

Changing mindsets. Building bridges out of poverty.



A publication of

Unite Escambia's *Poverty Solutions Team*



POVERTY COSTS

by Kathleen Logan, Community Volunteer / Poverty Information Group Co-Chair

"Poverty is expensive." Huh? What does that mean? Precisely what it says: poverty costs everyone in a community. Poor people have no money for extras, so businesses, for example, lose customers. On the other hand, getting even one person out of poverty has a "multiplier effect" because, just like happiness, it's catching. Individuals who have "made it" grab onto other people to help them become self-sufficient, too.

The Poverty Information Group (PIGs, we cheerfully call ourselves), are a sub-committee of the Poverty Solutions Team of Unite Escambia. This is a volunteer effort to cut poverty in half by 2020 in Escambia County. Just as the community shares the costs of poverty, so does it share in the substantial benefits of increasing self-sufficiency among citizens.

YOU are an essential piece of this effort. Participate in the Bridges to Circles process; become an ally to an individual. And if you don't know what these terms mean, find out, because YOU are part of the solution.

What Every Church Member Should Know About Poverty

First Presbyterian Church and Gulf Breeze United Methodist Church have joined the many churches that have offered this book study to their congregation.

For more information on how you could offer the study, contact Captain David Alexander at dalexander@ci.pensacola.fl.us.



Tune In to WSRE

Dr. Ruby K. Payne's "What Every Church Member Should Know about Poverty" Presentation will air February 4 and February 11 at 7:30pm on WSRE.

STEPPING OUT

by Beth Shepherd, M.S.W. Intern, University of West Florida



Congratulations are in order to Bridges to Circles member, Dorothy Henderson. Dorothy enrolled in the Getting Ahead Class in the fall of 2008. Upon completing the class, she opted to become a circle leader in the Bridges to Circles Program and began formulating and working towards her personal goals. She decided she would focus her efforts on three primary items: enrolling in college, obtaining a vehicle, and getting needed dental work.

Todd Winter has been serving as an ally to Dorothy. He says, "Dorothy is an attentive fulltime caregiver to a disabled patient. She is working on self-sufficiency goals of transportation and attending school for her culinary vocation. She has completed some of the objective by obtaining a good gas-efficient car from her daughter and applied for a Pell Grant and admission at Pensacola Junior college. She is encouraged to stay employed while researching school hours and possibilities as well as her volunteer work on Tuesdays baking desserts for our Bridges to Circles meeting."

Today, less than one year from enrolling in the program, Dorothy has achieved all three of her goals. She is now a student in the culinary program at Pensacola Junior College, has her own vehicle, and has had the dental repairs completed. When Dorothy decided to return to school she had no computer skills. She shook her head laughing and said "I could not even turn on a computer!" She has worked hard to catch up with technology, and although she is still learning, Dorothy is rapidly gaining skills and confidence. When asked about what impact Bridges to Circles has had on her life Dorothy said warmly, "It's my support. It gives me hope, courage, strength."

Dorothy has two children, five grandchildren, and one great-grandchild. She is currently employed full time as a home aid with Ginger Cupp. She says that she loves her job and the elderly population she works with, but she has dreams for a business of her own. After she completes her culinary program, Dorothy hopes to open her own catering company which she will call *How Sweet It Is*. Dorothy's story is a wonderful example of the supportive power of united community. We applaud our sister for her hard work and look forward to seeing her continue to bloom.



The story you've just read is about community more than about poverty. Building bridges can begin with simple acts or it can begin with great commitments. Joining the *Bridges to Circles* community is one of those commitments. It is a commitment to build bridges among people and across many segments of our community. Remember, it is about community.

Run for Missions

First United Methodist Church
Saturday, April 17, 2010
5k Run/Walk—8:00am
Fun Run—9:00am



Proceeds benefit Unite Escambia's Poverty Solutions Team

Details: 432-1434 or
www.pensacolafirstchurch.com

Poverty and crime: they're neighbors

By Charlotte Crane, Northwest Correspondent *Florida Trend Magazine* & Poverty Information Group



➤ The United States has less than 5 percent of the world's population. But it has almost a quarter of the world's prisoners: 2.3 million people in prisons or jails, more than any other nation.

➤ While U.S. sentencing policies, incarceration for drug offenses and high recidivism account for a major share of our nation's higher prison populations, much of the growing incidence of crime can be traced to root causes, primarily poverty.

➤ Our overcrowded prisons are breaking our budgets. Building and maintaining prisons takes state budget money away from critical programs such as strengthening schools and improving neighborhoods.

➤ The Florida Legislature included \$309 million in the 2009 fiscal year budget to add another 10,200 additional prison beds over the next three years. Legislators took away almost that same amount, \$332 million, from K-12 education.

➤ Prisons also contribute to poverty. Imprisonment of a family member can impoverish children, both economically and spiritually, and create a legacy of incarceration that lasts for generations, according to an article in *Mother Jones* magazine.



➤ How to explain a growing crime problem? Comments Russ Edgar, assistant state's attorney in Escambia County:
"We have terrible problems with poverty, which leads to despair, lack of opportunity and use of drugs. There's a widening gap between those who have and those who don't, a failing education system and dysfunctional families. That's the soil and the fertilizer and water and seed for our patches of crime and hopelessness."

The Power of Collaboration

by Rev. Lawrence S. Powell, President of Collaboration of Community Organizations (COCO)

The Collaboration of Community Organizations (COCO) participated in a community information forum, sponsored by Unite Escambia Poverty Solutions Team at Olive Baptist Church. The fellowship hall was full to capacity with 175 concerned faith leaders with like minds and "kindred Spirits".

The forum centered around an outstanding and informative presentation by Dr. Ruby Payne, co-author of *Bridges out of Poverty* and *What Every Church Member Should Know about Poverty*. We benefited tremendously from the theory, statistical and practical information she presented to assist community churches and entities with outreach ministry to help those in poverty move to self-sufficiency. Her presentation focused on addressing and solving poverty at the community level by empowering those who are affected.

COCO is made up of preachers, ministers, community advocates and leaders from 15 churches across denominations. We are doing work that is similar to the Bridges to Circles program and look forward to synchronizing efforts for a community approach to solving the problem of poverty that affects us all.

URGENT APPEAL FOR ALLIES

by Janet Westlake, *Bridges to Circles* community organizer

Bridges to Circles needs to reach as many people as possible as quickly as possible. Our Circle Leaders need allies. Help us help those who want to work their way out of poverty. Give us an audience with your fellow employees, parishioners and/or members of organizations with which you are involved.

We can provide:

**A 3-5 minute talk about the need
(perfect for staff meetings)**

**A 45-60 minute presentation about the impact of
poverty**

**A staffed display table in a break room or entry area
A flyer or email you can distribute**

The *Bridges to Circles* poverty initiative, as part of Unite Escambia's Poverty Solutions Team and Catholic Charities, is working with families who currently live below the federal poverty level with a strong desire to move to self-sufficiency. Circle 'Leaders' as they are called, have completed the fifteen week *Getting Ahead in a Just Gettin' By World* program and are now meeting weekly on Tuesday nights as they work their plans to better their lives. They have goals ranging from getting a GED to starting their own business to completing a bachelor's degree to purchasing a home.

A key component to the success of Circles Leaders is the support of Allies. These are individuals from the community who commit to meeting at least twice each month on Tuesday evenings. Allies come to build a relationship with them as well as encourage them on their plans and to serve as a resource as needed. It is a wonderful way for people of all ages to make a meaningful difference without having to spend money to do so.



We urgently need Allies to sustain *Bridges to Circles*. Lend a hand, and help us reach more people in our community as we work to reduce poverty in Escambia County by 50% by 2020.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Four opportunities are available from the trainers of *Bridges to Circles* which will benefit you. Our presentations range from 20-90 minutes. We believe this training will have a significant impact on how staff members relate to one another and to the public.

Bridges Out of Poverty

If you are looking to counter poverty or its impact on people and businesses in our community, explore the innovative concepts and training found in *Bridges Out of Poverty* by Dr. Ruby Payne. **Bridges Training is Monday, March 1 from 6:00-8:00 pm at the Catholic Charities Outreach Center at 1815 N. Sixth Avenue.**

Ally Training

This two hour session presents an overview of the *Bridges to Circles* poverty initiative and begins to equip the individual to serve as an ally for an individual moving from poverty to self-sufficiency. Ally training is conducted at the Catholic Charities Outreach Center at 1815 N. Sixth Avenue. **Upcoming Training dates are Thursday, February 11, 6-8 pm and Thursday, March 18, 6-8 pm.**

The Hidden Rules of Class at Work

An individual brings to an organization three things: resources, connections (i.e., relationships), and hidden rules. Meanwhile, the organization has its own resources, connections and hidden rules. The successful fit of the individual into the organization is largely determined by how well these three elements from the individual mesh with those of the organization. This training explores the concepts found in Dr. Ruby Payne and Don Krabill's book, *Hidden Rules of Class at Work*.

The Power of Language

Language has a powerful influence on both employee relations and interactions with customers. In Dr. Ruby Payne's book, *Hidden Rules of Class at Work*, she explores innovative ways to improve communication. A key component is language, particularly the registers of language such as casual and formal, discourse patterns, and story structure.

To register for all training, schedule a presentation, or for more information, contact Janet Westlake, community organizer for *Bridges to Circles* at 429-7296, ext. 18 or westlakej@cc.ptdiocese.org.

Bay Area Works Completes Employer Survey

by Mort O'Sullivan, Bay Area Works Champion



The Bay Area Works Planning Team is gathering data for the business case to implement the Cincinnati Works model in northwest Florida. Last summer 105 companies employing 50 or more people participated in a survey conducted by Workforce Escarosa and Bay Area Works. The survey included questions on sources for recruiting entry-level employees, health benefits, adequacy of the labor pool, number of entry-level job openings, types of entry-level positions and required qualifications, and wages.

This month 300 clients of Department of Children and Families, Families Count, Workforce Escarosa, First Call for Help and Catholic Charities are being surveyed to identify prospective employee barriers to employment including issues related to housing, education, felony, credit, drug/alcohol and other issues that may keep them from working.

The full responses to the employer survey can be viewed at uniteescambia.org/poverty. A few highlights of the employer survey results:

- 64% use internet and website job postings to recruit entry level employees (entry level defined as 30 hours/week and paying \$8/hour)
- 66% offer something other than traditional indemnity plans or managed health care plans
- 66% have no positions currently available
- 75% are satisfied with the available pool of applicants
- 70% are interested in improving the quality of the entry-level labor pool

The survey was conducted to help determine the need to increase workforce productivity through retention of employees in entry-level, unskilled jobs. Bay Area Works, a proposed nonprofit entity that is initially working as a planning committee of the Unite Escambia Poverty Solutions Team, is modeled after Cincinnati Works. Cincinnati Works is a nonprofit organization founded by Dave and Lianne Phillips that helps individuals in poverty reach economic self-sufficiency through employment.

Through free, lifetime employment services, Cincinnati Works in Cincinnati, Ohio, offers job readiness, job search, job retention, barrier removal and career advancement services. The mission is to partner with all willing and capable people living in poverty to assist them in advancing to economic self-sufficiency through employment. Cincinnati Works has achieved extraordinary results. A total of 700 employees earning \$8-\$11 per hour are placed annually with an unprecedented 84% one year retention rate. Read more about it at cincinnatiworks.org.

Dave Phillips's goal is to share the intellectual property and coach any community that has the characteristics to make such a program successful. It is my honor to "champion" a 20 member planning team to plan and implement this model. I know what it means to receive a hand-up and I think it is critical that we solve the problem of poverty and narrow the gap. I am pleased to tell you that we are the first community to have a signed agreement with Dave Phillips for implementation of the Cincinnati Works model.

We know we have a tremendous challenge. But, we also know that this is a proven model that helps people to find, keep and advance in employment that moves them to self-sufficiency. This is a significant way we can achieve the vision of the Poverty Solutions Team which is that Escambia County is a community without poverty. As this vision is achieved, we will all benefit.

If you are an employer and want to partner with us please contact me at morto@osullivancreel.com or 435-7400.

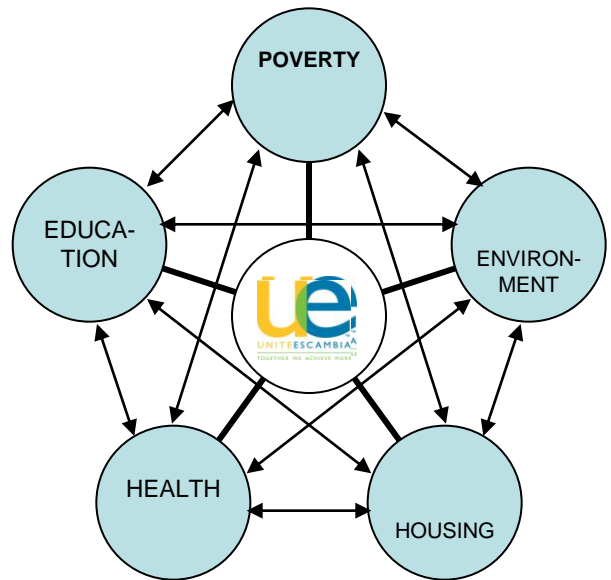
It's All Connected

by Lucie Wade, AmeriCorps VISTA, Unite Escambia

The Poverty Solutions Team is one of five teams developed under the Unite Escambia umbrella to work toward the Unite Escambia vision: "A healthy community where all have the inspiration and opportunity to succeed." Solutions Teams are also working in the areas of Education, Environment, Health and Housing to make Unite Escambia's vision a reality. As the movement has progressed since its inception in 2006 and implementation in 2008, the inter-connectivity of the five teams becomes more and more evident.

Take a look at the chart and see how many ways you can name that the work of one team affects the forward progress of the other teams.

Visit the **Unite Escambia website** and give us your feedback. www.uniteescambia.org



Escambia VISTA Coalition Job Announcement

The Escambia VISTA Coalition (EVC) seeks to attract talented individuals to serve for a minimum of one year at one of ten listed agencies to help: reduce the prevalence of poverty and poverty related problems; strengthen local agencies for sustainability, generate private sector resources and promote recruitment and development of volunteer teams.

EVC agencies include:
B.R.A.C.E.

Catholic Charities of Northwest Florida
Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County
EscaRosa Homeless Coalition
Families First Network
First Call for Help
Financial Stability Coalition
Pathways for change
Poverty Solutions Team
Unite Escambia

Escambia VISTA Coalition

For more information about becoming a VISTA volunteer, contact any of the Escambia VISTA coalition partners.

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, be sure to view **A Primer on Unite Escambia's Poverty Solutions Team** posted on the Unite Escambia website at www.UniteEscambia.com.

Don't forget to tune in to **Bridges Out of Poverty** airing on WUWF-TV at various times each week. Call us for more information at 479-9692

Together We Achieve More!