women at the end of January 1955 to become associate director of the Community House.

Alva began her duties on Feb. 1. She oversaw building operations and an in-service training program. She developed a new department in nationality backgrounds and folklore and was available for counseling.¹⁴⁰

Before joining Morningside's administration, Alva was dean of women at Ohio Northern University. She earned a master's in education from University of Chicago, served 11 years on the Coe College faculty and went on to chair Dakota Wesleyan University's women's physical education department.

The daughter of Swedish immigrants, Alva served on the boards of the Woodbury County Society of Crippled Children and Sanford Center. She was treasurer of the Community House, past president of Quota Club, and a member of AAUW, Sioux City Women's Club and PEO Chapter JG. Her many academic memberships included serving as past president of the Iowa State Association of Deans of Women and Advisors of Girls.

On May 14, 1955, almost a year after the flood, an open house invited visitors to see the Community House's recovery. In addition to offering tours and demonstrations, staff and volunteers showed a film on Community House services in immigration and naturalization, recreation, counseling, and adult education. Visitors saw the recently completed new library *and* the renovated and redecorated gym which had been badly damaged by the 1953 flood.¹⁴¹

Miss Treglia goes to Washington

¹³⁹ "House Holds Annual Meet" (The Sioux City Journal, April 7, 1954, p. 2).

¹⁴⁰ "Community House Officer to Begin Duties Tuesday" (The Sioux City Journal, Jan. 31, 1955, p. 9).

¹⁴¹ "Community House to Host Visitors in Special Events" (The Sioux City Journal, May 15, 1955, p. 12).

Mary was invited to speak before a U.S. Senate Judiciary Subcommittee the week of Nov. 28, 1955. The invitation came from the National Federation of Settlement Houses and Neighborhood Centers, headquartered in New York. The Community House was one of 275 settlement house members of the Federation. Mary was president of the Iowa-Nebraska Federations.

In a Nov. 20, 1955, *Journal* feature story, readers learned that at the hearing Mary would outline “what immigration and naturalization policies are best for us today.” She would speak for 30 minutes, then take questions.

On the matter of handling visas, Mary wanted State and Justice Department functions to be consolidated into one independent agency. That agency’s exclusive responsibility would be immigration and naturalization.

Mary’s presentation also would cover: the unfairness and discrimination in the national-origin quota system; a remedy for unused visas; and ways to modify the present alien registration requirements.

Immigration was again the topic when Mary was the featured speaker at “Sharing Together,” the Girl Scout Banquet on April 8, 1956, at the Martin Hotel. Senior Girl Scouts from Des Moines, Council Bluffs, Fort Dodge, Sheldon, Ida Grove and Sioux City attended the banquet.¹⁴²

The title “Sharing Together,” also described the Thursday, April 26, 1956, project that brought 127 Eastside kids to clean up and beautify the Community House’s grounds. They raked the entire area, spread out two loads of dirt, moved a pile of wood, and planted rose bushes and bridal wreath. A few adults lent helping hands, but most of the work was done by the girls and boys. It was the opening project in the citywide Beauty-o-Rama.¹⁴³

Flood control and politics

Flood control was a political issue when Democratic Presidential Nominee Adlai Stevenson came to Sioux City for a campaign strategy meeting on Aug. 29, 1956. After touring the Floyd Valley, Stevenson addressed the flood-control issue in the Community

¹⁴² “Mary Treglia Will Talk at Scout Dinner” (The Sioux City Journal, April 8, 1956, p. 56).

¹⁴³ “Busy Youth Crews Launch Beauty-o-Rama” (The Sioux City Journal, April 28, 1956, p. 3).

House gym. He criticized President Eisenhower for vetoing the omnibus bill that included the Floyd River flood control project.

“President Eisenhower vetoed the bill recently because some of the projects in it had not been approved by the budget bureau or the army engineers, although the Floyd river project was not one of those,” *Journal* reporter Robert Gunsolley wrote in a page-one story.¹⁴⁴

Accompanied by Sen. Hubert Humphrey (D-Minn.), Stevenson praised the Community House and Mary Treglia. He pointed out that the building was constructed by unemployed persons during the Great Depression.”¹⁴⁵

Honoring a leader

A bronze plaque inscribed “The Mary J. Treglia Community House” was unveiled at a testimonial dinner honoring Mary on Nov. 15, 1956, at the Sheraton-Martin Hotel Ballroom. More than 100 Sioux Cityans and out-of-town friends paid tribute to the executive director who had served the Community House for 35 years. Mary was given a purse containing \$400 to spend on something for herself.

Speakers praised her contributions for everything from helping people secure U.S. citizenship to inspiring Sanford Center. A.L. Sarcone, owner and publisher of the *American-Citizen* and the Sarcone Publishing Co. in Des Moines, spoke of how Mary helped him gain citizenship. He, in turn, helped others.

More testimonials were delivered by: Dr. D.M. Nigro, Kansas City Mo., a former outstanding athlete at University of Notre Dame who became president of both the Rockne Club and UNICO, a national Italian-American service organization; Arlone Kinkaid of Beverly Hills, Calif., a Sioux City native who was Mary’s assistant for 11 years; Lewis Pardee of Omaha, president of Cartan & Jeffery Co.; Editha K. Webster, Women’s Editor of *The Journal-Tribune* publications; Frances Cassem, president of the board; Burton Ford, Sioux City businessman whose mother, Frances Ford, was president of the board when the cornerstone was laid; and Raymond Fisher who grew up in the Eastside and was active in Community House life. Fisher became a professor

¹⁴⁴ Robert Gunsolley, “Stevenson Tours Flood Scenes: Raps Ike for Vetoing Rivers, Harbors Measure” (Aug. 30, 1956, p. 1).

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

at Western Reserve University's School of Social Work, Cleveland Ohio, and a Fulbright Scholar in England. He credited Mary for inspiring his vocation.¹⁴⁶

The following afternoon, an open house at Sixth and Morgan honored Mary. The bronze plaque was installed in a prominent place for the occasion. It was the first of many events marking Mary's service.¹⁴⁷

The Community House's newspaper column title changed from "Community House Activities" to "Mary J. Treglia Community House Activities." The Dec. 16, 1956, column detailed programs, meetings, and special events, including the Adult Education Christmas party in Casa Maria where class members would sing carols, play games and discuss how Christmas was celebrated in other lands.

In the following year, more events honored Mary, including Women of All Nations' surprise Valentine's Day Dinner at Casa Maria where Mary was crowned "Sweetheart of the Evening." Club members presented nostalgic reminders of the "old days." Maria Giannetti, who co-founded the club with Mary's mother, Rose, gave the invocation.

The War Brides Club honored Mary at The Normandy restaurant on March 24, 1957. The Social Hour Club hosted a surprise testimonial tea at the Community House on May 5, 1957. Ella Murphy was master of ceremonies and president of the club. Frankie Williams, a well-known Sioux City tenor, was accompanied on piano by Harry Smith. The club's choir performed. Testimonials were presented by Elzona Trosper, executive director of Sanford Center; Arretta Butler, president of the Sanford Center Executive Board; and Stella Sanford.¹⁴⁸

A record year and immunizations

The April 11, 1957, annual meeting revealed that attendance for 1956-1957 was 83,506 – the largest in Community House history. Eighty people had volunteered time and skills. A course in field work had been introduced for Briar Cliff and Morningside college students.

¹⁴⁶ "Alter Community House Name as Honor to Marry (sic) J. Treglia on 35 Years of Service" (The Sioux City Journal, Nov. 16, 1956, p. 4).

¹⁴⁷ "Reception at Newly-Named Mary Treglia Center Today" (The Sioux City Journal, Nov. 18, 1956, p. 25).

¹⁴⁸ "Miss Treglia Is Honored at 'Surprise'" (The Sioux City Journal, May 6, 1957, p. 11).

Participation in recreational activities had boomed. Newly organized or reactivated groups were Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts, Brownies, family nights, a men's club, Mary J. Treglia Community House Guild, and afternoon sewing classes.

In 1956-1957, immigration and naturalization services, including various types of counseling, instruction, and assistance, had been given to 250 people. Counseling and case work included marital and family counseling, adoptions, medical indigents, vocational counseling, assistance in obtaining birth certificates, railroad retirement and Social Security insurance, and advice in buying private insurance. The Irving School-Sanford Center-Mary J. Treglia Community House Case Committee was in its fourth year of operation. Staff members had given 40 presentations on the Community House's work and interests.

The annual report thanked *The Sioux City Journal-Tribune* publications and other communications for publicizing Community House's programs and services.¹⁴⁹

People of 24 nationalities now were enrolled in reading and writing classes. "The types of students who came to the Community House changed over the years. In the '50s when I began, we were still getting war brides and displaced persons from World War II. We had a new influx of students after the Hungarian Revolt in 1956," said Jane Sellen who began as a volunteer teacher in 1957.¹⁵⁰

A public health emergency arose in summer 1957; 230 children lined up for throat cultures at the Community House. All the children had played Anderson Park swimming pool. Among them was a 5-year-old girl who was sick. Her illness was diagnosed as diphtheria. The pool was closed and Dr. Charles P. McHugh, city public health director, "urged that parents have their children protected against the disease by proper immunization."¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ "View Agency Work Here" (The Sioux City Journal, April 12, 1957, p. 21).

¹⁵⁰ Jane Sellen, "What I Remember About the Community House."

¹⁵¹ "Pool Will Stay Closed Pending Health Checkup" (The Sioux City Journal, July 20, 1957, p. 2).

The Community House topped the list of 19 Sioux City non-profits that received Community Chest allocations for the 1957-1958 fiscal year. The Community House received \$21,750.¹⁵²

Mary Treglia's death

On Saturday, Oct. 10, 1959, Mary died at her Sydney Apartments home. Her body lay in state from 1 to 4 p.m. the following Monday at the Community House. All activities were canceled that day. The rosary was said at Perasso Brothers Funeral Home Monday evening. The funeral Mass was Tuesday morning at Cathedral of the Epiphany. Jane Sellen was there.

“The place was full of the important city people and her Community House clients. The scripture was from the Gospel of Matthew Chapter 25: ‘...for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison, and you visited me...’ In the homily the priest pointed out how Mary had carried out those same services so well. I recall feeling strongly I had been privileged to know a Christian woman for whom that quotation fit perfectly,” Sellen wrote in her memories of the Community House.

Burial was at Calvary Cemetery where Mary would rest next to her mother, Rose.

The Journal's obituary listed Mary's extraordinary contributions to local, regional and national causes. Among them: She was a founder of the Woodbury County Society for Crippled Children and Adults with Judge Berry J. Sisk and the Rev. John P. Hantla. She was a recipient of top awards from *The Sioux City Journal-Tribune*, Kiwanis, Order of Eagles, National Civic League, Agora Club, Business and Professional Women, Catholic Lay Women, Quota Club and KVTU.

The obituary lauded Mary's work on Floyd River flood control, case committee services, field work for undergraduate students, counseling services to agencies of all faiths, and community organization consulting.

In demand as a public speaker, she addressed national and regional social work conferences. She organized the first African American theater group at Sanford Center.

¹⁵² “List Chest Allocations” (The Sioux City Journal, Nov. 28, 1957, p. 38).

She was a pioneer of Sioux City inter-racial programs and was a recognized authority on problems of immigration throughout the Midwest

She was a past member of the board of the National Federation of Settlement Houses and Neighborhood Centers. She also served on boards of the National Association of Social Workers, the Council of Community Services, the Girl Scout Council and the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis.

Mary was past president of the Iowa-Nebraska Conference of the National Federation of Social Workers, and the American Association of Social Workers, Iowa chapter. She represented Iowa at the delegate conference of this organization three times, and served as president of the Woodbury County Social Workers and the Compass Club, an early Sioux City social workers organization.

Mary served on committees of the: Iowa Recreation Commission; Sioux City Conference of Christians and Jews; and International Conference of Settlement Houses and Neighborhood Centers. She was the Community Chest Agency representative who worked with the United Fund labor committee.

She was a member of these clubs: Altrusa; National Italian-American Civic League; and the Sioux City Italian-American Civic League. She served as president of the Columbus Club of Iowa; Sioux City Quota; AAUW; Alpha Kappa Delta national sociological fraternity; Alpha Sigma social sorority at Morningside College; and Pi Gamma Mu social science fraternity.

On Oct. 20, 1959, the board named Alva Tolf executive director of the Community House. Jayne Yates was named her assistant.

The Community House “will carry on a progressive, forward-looking program, that everyone concerned will draw inspiration, courage and strength from the traditions established by the late Miss Treglia, and that the vital functions of the agency will be carried out.”¹⁵³

Flood control, urban renewal transform Eastside

In 1959, planning, at long last, was under way for rechanneling the Floyd River to prevent devastating floods. The Army Corps of Engineers' initial plan called for using the Stockyards' existing channel and adding an alternate outlet to handle emergencies.

¹⁵³ “Post Filled by Alva Tolf” (The Sioux City Journal, Oct. 21, 1959, p. 8).

That plan was rejected in favor of a plan that created a completely new route for the Floyd below 18th Street.

The new channel would veer west of the Stockyards to meet the Missouri River. Construction started in the summer of 1961. Federal contractors dug out 4,850,000 cubic yards of dirt and piled all but one million yards of the dirt along the sides to form levees. Some 420,000 tons of rock lined the channel.

The City of Sioux City purchased 435 parcels of land in the channel right-of-way and demolished 250 buildings. Almost one-third of the properties had been condemned.¹⁵⁴

As the Floyd Flood Control Project moved forward, the City saw significant advantages to synchronizing an urban renewal project with it. A Federal assistance aid program would allow the City to use its contribution toward flood control as the match for an urban renewal grant. Urban renewal would transform blighted areas to make way for industrial development and increase the City's tax yield.

An urban renewal project area – 122 acres north of Fourth Street, straddling the new Floyd Channel – was selected and authorized. The area would be cleared of all homes and small businesses that were not already marked for clearing for the new Floyd channel.

About 125 residents in the flood control and urban renewal areas attended a panel discussion on Friday, April 21, 1961, at the Community House. City officials referred to Eastside urban renewal as the “Mary Treglia Project.” They answered neighborhood residents' questions: When would they have to move out? What assistance would they receive with relocating in Sioux City? After all, they were being forced to move: 109 families (397 people) for the new Floyd channel; and 250 families (850 people) for urban renewal.

A citizens committee was formed to help relocate people to safe, sanitary housing. Additionally, a committee was appointed from the Community House Board to help with the relocation of families and consider the possibility of a new site for the Community House itself. The Community House had to vacate its Sixth and Morgan streets location by Feb. 1, 1962.

¹⁵⁴ Robert Gunsolley, “Harnessing of Floyd One Reason for 3-Day Celebration” (The Sioux City Journal, Oct. 14, 1964, p. 44).

Finding a new home

But would the Community House relocate? It was known mainly as an agency that served Eastside “foreign born” residents. With the neighborhood cleared, what need would there be for the Community House? If its staff, board and supporters couldn’t satisfactorily answer that question, funding would cease and relocation would be impossible.

The board, with Frances Cassem chair, decided that other Sioux City neighborhoods needed Community House services. The leaders hired Fern Colburn, of the National Federation of Settlement Houses and Neighborhood Centers, to come to Sioux City to help determine which neighborhood it would be.

The City agreed to pay \$140,000 for the Sixth and Morgan lots and building. Additionally, money had been saved through the years to build an efficient single-story building.

Meetings were held with community leaders, directors of public and private agencies, school personnel and City officials. Eventually, two areas were identified. One on the near Westside, the other in the Mid-City, an area extending from Fourth Street to 14th Street and from Floyd Boulevard to Nebraska Street. There were two possible Mid-City sites: 13th and Dale streets; and Ninth and Jennings streets. After considerable work, Ninth and Jennings was chosen.

“...In the future the Community Center’s goal will be to establish confidence among the people of the neighborhood and through understanding and awareness of existing problems, provide a service that will stimulate co-operative effort, strengthen morals, develop skill, and help people understand and respect the privileges of good citizenship....”¹⁵⁵

Next came the challenge of obtaining a building permit. Disagreement arose over whether the building plans conformed to the zoning ordinance. The main issues were the size of the building’s front setback and the number of parking spaces. The Community House revised plans and the project proceeded. Chris Hansen was awarded the general construction contract; Scott Plumbing Co., the plumbing and

¹⁵⁵ “Treglia Center Has Served Over 30 Years” (Journal May 15 1962 p. 5).

heating contract; and Power Engineering Co., the electrical contract. The total cost of the new building would be \$140,000.

Groundbreaking on Jennings Street

A groundbreaking ceremony was held at 10 a.m. Saturday, May 12, 1962. City officials, United Fund Council of Community Services representatives, and members of the Community House Advisory Board and Board of Directors participated.

The existing house on the property would be used temporarily. However, it was in poor condition, according to Jane Sellen.

During demolition of the Sixth and Morgan streets building, a fire was reported on Sept. 21, 1962. Two companies of firefighters worked about two hours to put out the fire. The cause was undetermined.

The move from the temporary building into the new Community House took place throughout December 1962. Programs began in January 1963.

Mary J. Treglia Community House's new home at 900 Jennings St. was dedicated at 2 p.m. Sunday, March 24, 1963. C. Fred Stilwell presided; Sioux City Mayor George Young welcomed guests. Rabbi Albert A. Gordon offered the invocation. Speakers included Wendell Arnold, United Fund director, and Alyce Wilson, representative of the National Federation of Settlement and Neighborhood Houses. Architect W. Lee Beuttler presented the Community House keys to Board President Frances Cassem. The Community House opened to the public from 3 to 5 p.m. Guided tours were given for some 400 people.

In April 1964, youth enrollment was 317, considerably greater than what it had been at Sixth and Morgan. Three hundred volunteers were contributing time and skills.

Executive Director Alva Tolf resigned in June 1964. She was recognized for her outstanding service. Jayne Yates was named her successor. Alva and Jayne were the leaders in the Community House's evolution from the Eastside to its new home and expanded mission, according to Jane Sellen.

The Community House thrived at Ninth and Jennings. Reading, writing, and English-as-a-second-language instruction continued to be at the core of citizenship classes. Volunteers were trained in the changing immigration laws and the complexities of processing immigration and naturalization petitions.

Daily after-school programs offered clubs, classes, and game room activities. Evening children's groups also met Monday through Friday. Adult clubs were going strong, including the Rose Treglia Golden Age Club, Women of All Nations, Social Hour Club, Mary J. Treglia Guild, and Skinny Minnies. Adults enjoyed knitting and sewing instruction. Activities for teen-agers were part of the weekly schedule. Basic education classes were offered through the Adult Education Center at the north entrance of Central High School.

January 1965 brought neighborhood family nights. The Saturday evening activities invited parents and other adults to see the facility and learn about its clubs and classes. Movies and neighborhood children's art exhibits were part of the events. Children attended accompanied by adults.

Sanfords make a difference

In January 1965, the Stellart Sanford Foundation donated \$25,000 to build a fenced-in playground and an 18-by-72-foot addition that would add six rooms to the building. The additional space was badly needed.

On June 29, 1965, Head Start began in Sioux City. The Federal program was established to give children with limited advantages opportunities to get a "head start" on school. Eight-week sessions at the Community House provided classroom activities, medical and dental care, supervised field trips, balanced meals, and a program for parents.

An open house was held on Oct. 3, 1965, for the Sanford-funded building addition and playground. Some 200 people attended. Arthur and Stella Sanford were honored guests. The expansion provided separate rooms for: an arts-and-crafts department; 4- and-5-year-old children's activities; boys clubs; girls clubs; and two adult club rooms.

That same day the Community House announced a busy fall class schedule for all ages. A class in fundamentals of government for those seeking American citizenship, and classes in reading and writing were offered from 7 to 9 p.m. Thursdays. "All these were Europeans," according to Jane Sellen. "But the greatest shift came with the arrival of the refugees from Southeast Asia in the early seventies. Our classes were full and crowded and used all the available room and then some."¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ Jane Sellen, Sept. 15, 1996.¹

Gov. Harold Hughes' workshops

Iowa Gov. Harold Hughes addressed 250 representatives of business, civic, labor, education and government groups at the Community House on Friday, March 29, 1968. The participants met for workshops on employment for underprivileged youth and adults, summer camping and recreation programs. The workshops were led by a special research staff organized by Gov. Hughes. It was the last of his 16 "summer crisis" meetings throughout the state.¹⁵⁷

The Community House's 1969 summer finale program showcased artwork by 40 children, 5-to-10 years old. The young artists created sculptures, tempera paintings and seed mosaics made with peas, bean, corn and watermelon seeds. David West, of the Sioux City Art Center, judged the contest.¹⁵⁸

Another summer highlight? The Community House participated in the Federal government's Office of Economic Opportunity Summer Program. It included a picnic, nature hike and display of live snakes at Stone Park, and a tour of Sioux City.

As the 1970s began, the Community House was busy helping families solve housing, recreation and human relations problems. A group of neighborhood parents approached Duane Schubert, Irving School principal, and Jayne Yates about starting a program that brought together families. The idea was to promote a good neighborhood. The outcome was a reboot of the Community House's "Family Night" programs, co-sponsored by Irving School and the Community House.

The fun-filled programs gave neighbors an opportunity to become better acquainted. Any families living in the near Northside or whose children attended Irving School or the Community House could participate.

A half-century of service

About 200 people attended the Community House's 50th Anniversary celebration on May 2, 1971. Board members and staff conducted tours; various groups demonstrated activities. Historical photographs and a scrapbook showing the Community House's development were on display.

¹⁵⁷ "Responsibility Up to People: Hughes" (The Sioux City Journal, March 30, 1968, p. 1).

¹⁵⁸ "Summer finale" (Sioux City Journal, July 27, 1969, p. 16).

In October 1971, the City of Sioux City designated the neighborhood as a “redevelopment area” or “urban renewal” area. However, rather than razing homes and buildings, the project focused on rehabilitation. Additionally, a committee comprising neighborhood residents, known as the Mid-City Urban Renewal Project Area Committee, was organized in 1971. This ensured that residents had a voice in the decision-making process.¹⁵⁹

On Oct. 18, 1972, it was announced that American citizenship classes would be co-sponsored by Western Iowa Tech Community College and the Community House. The Thursday evening classes would focus on American government. Jane Sellen, WITCC supervisor of Adult Education, was the instructor. Field trips to governmental agency meetings, such as the City Council, would be part of the class.

As designated immigration center, the Community House had qualified personnel to assist people in making application for citizenship at the U.S. Immigration office in Omaha.

Sioux City Journal readers learned more about how much Community House services were needed in Sunday, March 24, 1974, editions. A story focused on 13 people in the Thursday evening class.

“...Most persons studying to become citizens attend a one-hour English class before the citizenship class at the Community House each Thursday evening. If they are English, they already know the vocabulary and understand the concept of democracy. For others, it may take all winter and for some, it may take two winters, said Jane (Sellen)

“We have never had one that failed his test as long as I can remember. We don’t send them to the examiner to be disappointed because this may be the most momentous thing they have done in their lives.

“Each must travel to Fort Dodge with two witnesses to take his oral and written test and then must return again to receive the oath of citizenship. The tests were given in Sioux City until last spring....”

There was no charge for the classes. Jayne Yates, executive director, prepared naturalization papers. To be eligible for naturalization a person must have been a

¹⁵⁹ “History of Mary J. Treglia Community House,” Community House archives, author unknown, ca. early 1980s.

resident of the United States for the past five years or have been married to an American citizen for three years.

Socialization and the City Council

The Community House's 1974 fall schedule touted after-school variety for girls and boys, from kindergartners through high school age divisions. Activities included arts-and-crafts, cooking, woodwork, gym classes, game room activities and field trips. Junior high boys had a basketball team. Co-ed projects were offered for both pre-teen- and teen-age groups. Classes in reading, writing and citizenship preparation for foreign-born met Tuesday and Thursday evenings. A high school-equivalency class also was offered Thursday evenings.

Adult clubs met: Rose Treglia Golden Age Club 12:30 p.m. Tuesdays; Women of All Nations, 7:30 p.m. Wednesdays; Mary Treglia Guild 1:30 p.m. Thursdays. The Italian Club gathered at 2 p.m. on the second Sunday of each month.

On July 20, 1975, the City Council held the second in its series of "on the road" meetings at the Community House. Between 100 and 150 people attended to ask questions and lodge complaints about City policies and services. The Council showed up more than a half-hour late, but the citizens waited.

Among the citizens was Dewey Gaul, 1906 Iowa St., who asked about progress on the Mid-City Park between St. Joseph Catholic Church and Woodrow Wilson Junior High School. The preliminary design was close to completion but it would be three or four years until funding could catch up.

Welcoming Southeast Asian refugees

A great shift came with the arrival of Southeast Asian refugees after the Fall of Saigon in 1975. "Our classes were full and crowded and used all the available room and then some," said Jane Sellen. A Federal grant provided money for new folding chairs and tables and other essentials. "...through the cooperation of a number of agencies, with Mary Treglia Community House leading the way, we made it through this period successfully."¹⁶⁰

¹⁶⁰ Sellen, Sept. 16, 1996.

In 1977, Sellen's book, "How Your Government Works," was published by Monarch Press, a subsidiary of Simon and Schuster. From 1956 until her retirement in 1990, she taught citizenship classes at the Community House

Creating opportunities

In summer 1979, Arthur and Stella Sanford's Foundation donated a 12-passenger van for the Community House to transport children to YWCA swimming classes and take them on summer program field trips. The van was the latest in a long list of community gifts made by the foundation for civic, religious and educational undertakings since it was established in 1947. Arthur Sanford was a realtor, builder and financier in the Sioux City area. He was among the incorporators of Urban Homes Inc. non-profit corporation which provided low-cost housing for Eastside residents forced to relocate for urban renewal. He was involved in construction of the Warrior Hotel; Orpheum Electric Building; Frances Building; Sioux Apartments; Bellevue Apartments; Davidson Building; Insurance Exchange Building; Shaare Zion Synagogue; Masonic Temple; two subdivisions; and five theaters. He was involved in starting Hanford Airlines, which later became Braniff Airlines, and Allied Laboratories which merged with Dow Chemical.

"It is my aim and ambition to do everything I can to make opportunities for the younger men and women of Sioux City who have the same faith that I have in our city and territory and want to make this city their home," he said.

Stella Wolff Sanford was a 50-year member of the Community House Board. She was president from 1933 to 1948 and later was named honorary chairman and honorary life member of the board. Sellart Sanford Foundation donated funds to build Sanford Community Center, Sanford Community Park and Stella Sanford Day Care Center.

Stella Sanford was a member of the Sioux City Board of Education for six years. She was given the Kiwanis Club's annual community service award and was named Woman of the Year by the Sioux City Business and Professional Women's Club. She was Girl Scout commissioner and headed regional Girl Scout camp committees. She was a member of League of Women Voters, the AAUW and the National Council of Jewish Women.

When the Community House honored her for 50 years on the board, Mabel Hoyt said: "Her intelligence, her compassion, her concern for people, her quiet and gracious

personality, have done much for this agency. She has devoted many years of service to the Community House and has been a friend to everyone with whom she worked.”

Stella attended Fieldston Ethical Schools and Business College in New York City and Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Arthur Sanford died on March 10, 1981. Stella Sanford died on Aug. 13, 1981.

Still a great need

Is the Community House still needed? The Community House faced that question in the 1930s when its Fourth Street home was condemned. It faced it again in the early 1960s when its second home was lost to flood control and urban renewal.

In 1982, United Way tackled that question once more, according to Georgia Schieffer's 1985 master's thesis. "It was determined that there is no other agency or combination of agencies that could provide the services offered by the Community House. The basic factor is the availability of personalized service in a non-threatening setting."

Among the Community House's great strengths was adaptability, Schieffer noted. From its very beginning, "...the operative concept has continually been to adapt to the needs of those served...." Jayne Yates saw the entire neighborhood as the Community House client....¹⁶¹ Programs and services in that neighborhood fell under six major areas:¹⁶²

Delinquency Prevention: Children, 5-12 years old, meet after school and on Saturdays for arts-and-crafts, cooking, gym, field trips, swimming and other activities aimed at building self-confidence and positive social relationships and an alternative to delinquent behavior.

Teen-agers meet in the evening for structured activities. Game Room activities, such as ping-pong, pool and table games encourage informal discussions, ranging from specific social problems such as substance abuse to employment opportunity for teen-agers. Outside speakers are brought in for more formal discussion groups. Parents

¹⁶¹ Schieffer, p. 44.

¹⁶² Agency Summary Information, April 30, 1986.

participate, if appropriate. Casework services are an important component of Delinquency Prevention.

Participatory Recreation: Gym classes and related activities included in Delinquency serve as “feeders” into that program. Young adults and other neighborhood groups use the gym for recreational purposes only.

A Mid-City summer program for children 3 through 12 is the result of a co-operative effort of the City’s Development Division, Mary Elizabeth Day Center and the Community House. It operates three days a week throughout June and July and serves 80-100 neighborhood children. Children from other areas of the city are served through referral.

Adult Education: Participants have the opportunity to complete their high school education through this program. Immigrants and refugees learn to speak, read and write English, and prepare for their U.S. citizenship application process.

Social Development: Organized for adults, these activities are planned by members and may be social, educational or neighborhood centered. The goal is to make it possible for people to participate in group activities that are easily accessible and affordable.

Neighborhood Development: The Community House works closely with area residents, City staff, the City Council and others involved in the neighborhood’s revitalization. This coordinated effort has brought visible improvements. The percentage of rehabilitated houses has increased. The area between St. Joseph School and Woodrow Wilson Middle School is now equipped for tennis and basketball, with areas for softball, soccer and other field sports.

Mid-City Park, across the street from the Community House, is particularly appreciated by parents. It has a “tot lot,” play equipment for elementary school children, fitness course, shelter house and picnic area. Before Mid-City Park was established, the neighborhood had no park.

Outreach/Family Counseling and Casework: The Community House’s Outreach Program is part of its Casework Services. The Outreach Program comprises systematic home visits during which the staff member has an opportunity through informal visiting to perceive potential problems and if possible, resolve them before they reach a more

critical stage. The entire program is targeted for a geographical area that extends from Fourth to 14th streets and from Floyd Boulevard west to Nebraska Street.

Always evolving, the Community House welcomed The Rockets in the early 1980s. The brainchild of Briar Cliff College Assistant Professor of Physical Education Lila Frommelt, The Rockets was a team of special-needs men and women from Sioux City. Briar Cliff students working toward a degree in physical education coached the team. They had support from Sioux City Knights of Columbus for travel expenses, uniforms, basketballs and other equipment. The team practiced in the Community House gym each Saturday from late November to early February.

An exemplary leader

Mabel F. Hoyt, retired educator and longtime community and civil rights leader died at Holy Spirit Retirement Home in 1987. She began teaching in area and Sioux City schools in 1922. She was principal of Irving School from 1952 to 1967. For 36 years, Mabel was a volunteer at the Community House where she taught reading, writing and citizenship to hundreds of foreign-born Sioux Cityans. She was a Floyd River flood control advocate and served on the Mayor's Urban Renewal Committee which found housing for people displaced by the flood control project.

Mabel was a University of Chicago graduate and earned a master's at University of Wisconsin. She did additional graduate work universities in New York, California, Colorado and Boston. She served as president of Sanford Center; and president and treasurer of the Community House where she was on the Board for 30 years.

Surely, Mabel would have applauded the 1988 accomplishment that won a three-year grant from the Office of Refugee Programs. The funds enabled the Community House to offer an English-as-a-second-language class for 20 children, ages 2 to 5. The children had come to Sioux City with their families from Southeast Asian refugee camps. The class had been conceived as a day-care program for children whose parents were taking ESL class. But when the children arrived day care evolved into an opportunity to teach the children English.

“...we decided to do the best we could to help them move from one culture to another...There is a delicate period of adjustment for most of the children, particularly

for those who recently have come to this country. Some refuse to talk for months. Some have been traumatized by the violence they've witnessed in refugee camps...."¹⁶³

Twenty-five years at Ninth and Jennings

On Oct. 23, 1988, the Community House celebrated 25 years of service at its third location. The Sunday afternoon event featured a presentation by social worker Dorothy Harris who did graduate work at the Community House. She spoke on "Welfare Reform: Black Female Perspectives." Harris' appearance was made possible by support from Briar Cliff College's Sociology and Social Work Department. The need for financial support was a constant throughout the Community House's history.

Among the most high-profile fundraising projects came in November 1989 when the Community House collaborated with the Sioux City Musketeers Hockey Team to create an eye-catching poster calendar. The sports connection aimed at reaching new and varied audiences. The hockey players donned tuxedos, held hockey sticks and were photographed by George Lindblade in front of the Sioux City Municipal Auditorium (later known as Longlines). Siouxland high school cheerleaders played "adoring fans" in the background. Graphic artist Brent Stockton designed the poster which sold for \$5 at home games.

A change in leadership

After 47 years of service, Executive Director Jayne Yates retired from her position Dec. 31, 1994. Many awards had recognized her decades of work. In 1993, she received the Noon Sertoma Club's Service to Mankind Award for her work with immigrant groups and her role in advancing a neighborhood concept in the Mid-City area.

Matt Boley was named executive director January 1995. He had more than two decades of experience in social work and education. Most recently, he was coordinator of the Clinical Assessment and Consultation Team at the Iowa Department of Human Services. He was a school social worker at Western Hills Area Education Agency from August 1978 to October 1993. He held a Master of Social Work from University of Arkansas

Graduate School of Social Work; Master of Social Welfare from University of Arkansas.

¹⁶³ Marcia Poole, "Class brings refugees up to speed" (The Sioux City Journal, May 7, 1988, p. 7).

Under Matt's leadership, classes, services and activities continued to thrive. But the Community House's 33-year-old furnace did not. It was patched for the last time in November 1995. Donors pitched in to fund a new furnace. The donors included: the Andrea and Norman Waitt Jr. Foundation, United Way, Norwest Bank, Prince Manufacturing, Great West Casualty, Dr. Fred Stark, St. Paul Lutheran Church, and IBP inc. Close to 100 IBP employees were learning to speak English thanks to classes at the Community House.

Equipped with its new furnace, the Community House was a comfortable home to all who participated in its activities and services. Among them were the Mary Treglia Drill team members who performed at the fifth annual Circle of Nations Siouxland Multi Cultural Fair in April 1996 sponsored by the Sioux City Human Rights Commission

Irving School's after school-program at the Community House offered fun and educational support. Any youngster who had homework could spend time with a tutor – many of whom were college students and senior citizens volunteers.

Thanks to a \$15,000 U.S. West Communications grant in 1997, Community House staff and volunteers were connected to Irving School teachers via computers. Teachers typed in skills area the students were studying and suggested after-school activities to support in-class learning. After school, the youngsters received help with their homework. When they were done, it was time for pool, art and crafts, gym activities and reading.

In 1997, a before-school program was added for parents who work day began early. The youngsters arrived at the Community House at 6 a.m. Staff and volunteers walked them to Irving for the beginning of the school day. The Community House always had a relationship with Irving. Now it was particularly close.

An artistic story

A Monday, July 28, 1997, dedication event celebrated the completion of a Community House mural. Under the direction of artist Gale Shamblott, neighborhood residents, and adult groups and children of the Community House all contributed time and talent to the creation.

The mural symbolized what the Mary J. Treglia Community House had done over the years and what it would continue to do. Funding for the project came from the Iowa Arts

Council; Lutheran Brotherhood; IBP inc; Team Ford; Knoepfler Chevrolet; and St. Paul's Lutheran Church.

A March 15, 1999, *Journal* story told the personal of a neighborhood kid who practically grew up at the Community House and now was assistant director of his boyhood "home away from home." The story told readers how Jeremy Foster was "Making a Difference."

"When I was young this was a fun, safe place to come. I know what those kids want because I was one of them." Jeremy went to Irving, Woodrow and North (class of '92). He studied accounting at Briar Cliff. "I wanted to make the big bucks, but then I started to question myself and returned to the Community House to become a youth worker."

Jeremy switched his major to sociology and graduated in 1997. He was certified to do counseling as a family development specialist. He created a Community House web page where prospective donors could learn about the non-profit's work.

Programming had changed. Arts and crafts were the main thing during Jeremy's childhood. Now, the Community House had a computer lab where kids learned to type and were taught basic computer skills.

The hours also had changed. Middle school and high school programs and activities were held from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. "Most violent crimes for kids that age are committed between 3 and 8 p.m. so we try to keep those kids out of trouble."

Neighbors helping neighbors

Neighbors helping neighbors was the goal of the "Time Dollar" program in 1999. Participants registered to provide services, such as tutoring, carpentry, cleaning or cooking. A credit was given for each hour of work provided. In turn, the credits could be used for services needed. The program which has been talked about for more than a year was made possible with a \$10,000 grant from Bank of America.

On Sept. 11, 2001, the United States was attacked. Matt Boley asked the Board of Directors permission to volunteer his mental health services at the World Trade site for the American Red Cross. The executive director volunteered to go without pay, but the Executive Committee would not allow that. He would receive his salary during the two weeks he was in New York. In a Dec. 4, 2001, letter to the editor, Matt thanked the Mary J. Treglia Community House Board of Directors.

“This is just another way of how the Mary Treglia Community House has been responding to individual needs for the past eight decades, both in Siouxland and the nation. With the charismatic Mary Treglia helping with local food relief, selling war bonds, or going to Washington, D.C., to talk about the rights for immigrants, the Community House has always attempted to be of service in any way possible to all of humankind.

“As we know and have been told, what happens to you and/or your community today can easily befall me and my loved ones tomorrow. We are sisters and brothers to one another (even if, at times, we do not speak the same language). Our love and concern for each other can transcend misunderstanding.

“United, we stand to be of service.

“Thank you, Community House Board of Directors. Thank you, Red Cross. Thank you, Siouxland. – Matt Boley”

Matt Boley retired in May 2002 to be close to his 94-year-old mother. He and his wife, Katie, would take classes at University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, to become certified school social workers in the state of Illinois. Jeremy Foster succeeded Boley as Executive Director.

Refugee makes a difference

The Journal again honored a Community House member who was “Making a Difference” on page one of July 11, 2005 editions. Hong Cuc Thi Nguyen was a Vietnamese immigrant who came to Sioux City in 1991. The retired educator and social worker was an advisor/member of the Vietnamese Mutual Assistance Association of Siouxland, a part of the Mary J. Treglia Community House. She and other volunteers in the organization helped Vietnamese refugees and immigrants with visits to doctors, hospitals, attorneys, banks and the INS office in Omaha.

Summer 2005 brought the Beyond the Bell program to the Community House. The Monday-through-Friday program was offered through the Sioux City Community School District at various sites, including the Community House where field trips, camping, swimming, computers, arts and crafts, video games, board games, sports and more were offered. An academic component focusing on reading and math was part of the daily schedule.

Executive Director Jeremy Foster called it “a once in a lifetime opportunity” for many kids when Dance Camp organized in summer 2005. Four high school students and one college junior developed the activity. The kids wore matching T-shirts that read, “What’s Goin’ On...Dancin’ and Stompin’ at the Mary Treglia Community House.”

The idea came from Ann Jenkins, a longtime dance team coach at Homer Community School. Her daughters, Melissa, 19, and Kristi, 16, brought in friends to organize the Community House camp.

Another grand opportunity for kids came in the 2005 Christmas season when the Community House and First Presbyterian Church children worked together to present the musical, “Welcome King” during the 11 a.m. service on Dec. 18 at the Sixth and Nebraska street Church.

In 2006, a two-part *Sioux City Journal* series celebrated the Community House’s 85th anniversary. It covered Community House history, highlighting experiences of immigrants from Denmark, Mexico and Ethiopia, and the life of Mary Treglia.

In October 2006, the Council for Sexual Abuse and Domestic Violence (CSADV) sponsored a Youth Education event. The evening focused on teen dating violence. Among the highlights was a skit performed by Students Against Violence Everywhere, a CSADV-sponsored group from Le Mars, Iowa. A panel discussion, a game of Family Feud and question-and-answer session were part of the event.

In January 2007, Siouxland Habitat for Humanity, the local NAACP, and several other organizations sponsored an Extreme Makeover program at the Community House and Sanford Center. The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day-related service project put a fresh coat of paint on interior walls. Most hadn’t been painted for about 12 years.

Expanding services and changing leadership

In November 2006, La Casa Latina, a program of Center for Siouxland, was transferred to the Community House to assist low-income and immigrant individuals and families. In 2007, Jeremy Foster resigned his position; Erica DeLeon succeeded him.

In March 2007, the United Way of Siouxland’s Women United announced that a \$40,000 grant would be awarded to the “Brain Zone,” a project implemented through the Community House, Girls Inc. and the Boys Club. The three United Way agencies collaborated to provide skills and activities to help children develop their brains.

In summer 2009, Sacred Heart Catholic School eighth grader Michael Martin was pursuing his Eagle Scout badge. His project? Remodeling the Community House's pre-school classroom. He recruited artist Joey Feaster to create a mural. Volunteers helped with the project. Martin persuaded almost 20 businesses to donate time, talent and money to the project. His initial plans blossomed to include a room divider, a storage unit that resembled a castle, a puppet stage, moveable blackboards and other welcome additions.

The Oromo culture

The Oromo Mutual Benefit Association of Siouxland, a new non-profit group, shared their culture, including fashion and food, at a Community House program on Aug. 8, 2009. The Oromo people, from Northeast Africa, comprised one of Sioux City's newest communities. The event gave participants an opportunity to learn about the Oromo people's heritage. Many came to Sioux City not only to find opportunity but also to flee violence and an oppressive government. The first Oromo people arrived in Sioux City in 2004, numbering only a few. By 2009, the community had grown to about 200.

In October 2010, training was offered to create free tax preparation services for those who could not afford tax-filing assistance.

The 90th anniversary

Thirty-nine new U.S. citizens were at the center of the Community House's 90th anniversary on Wednesday, Sept. 2011. U.S. Judge Donald O'Brien administered the U.S. Oath of Allegiance during the naturalization ceremony. Festivities included a screening of the video "Faces of America."

About 100 people celebrated the grand opening of the Somali Community of Siouxland, an organization aimed at strengthening the ability of Somalis living in Siouxland to become active members of society while preserving their culture. Between 2,000 to 2,500 Somalis lived in Sioux City at that time. Education and employee services and services for children were offered by the program.

Moving toward the century mark

"The underlying principle of the true neighborhood house is human service." Mary Treglia often spoke those words. As the Community House moved toward the century mark, those words remained at the heart of the enduring non-profit.

The Community House hosted a health fair for low-income people and immigrants in April 2012. Local healthcare providers, wellness experts, and medical insurance specialists provided information on a range of healthy-living topics, including understanding insurance, occupational therapy, cholesterol and blood pressure checks, diabetes education, smoking-cessation resources, HIV education and testing, women's and children's health issues, exercise and wellness programs, healthy-eating resources, car-seat safety checks, vision screenings for children, lead testing and immunization information. Interpreters in Spanish, Oromo, Somali and Vietnamese were available.

A Community House fundraising event served up a humorous and educational wine-tasting opportunity titled "Wine on a Dime" in December 2008 at the Marina Inn. The event promised "great international wines that won't break the bank. It featured wine expert Gary Vaynerchuk and benefited Community House youth programming.

Kids learning English as a second language alongside their parents? That's what happened in fall 2014 when the Community House took over the "Parent/Child Empowerment" program. This was a result of the Community House's merger with La Casa Latina in 2007. Each Wednesday, young children accompanied a parent to the Community House where they learned and practiced English together.

The Briar Cliff University Department of Social Work presented a program to show what it's like to go through the immigration process. Immigration simulations were presented at Briar Cliff's St. Francis Center in cooperation with the Community House and Siouxland Unidad Latina Board of Directors on April 8, 2014.

In September 2016, Amy Chabra joined the Community House as executive director. That same year planning got under way to develop an exhibit illuminating the Eastside beginnings of the Community House. The exhibit, "Building Bridges to Better Lives," opened at the Betty Strong Encounter Center on Jan. 14, 2017.

Tens of thousands of Encounter Center visitors learned about this extraordinary story thanks to the exhibit. It was researched and written by Marcia Poole, using sources and historic images mainly from the Community House and Joe Stabile, a descendent of early Community House members. Patrick Osborne designed the exhibit; Mike McCormick installed it.

The exhibit was enhanced by the April 2017 program “Did Immigrants Learn English Faster Than Today’s Immigrants?” by applied linguist Dr. Alex Poole. Poole’s illustrated program looked at claims that today’s immigrants are slower to learn English than 19th century immigrants. The program was presented at the Encounter Center in cooperation with the Community house.

“Ode Storytelling Night” was held in the Community House Garden the evening of Aug. 24, 2017, as part of a series produced by Siouxland Public Media. Storytellers dug into sweet and savory topics.

“We Are Dreamers” documentary was shown on Feb. 20, 2018. The film tells stories from young undocumented immigrants who had been protected from deportation under the Dreamer’s Act.

On May 26, 2019, the Community House celebrated the recent renovation of its preschool, kitchen and gym as part of an effort to have the facility licensed by the Department of Human Services for childcare services. The project was funded by contributions from Women United, Tyson Foods and Missouri River Historical Development, inc. (MRHD).

J. Rebecca (Becky) Carlson was named executive director in July 2019. Carlson began her career at Council on Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence and also held positions at the Center for Siouxland and the Siouxland District Health Department.

On Aug. 18, 2019, Andrea Paret of the Community House staff was named United Way’s Outstanding Services professional of the year based on merit and commitment to the community

The Mary J. Treglia House received the Sioux City Human Rights Commission Annual Award for Outstanding Public Service in Promoting Civil and Human Rights in November 2019. The award recognized the Community House for its “extraordinary work that has positively improved countless lives in Sioux City and the Siouxland area.”

In recognition of Women’s History Month, the Sioux City Public Museum’s Grace Linden presented a program about Mary Treglia as part of the museum’s “History at High Noon” series on Thursday, March 19, 2020.

The Community House marked 2021 with a year of special events to celebrate a century of service. Adjustments were necessary due to the pandemic, but the Mary J. Treglia Community House never wavered in its commitment to the community.

Visit www.marytreglia.org to learn more.

