

Changing mindsets. Building bridges out of poverty.



A monthly publication of  
Unite Escambia's *Poverty Solutions Team*



### From the Editor

by Christy Emmanuel, Lender Processing Services (NYSE: LPS) / Poverty Information Group member

July 1<sup>st</sup> marked a change in leadership of the *Poverty Solutions Team* as Jean Norman, President and CEO of United Way of Escambia County, passed the chairmanship to Janice Thomas, Circuit 1 Administrator of the Department of Children and Families. Joining Jean and Janice as 2009/2010 officers are Tim Evans, Executive Director of Manna, and Susan Nelms, Executive Director of Workforce EscaRosa.

The new leadership will no doubt continue to build the momentum of the last two years, thanks in large measure to Jean's vision, passion and tireless effort. Sincere thanks to Jean for laying the groundwork and for her continued involvement, and to Janice, Tim and Susan for taking on the challenge to lead the Poverty Solutions Team to new heights.

Jean looks back over the Poverty Solution's Team's first two years in this issue of *Bridges*. Also find the customary Calendar of Events, Training Schedule, 'Stepping Up' and 'Stepping Out' columns, and Kathleen Logan's book review on *Nickel and Dimed* by Barbara Ehrenreich.

Speaking of Barbara Ehrenreich, I just read about her in a poverty 'blog' while surfing the Net. In a recent *New York Times* op-ed, "Too Poor to Make the News," the author observes that with all of the attention to the "Nouveau Poor" resulting from the current recession, the plight of those who were already poor has been largely ignored in the mainstream media.

*The deprivations of the formerly affluent Nouveau Poor are real enough, but the situation of the already poor suggests that they do not necessarily presage a greener, more harmonious future with a flatter distribution of wealth. There are no data yet on the effects of the recession on measures of inequality, but historically the effect of downturns is to increase, not decrease, class polarization.*

*The recession of the '80s transformed the working class into the working poor, as manufacturing jobs fled to the third world, forcing American workers into the low-paying service and retail sector. The current recession is knocking the working poor down another notch — from low-wage employment and inadequate housing toward erratic employment and no housing at all. Comfortable people have long imagined that American poverty is far more luxurious than the third world variety, but the difference is rapidly narrowing*

As stated in the blog, "We shouldn't discount the negative effects the current crisis is having on a wide range of families who make up the newly poor; but neither should we forget the long-term poor, who will be less likely to bounce back once this crisis turns." We can all play a role in support of those working to pull themselves out of poverty. Read on!

# Poverty Solutions Team...Looking Back Over the First Two Years

by Jean Norman, President and CEO of United Way of Escambia County and Past Chair of the Poverty Solutions Team

The mission of the Poverty Solutions Team is to make Escambia County a community without poverty. Since its inception in June 2007, the Poverty Solutions Team has been focused on two key goals, namely:

***Reduce by 50% the percentage of the county's population living below the federal poverty level, i.e., from 15.8% to less than 8% from 2006 to 2020. A total of 42,935 people, including 16,918 children, met this criterion in 2008.***

***Increase to 200 the number of partners working to reduce poverty by communicating the Poverty Solutions Team's work and Bridges Out of Poverty concepts, by June 30, 2009.***



Two years ago, 19 people representing nonprofit organizations and government, gathered in the Habitat for Humanity classroom following an invitation to serve on the newly formed *Poverty Solutions Team*. The team was developed in response to one of the five priorities identified by [Unite Escambia's] community needs assessment. When asked why they wanted to participate on the team, a variety of responses were given, such as:

- Many people shopping & working in our stores live payday to payday
- My family was in situational poverty; I am committed to making a difference
- Now there are different groups coming together to actually do something
- Eager to see how we can address the larger piece
- I recently got a Habitat home so know what it is to struggle
- 41,000 people in Escambia County live in poverty
- I want to really help people, not enable them
- Would love to see something new & innovative to empower people to improve their lives; maybe do some pilot projects
- Many community difficulties result from lack of collaboration; I hope this collaborative effort helps those who feel helpless and gives them hope
- My agency is bombarded with needs and not able to meet them
- Help people get to a level of self-sufficiency so there can be normalcy in their lives
- We must start somewhere

Our overarching task was to develop a plan of work to reduce homelessness and the number of children and elderly living in poverty. Programs initiated were to be best practices that are research-based, data-driven and produce measurable outcomes. We were to develop one short-term goal for a quick win and one long-term goal for maximum impact.

Thanks to the work the Escambia County School District had been doing for several years with *Aha!Process*, we were quickly introduced to the concepts of *Bridges Out of Poverty* by Ruby Payne, Phil DeVol and Terie Drussie Smith. This led us to adopt a bold vision: *To make Escambia County a community without poverty*. Two bold goals were adopted and a number of impressive accomplishments have been achieved inching us in the direction of the vision:

**Short-term Goal:** Increase to 200 the number of partners working to reduce poverty by communicating the Poverty Solutions Team's work and Bridges Out of Poverty concepts by June 30, 2009. Results:

- Twelve 30 minute Bridges Out of Poverty programs have been produced and aired multiple times on WUWF-TV educating the community about causes and solutions to poverty
- This Bridges newsletter is emailed monthly to 1000
- Nearly 600 people have attended Bridges Out of Poverty training, Getting Ahead in a Just Getting By World workshops, Bridges to Circles ally training, or presentations by nationally recognized speakers on best practices
- Over 750 in civic, business, faith-based groups have attended presentations about the work of the Poverty Solutions Team
- 45 individuals and organizations have completed Poverty Solutions Team partner agreement forms which are available at [www.uniteescambia.org](http://www.uniteescambia.org).

**Long-term Goal:** Reduce the number of people living below the federal poverty level in Escambia County by 50%, from 42,935 (15.8% in 2006), including 16,918 children, by 2020.

Results:

- 24 Circles Leaders and 33 allies are actively engaged; 75 have graduated from the Getting Ahead in a Just Getting' World workshop
- 1,200 tax returns for low-to-moderate income families were completed in 2009 resulting in a \$1.4 million impact in tax credits and fee preparer savings

## Looking Back (continued from page 2)

- Conducted the first annual *Getting Ahead Fair* connecting people with resources attended by over 800 residents of the Englewood neighborhood
- Poverty Solutions Team structure is organized around the causes of poverty defined by the *Aha!Process* Community Sustainability Grid
- Implementation of the Cincinnati Works model is being planned locally as *Bay Area Works*. The model places the chronically unemployed in jobs with a high retention rate through barrier removal.
- Secured \$40,000 in grants plus substantial in-kind support for training, presentations and national speakers; grant applications have been submitted to American Recovery & Reinvestment Act Strengthening Communities Fund (two grant requests), the Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention, and Impact 100 .

Now, more than 220 results-minded people are actively working on these goals as members of the 30-member board of directors, support teams, allies and Circle leaders. Looking back at the reasons people initially became involved, the rewards are notable. While there is much to be done, our momentum is growing and we are implementing both local and national pilot projects that are producing results, energy and hope. And, we are doing it as a growing collaboration.

Under the leadership of our new-elected Poverty Solutions Team chair, Janice Thomas, Circuit 1 Administrator with the Department of Children and Families, results will continue to grow. Come join us. Be part of the solution. Ask Peggy Groves (*Getting Ahead In a Just Gettin' By World Team* lead) how you can help at [plgroves@cox.net](mailto:plgroves@cox.net).

## SCHEDULED TRAINING

The best way to become part of poverty solutions is to participate in training. Learn about the *Bridges Out of Poverty* model. Become an ally to a person or family committed to working their way out of poverty.

***Bridges to Circles*** weekly community meetings are scheduled every Tuesday from 5:30-7:30 pm at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, 1212 E. Moreno on the corner of 12th Avenue. The weekly session includes dinner and a program focused on individual self-sufficiency and eliminating the systemic barriers caused by poverty. All community members are invited.

Upcoming events in the Resource Room at the Catholic Charities Outreach Center, 1815 N. Sixth Avenue:

- July 13, 5:30-7:30 pm, **Bridges out of Poverty training**
- July 27, 5:30-7:00 pm, **Hands-on Ally training**
- August 10, 5:30-7:30 pm, **Bridges Out of Poverty training**
- August 31, 5:30-7:00 pm , **Hands-on Ally training**

Above events are free; RSVP to Janet Westlake, *Bridges to Circles* community organizer, at 429-7296, ex. 18 or [westlakej@cc.ptidiocese.org](mailto:westlakej@cc.ptidiocese.org)



- July 17, 10-11:30AM -- **Community Orientation to PST** (thru UWF Leisure Learning program), UWF Downtown Bowden Building
- July 21, 2009 – 9:00 - 4:00 pm, ***Bridges Out of Poverty full-day training*** (this is a prerequisite to attending certification training); Grace Lutheran Church, North Ninth Avenue just south of Creighton Road; send \$20 registration fee payable to Catholic Charities for cost of *Bridges Out of Poverty* workbook and box lunch to Janet Westlake, Community Organizer for *Bridges to Circles*, 1815 N. Sixth Avenue, Pensacola, FL 32503.

**NOTE:** The **Trainer Certification Workshop** that was to be held July 29 – August 1 (as reported in the last issue of *Bridges*) has been postponed. It will likely be scheduled in mid- to late Fall 2009.

Send your comments, questions and suggestions on Bridges to [christyemmanuel@aol.com](mailto:christyemmanuel@aol.com). For more information about the Poverty Solutions Team, including our Mission, a Call to Action for both individuals and businesses, Definition of Terms, Team Descriptions / Contacts and Training Programs, view ***A Primer on Unite Escambia's Poverty Solutions Team*** posted on the Unite Escambia website at [www.UniteEscambia.com](http://www.UniteEscambia.com), and tune in to ***Bridges Out of Poverty*** airing on WUWF-TV in various time slots each week.

## STEPPING UP

by Carolyn Appleyard, Chair, Poverty Information Group of Unite Escambia's Poverty Solutions Team

*Question: What motivated you to become involved in the Poverty Solutions Team effort to reduce poverty in Escambia County?*



Because of my involvement with Habitat for Humanity, I saw the barriers that potential homeowners faced as they tried to succeed in the program. Even after they had a home, they still faced challenges. No matter what they did, there were too many things that were out of their control, like transportation.

The *Bridges Out of Poverty* program made sense to me because it filled a need in our community. We have a lot of local programs that help individuals, but no organizational approach for addressing systemic causes of poverty. *Bridges* has a wider, bigger impact, and will help solve the overall problem of poverty in our county.

## STEPPING OUT

by Haley Richards, Bridges to Circles, VISTA Volunteer

Congrats, graduate!



Education is an essential resource for anyone trying to succeed in life and your graduation day offers the chance to reflect on how far you've come. The Megill family certainly has a lot to celebrate with Jennifer Megill graduating from nursing school. Jennifer and husband, Kevin, along with their 3 children began this journey alone but over the last few months have felt the support of the *Bridges to Circles* community.

During the *Bridges to Circles* weekly community meeting Jennifer would update everyone on her progress, and her graduation announcement was met with a resounding round of applause. This wonderful accomplishment was one goal set by the family to move out of poverty and become self-sufficient. The Megill family can now begin working with their *Bridges to Circles* allies on the next goal. Congratulations Jennifer!

## BOOK REVIEW

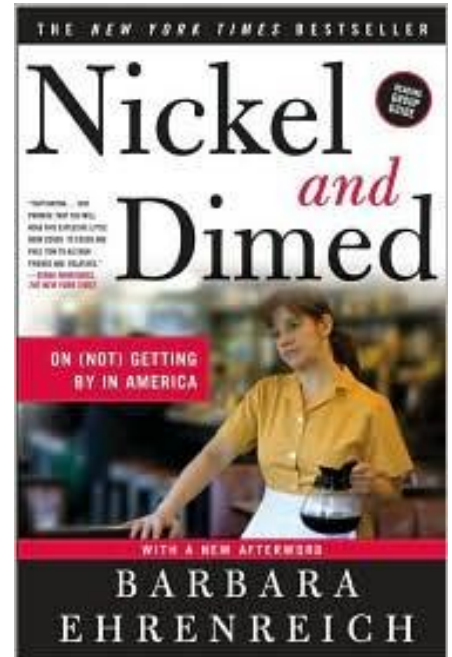
by Kathleen Logan, Community Volunteer / Poverty Information Group Member

***Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America*** by Barbara Ehrenreich, 2001, Henry Holt and Company, NY, \$13

Imagine trying to live on the U.S. minimum wage of \$6.55/hour. For a 40-hour week, you'd earn \$262, or \$1,048/month. Before deductions.

Now try to imagine paying for rent, food, transportation, medical bills, child care, etc. How would you do it? The people who try are those whose services you need and use daily. Live in their world for the length of this short, impactful book.

Author Barbara Ehrenreich suspended her normal life to take those minimum wage jobs – waitress, hotel maid, house cleaner, nursing aide, Wal-Mart salesperson – “to see whether I could match income to expenses, as the truly poor attempt to do every day.” If you've been lulled into middle-class complacency, this book will jolt you out of it and into a new way of looking at the people trying to live on poverty wages.



## CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

# West Florida Community Day Luncheon

### West Florida Community Day Luncheon

**Friday, July 24, 2009, 10:00 am – 1:00 pm**

**Pensacola Civic Center, 201 E. Gregory Street, Pensacola**

In addition to live entertainment, free lunch and door prizes, the program includes free information about public services such as:

- How to save money on your telephone bill
- How to get a free cell phone & free monthly minutes
- Disaster Preparedness
- Senior Services
- Keeping your body healthy ~high blood pressure & diabetes testing and healthy eating recipes
- Community Health and Insurance Services
- Housing Information

For more information and to reserve your lunch call Linking Solutions, Inc. at 866-899-7106 (toll free) on or before July 22th. Free group transportation is available.

### Getting Ahead Fair

**Saturday, July 25, 8 AM-12 noon**

**Boys and Girls Club**

**2751 North H Street, Pensacola**



Open to the public with door prizes, food, refreshments, community services, information and family fun. *Feed the Children* Food Vouchers are limited to the first 400 families. Pre-register by July 16 at Catholic Charities, 1815 North 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Pensacola.

Families receive 40 pounds of food and hygiene products from Feed the Children as well as information on community resources such as Families First Network, Escambia County Early Learning Coalition, Learn to Read of NW Florida, Sacred Heart's 'Mission in Motion' and more.

Free workshops and services include credit repair and budget help, low cost health care for children, free health screenings, legal services, prescription discount cards, information on owning a Habitat home for less than \$500 per month and more.



POLICE • COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

### The 26th Annual "America's Night Out Against Crime" Celebration

**Tuesday, August 4, 2009, 5:00 – 8:00 pm**

**Magee Field, 2500 Martin Luther King Blvd., Pensacola**

National Night Out is designed to: (1) heighten crime and drug prevention awareness; (2) generate support for and participation in local anticrime efforts; (3) strengthen neighborhood spirit and police-community partnerships; and (4) send a message to criminals letting them know neighborhoods are organized and fighting back.

The Celebration will include free food and refreshments, backpacks, books and school supplies for children, music, raffle prizes and plenty of activities for kids. Please join us!

For more information, contact Captain David Alexander, Pensacola Police Dept., @ 698-0905 or Linda Moultrie, Escambia County Sheriff's Office at 436-9553 or 554-1265.

**Organizations are invited** to have a table at the event to provide participants with information about resources that are available in our community. Set-up time is 4:00 pm.

A 6' table and 2 chairs will be provided. Please bring any table coverage and signage desired. Consider bringing a pop-up tent, if you have one, to provide shade for your table.

Questions from community organizations? Contact Lori Broadhurst at [nwflpc@bellsouth.net](mailto:nwflpc@bellsouth.net) or 934-3071 by July 24<sup>th</sup> with completed form.