

**STATEMENT OF  
CARROLL THOMAS  
CEO, MIDDLESEX COUNTY  
ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY CORPORATION  
BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**September 12, 2002**

**My name is Carroll Thomas; I am the President and CEO for the Community Action Agency serving Central New Jersey. It is indeed my pleasure to be here today.**

**Middlesex County Economic Opportunities Corporation (MCEOC) has been serving low income and disadvantaged persons for 37 years. We run a host of programs, all designed to provide the opportunity for persons to become self-sufficient.**

**Today, I'd like to talk about a partnership that has worked, MAVERIC (Moving American Veterans into Employment and Residences in Community). The cornerstone of MAVERIC is providing opportunity to comprehensive services that lead to meaningful employment, while protecting the dignity and honor of our veterans. MCEOC acquires foreclosed properties. The property is repaired and brought up to code in partnership with veteran's homeless services. We house the veterans who pay rent of \$300 to \$400 per month. The veterans are employed by our agency in one of our programs, or are employed within the community. In other words this is a win win situation for the veterans and the taxpayers. They are immediately contributors to society. We, in partnership with Veterans Industries operate several businesses: a thrift shop in Bound Brook, a Horticultural business, and we have begun renovations at the train station in Perth Amboy for a coffee and novelty shop. We will employ six to eight veterans there. The spring of next year will find us opening a golf driving range and in January of 2003 we will operate a computer-recycling venture. We will refurbish computers and make them available**

**to low-income families. We also assist in the transportation of the veterans through our contract with Veterans Industries.**

**Tomorrow I will return to New Jersey because we will be piloting the first Community Land Security Project across the nation. It will employ one of our veterans who will educate the untutored to the nation's anti-terrorist initiative.**

**There could be no greater call to service for veterans than to continue serving his country in our mission against terrorism. What we know in Community Action is that if there is going to be an incident of bio-terrorism, the communities we serve, the young, the old and the sick will be most vulnerable.**

**I wish that I could put into words the impact that the work of John Kuhn, the Veteran staff and the staff of MCEOC is making a difference on the lives of our veterans by returning them to the work force by generating additional revenue. Through their entrepreneurial efforts, by stabilizing communities, by rehabilitating foreclosed homes, and by preserving historical structures such as (the Perth Amboy Train Station) and by assisting in the building of a state of the art Head Start Center in Carteret, New Jersey. In fact, the newly developed Johnnie Stevens Child Care Center is named after a local hero who freed Normandy as a part of the Black Infantry.**

**MAVERIC is just that! It's taking hold of initiatives, looking outside the box, in order to assure that our Veterans are included in the American Dream.**

**As we all remember 911 and the new mission against terrorism, our soldiers, primarily those of color, must know that America will never forsake them.**