

Joan Bowman & Rose Pope

Joan (jo-ANN) Bowman was born in Marion in 1927, and has essentially lived here all of her life. At 89 years of age, she works at Justice Middle School in food service.

Bowman has been a leader of her neighborhood, Center City, for 20+ years. Bowman has even helped other neighborhood associations during the years. Bowman was one of the leaders of the staging efforts that would take place to mitigate drug activity in certain homes in the 90's, an effort she says Norma Stone initiated as PAIN (People Against Illegal Narcotics).

Bowman has led her association through major cleanups. She claims she misses them. "I wish we all could come together and be on the same page in beautifying the neighborhood. I wish more people would come to the meetings so we could hear their ideas and concerns, and we can work from there. I cannot understand why people don't want to get involved."

Bowman describes Marion as an ideal place to live. "I like a small town. It's for me. I raised a family here. You know your neighbors, whereas in a big city you don't really get to do that."

Bowman says championing for your community really is "winning." She adds, "Everything that we start, I hope we can accomplish it and be a winner on what we start and finish."

Rose Pope was born in Marion in 1932, and has lived here all of her life.

After seeing drug activity in a couple of homes in her neighborhood, she (and Daryl Smith) started a neighborhood association. At that time, approximately 25 years ago, the H.O.P.E. association was formed. Pope led numerous efforts that successfully deterred drug dealers from entering the homes. They would set up a burn barrel and cook hot dogs every weekend from the early evening until midnight in front of the concerned homes. She also led marches, one being citywide with many other neighborhood associations, where the Marion Police Department would also get involved.

The H.O.P.E. association worked hard to clean up the neighborhood (33rd to 38th, Adams to Western). Pope said they cut down weeds, helped paint the curbs, cleaned up debris, and assisted elderly residents with the upkeep of their homes.

At one time, H.O.P.E. had about 40 members. Today there are only 15-20. Most members grew older and many of them have passed away, Pope explained. She hopes to build the association back up again with the help of Larry Richardson, former Neighborhood Association Coordinator, who this year retired from the City, but will continue serving as H.O.P.E.'s new president.

Pope responded immediately when asked what it means to champion for the community. "Peace of mind." Pope advises younger generations, "Realize this is their place to live. If they want to have a decent place to raise their children, they need to get involved now."