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PO Box 1660
Green Bay, WI 54305

SPRING 2007

A study and recommendations by
Bay Area Community Council



Poverty in Brown County

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The Urgency of Moving People to Self-Sufficiency

Bay Area Community Council Board Members 2007

Children Task Force

Randy Lawton, BACC vice president; owner-manager C.A. Lawton Co.; active in Brown County United Way and its Community Partnership for Children and Sheltered Industries
Rose Smits, executive director, Encompass Early Education and Care

Health Care Task Force

Rev. Paul Demuth, Catholic Diocese vicar for ministry; former pastor
Pat Finder-Stone, registered nurse; retired nursing instructor; community activist and volunteer
Regan Gurung, Ph.D., UWGB associate dean of liberal arts and sciences

Housing Task Force

Noel Halvorsen, executive director, NeighborWorks Green Bay, a not-for-profit developer and provider of homebuyer education and related services
Jim Liethen, longtime volunteer with United Way and Integrated Community Services
Harry Maier, Salvation Army advisory board member; St. Vincent de Paul volunteer
Judy Nagel, vice president of investments, Wachovia Securities LLC; chair, Brown County Mutual Housing Association, a provider of housing for those in entry-level jobs

Neighborhood Services Task Force

John Gilman, retired retailer active in Weidner Center Presents; the Mayor's Neighborhood Leadership Council Executive Board and Community Development Corp.
Celestine Jeffreys, Green Bay alderman; board member, NeighborWorks Green Bay
Rev. George Krempin, pastor emeritus, Grace Lutheran Church; active in American Foundation of Counseling Services; Ecumenical Partnership for Housing
Rev. Chuck Mize, senior pastor, Union Congregational Church
Dennis Rader, retired Green Bay labor law attorney
Tom Schumacher, owner, Services Plus, Inc.; past chair, Employers Workforce Development Network; My Brother's Keeper advisory board member

Transportation Task Force

Dave Littig, Ph.D., UWGB emeritus professor; former chair, Green Bay Transit Commission
Harry Maier, Salvation Army advisory board member; St. Vincent de Paul volunteer
Mark Walter, executive director, Bay Lake Regional Planning Commission
Vince Zehren, Ph.D., director emeritus, Schreiber Foods, Inc.

Board Members At-Large

Bob Woessner, BACC president; retired journalist; poverty project principal author
Nan Nelson, BACC secretary-treasurer; executive vice president, Green Bay Area Chamber of Commerce
Phil Hauck, BACC past president; poverty project coordinator; directs CEO groups for TEC; board president, Healthy Lifestyles Cooperative, a small-business health insurance group
Paul Jadin, president Green Bay Area Chamber of Commerce; former mayor of Green Bay
Dan Nerad, Ed.D., superintendent, Green Bay Area Public School District

Former BACC directors Toni Loch, former president, Brown County United Way, and Craig Van Schyndle, former Green Bay Police Chief, also contributed to this project.

Purpose and History of the Bay Area Community Council

In 1989, The Green Bay Area Chamber of Commerce adopted a strategic plan in which it expressed a desire to promote the general prosperity and quality of life of the greater Green Bay area. As part of the implementation of that plan, a task force recommended the establishment of a community strategic planning council. This recommendation resulted in creation of the Bay Area Community Council (BACC). Established in 1990, BACC is a Brown County citizens' think tank made up of volunteers representing business, education, community, and government.

Mission Statement

With awareness of current issues, BACC provides Brown County with insight into future issues of our community through:

- Examination of anticipated community concerns that affect the growth and health of Brown County.
- Analysis of those issues through rigorous discussion and discovery.
- Effective communication of those issues to the community.
- Engaging the community in the issues.

Objectives

To ensure that the identified issues become part of the total vision of community efforts, BACC will endeavor to:

- Articulate the vision.
- Measure critical indicators.
- Coordinate strategies with broad-based community interest groups.
- Coordinate strategies with public sector planning and regulatory groups.
- Identify a process for stakeholder participation in planning and implementation.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Bay Area Community Council Board Members 2007 | 2 |
| Purpose and History of the Bay Area Community Council..... | 3 |
| Foreword..... | 5 |
| 1. Summary of Key Recommendations | 6 |
| Community Summit | 6 |
| Children | 6 |
| Health Care | 6 |
| Housing..... | 6 |
| Neighborhood Services | 7 |
| Transportation | 7 |
| 2. Green Bay Has an Increasing Poverty Problem | 9 |
| 3. The Size of the Problem | 9 |
| 4. The Impacts of Poverty..... | 10 |
| 5. Who Are the Low Income? | 10 |
| 6. What the Low Income Face | 11 |
| 7. Who is Helping..... | 13 |
| 8. What Would Happen If ...? | 14 |
| 9. What Do We Do Next?..... | 15 |
| Children | 16 |
| Health Care..... | 17 |
| Housing | 18 |
| Neighborhood Services: Creating Accessibility..... | 20 |
| Transportation | 21 |
| Appendices | 23 |

Foreword

Brown County has a poverty problem that is significant and increasing. The number of people in poverty in 2004, the last year for which Census Bureau information is available, totaled 23,269, or 10% of the population. That's up from 14,835, or 6.6% of the population, in 2000. (The federal government defines poverty as annual income of just under \$20,000 for a family of four.)

Over the last two years, BACC directors found their monthly discussions of local issues returning often to the continuing challenges and implications of poverty in our community. It is unclear how well the community understands its poverty problem.

Surveys taken during the last two years show mixed views on poverty. In 2006, respondents to the Brown County Quality of Life Survey showed a good understanding of the basic economic facts. Eighty-eight percent agreed that a family of four with pre-tax income of \$20,000 was living in poverty. In the same survey, 42% said county households are "generally middle class." But this year, 66% of respondents overestimated the percentage of families in poverty. At the same time, 68% rated social and health programs for the needy as either excellent or good.

The public's attitude is important because a thorough understanding of the situation is the first requisite for attacking the problem.

We know there are people stuck in generational poverty as well as ones passing through to self-sufficiency (transitional poverty). We also know there are immense government and private efforts aimed at helping people in need. But we wanted to know more about those in poverty and how well programs designed to help them are working.

Specifically, we wanted to learn what efforts best help those in poverty become self sufficient. Can those programs be made more successful, to touch more lives? Can Green Bay's spirit of volunteerism be enlisted to help more of those in need become self sufficient?

Putting the less fortunate on the track to self-sufficiency, especially immigrants who have undertaken immense risk with great courage to seek a better life here, is the right thing to do. It also has important, long-term, critically positive economic benefits for the community.

Simply put, we need them. The working poor are an important economic force. Areas with a surplus of willing workers attract new businesses and expansions. Innovation is driven by second- and third-generation immigrants.

For the sake of its future, the Green Bay community must help good people gain the skills they need to fit into American society, to raise their kids well and to thrive in the workplace.

As part of our study, we compiled data, read books, and listened to experts. It became obvious that there is no end to poverty studies, statistics, theories, policies and politics. Rather than become mired in that material, we decided to focus on the situation here and now.

What we learned is disturbing. Poverty in Brown County is more pervasive than many of us think, and the problem is getting worse. The good news is that the working poor are generally good people. They are here because they want to build a good life. They are willing to accept help and guidance. To that end, we have identified six important, immediate thrusts which will go far in providing critical help. If public agencies, private agencies and, most importantly, volunteers mobilize to do their parts, we can successfully address this problem and opportunity.

1. Summary of Key Recommendations

The following recommendations from our task forces build on services already available. We have selected some that need more attention and money. We recommend some new services and programs because current solutions are inadequate;

Community Summit

Support a Catholic Charities initiative to convene a summit of interested parties to spotlight poverty and increase awareness and coordination among those who can impact it.

Children

- Expand the existing Family Services Healthy Families home visiting program by adding three workers per year for three years, from the current seven to a total of 16 in order to further impact high-risk families. (One worker carries a caseload of 15 to 25 families.) Cost would be about \$26,000 to \$36,000 (including benefits) per worker. During January and February 2007, 41 high-risk cases were turned away for lack of caseworkers.
- Improve the coordination of current early childhood education initiatives, (e.g. Start Smart/Early Childhood Council, local school districts, Brown County United Way's Community Partnership for Children, etc.) by creating a paid position to coordinate existing efforts, monitor their impact, create funding options for high leverage solutions, and report measurable results. Cost would be about \$50,000 per year for a full-time position with benefits, informational materials and coordinating publicity efforts.
- On the state level, work with existing high impact special interest organizations to raise state government attention and action regarding the challenge.

Health Care

- Establish a reserve fund for emergency medications and other needed services (e.g. asthma, diabetes, antibiotics, dental care for pregnant women) administered by the NEW Community Clinic. Cost to be determined.
- Create a one-time physical assessment program, for at-risk students in kindergarten through third grade who qualify for subsidized meals in the public schools so that a child would be assessed at least once during that period. This could be a joint initiative of local nursing students and could be funded as part of the Bellin School of Nursing clinical curriculum.

Housing

- Work to increase awareness of the Housing Choice Voucher ("Section 8") Program among working families experiencing acute poverty.
- Support financial literacy programs and family self-sufficiency programs in the community and teach financial discipline to our children.
- Endorse increases in the minimum wage and encourage employers to pay a living wage.

- Support community efforts to renovate distressed housing stock.
- Support community efforts to develop new models of affordable workforce housing to meet the needs of our working families.
- Encourage community planners to better understand the changing demands of the population relative to housing and eliminate barriers to the development of housing that meets market demands. Encourage community planners to explore the connections between employment, wages, and availability of affordable housing.
- Continue to support programs designed to help working families achieve the dream of homeownership.
- Explore incentives for developers to better meet the housing needs of households earning less than the median income.
- Explore inclusionary zoning and other tools to increase the provision of workforce housing in developing areas.

Neighborhood Services

- Support the 2-1-1 system in Brown County
 - a) Universally adopt the 2-1-1 and 2-1-1 PLUS programs as the de-facto gateway for accessing area services at all levels of government, schools, businesses and human service providers.
 - b) Identify and enroll 2-1-1 PLUS sites to support true 24-7 accessibility.
 - c) Provide 2-1-1 information in media and locations where the poor live and work.
 - d) Ask the Chamber of Commerce to promote 2-1-1 and 2-1-1 PLUS to businesses.
- Develop a tracking system without invading personal privacy which logs service provider contacts by person or family to provide better overall case management to identify cyclical causes of poverty and improved accountability in meeting the needs of the poor.

Transportation

- The Brown County Planning Department should develop and administer a survey on the transportation needs of the poor.
- City of Green Bay should investigate permitting shared-taxi ride programs (possibly with funds from state/federal programs). Possible model: Red Cross' use of grants and volunteers.
- City of Green Bay should encourage the establishment of businesses which recycle used cars, including low interest loans for purchase. (Possible

implementers: Family Services' Wheels to Work program and Catholic Charities' Wisconsin Interfaith Needs Response.)

- Encourage employers to develop creative ways to provide transportation or use of transportation at key times for their employees.

In addition to the specific recommendations made by the five task forces, the BACC directors as a group also recommend that:

- Where feasible, services should be moved physically closer to those who need them. There is space in schools, libraries, churches and other facilities for centers that will encourage people in neighborhoods to gather for educational programs and networking. The Howe and Fort Howard neighborhood resource centers are good models of what we suggest.
- Fresh emphasis should be placed community-wide on the need for volunteers to help those in need become more self-sufficient. All of the agencies and groups we contacted do use volunteers and can use more. Examples include: Brown County Human Services' need for resources for modeling behavior to keep people out of institutions; United Way's need for volunteers to help educate the community on social issues; NEW Community Clinic can use volunteers to supplement its cadre of medical professionals; Family Services can use mentors to work with latch key kids; the Green Bay Area Public Schools can use volunteers as tutors, supply-drive organizers and developers of a clothing closet for low income students; Integrated Community Services can use help with child care and needs drivers; and Encompass Early Education and Care can use a variety of volunteers in its child-care centers.

Most importantly, our study showed there is a great need for volunteers willing to mentor those trying to escape poverty in accomplishing basic tasks such as budgeting, shopping, managing family affairs, etc. The biggest challenge is to find long-term volunteers. As one agency representative put it, "Long-term volunteers are difficult to find and it is costly in relation to staff time to have volunteers work only a short time and then more time has to be spent training new volunteers." Long-term volunteers will not have easy tasks, but their help can make the difference between dependency and self-sufficiency for many now in need.

Finally, BACC directors understand more clearly now than when we began this project that greater public understanding of the needs of those trying to become self-sufficient and the economic importance of the working poor are crucial in dealing with poverty in the community.

The plain truth is that if Green Bay shrugs its shoulders and shuns the working poor today, it will pay a heavy price tomorrow in additional costs for education, health care, police protection, neighborhood deterioration, economic segregation and erosion of the local work force.

2. Green Bay Has an Increasing Poverty Problem

To many of us, the poverty problem is invisible. The low income tend to cluster in central Green Bay neighborhoods where there is more affordable housing than in other parts of the community. If your regular routine does not take you into those areas, you don't see the poverty and it is easy to believe this is a community with few in need.

In fact, Green Bay often is seen as a more affluent place than it is. When the television networks send their cameras to Green Bay to broadcast football games, they show a community wealthy enough to have arguably the nation's best stadium and nearly 73,000 people able to spend \$59 to \$292 a seat for games 10 times a year.

But there is a side of Green Bay the cameras do not capture. Thousands of people in the community struggle to pay for daily necessities. Most are the working poor – people trying to support themselves and their children on subsistence wages. While most work, they are also dependent on a huge network of government and private agencies.

3. The Size of the Problem

As we noted earlier, 10% of county residents (more than 23,000 people) were below the federal poverty line in 2004, versus 6.6% (or 14,835) in 2000.

Census estimates also show that more than 8,500 county families earn less than \$25,000 and that nearly 24% of families headed by females are in poverty. Green Bay school district figures also document the trend. In 2000, 9.8% of students qualified for subsidized or free meals (based on a family income of less than 150% of the federal poverty guideline). In 2004, it was 16.5%.

These are the numbers we found most disturbing:

- More than half the students in 13 of the Green Bay school district's 34 attendance areas qualify for subsidized meals.
- Six elementary schools have in-building subsidized meal averages of 72% or higher.
- In September 2006, a total of 10,475 district children qualified for subsidized meals.

Mia, married and the mother of six children aged 15 to 7, came to the United States from Southeast Asia in 1989, married and moved to Green Bay a year later. Her husband has been incarcerated for the last five years. Mia works as a sewing-machine operator earning \$6.50 an hour and taking home about \$11,000 a year.

Help for the family comes from food stamps, housing subsidies and other sources such as her children's teachers and a local company. Both have provided food and gifts. Mia says she knows that she had too many children and that her lack of English and education is a serious problem because she cannot get a better job.

Everything is too hard and complicated, she says. She hopes to get her children educated and launched successfully into society.

Another example is provided by Brown County Human Services (BCHS) which administers mainly federal programs using tax dollars distributed by the state.

BCHS has a budget of \$97-million. Its FoodShare Program, for incomes up to \$32,000, covers 5,164 families. Medical Assistance covers between 11,100 and 11,500 families. About 1,000 families qualify for subsidized day care for children.

4. The Impacts of Poverty

As we researched and thought, the major impacts of poverty became clearer. Cost is the most obvious. Government and private programs spend more than \$150 million a year to help the needy here. The figure rises when education and health care costs are included. School and housing data suggest that Green Bay, the core of Brown County, is becoming an economically segregated community. In 2004-05, a total of 11,122 county children were eligible for subsidized school meals. More than 76% attended Green Bay schools and they were concentrated in the city's heart.

Economic segregation historically leads to deteriorating neighborhoods, increasing crime rates and rising tension across the community as the gulf between haves and have-nots becomes wider. Add racial and cultural differences and, sadly, it increases much, much more.

But the most important impact, in our minds, is that poverty in the community will continue, and likely will deepen, if renewed attention and action are not focused on it now. The result will be that the thousands of children in families now in need will be more likely to grow up with little hope. They and their children will become the poverty cases of tomorrow. We can not afford to let that happen in Green Bay.

Linda, 36, divorced with four children ages 18 to 2, works about 35 hours a week at a minimum-wage job and volunteers both with agencies that have helped her and at her kids' sporting events. She has little education and poor job skills, but a desire to work and learn so her children's lives will be better than hers. She is attending classes at NWTC to work in nursing.

Linda had her first child at 16 then dropped out of school to marry. She was then divorced, leaving what she calls an abusive relationship with a husband she says was a drug dealer.

Problems she faces include daycare that is not available on the nights and weekends when she works and landlords reluctant to provide decent housing to those receiving vouchers. Human service benefits have helped her, but these benefits get cut when you start to work so it is hard to earn money to get ahead, she says.

5. Who Are the Low Income?

To move past talking and reading we contacted several local agencies and asked to meet with low income families. We also interviewed directors of ten local help groups. Our interviews did little more than skim the surface of poverty in the community, but even the small sample of people we met with suggests common problems faced by low income families.

Brief profiles of some of the low income families we interviewed in June 2006 are highlighted in this report; they are considerably shortened here so the families remain anonymous. These are their stories ... where they are, what they are trying to do, and the barriers they face every day. Each represents a different situation. Multiply each many, many times. Add more situations and multiply those, too.

Reports of our interviews with the local help groups, conducted in September 2006, are summarized in the Appendix.

6. What the Low Income Face

We learned many things from our interviews. First, we found that poverty is usually a family matter.

The six households we contacted contain 34 people—11 adults and 23 children. Second, those in need do work. Ten of the 11 adults were working at least part time. Third, there are many causes of poverty. The most obvious cause, though, is that low income status generally stems from lack of education, poor language and job skills, and a lack of personal discipline.

These shortcomings often lead to people making poor choices when they are young, primarily in relationships (having children too early) and schooling (not taking advantage of basic education to start on a career ladder). Many of the low income make disastrous financial decisions because they lack budgeting skills. In many cases, those who make bad decisions come from impoverished backgrounds and tend to continue the poverty cycle in their own lives and the lives of their children.

Housing eats up a huge percentage of low income wages. The National Low Income Housing Coalition says that the cost to rent two-bedroom housing in Brown County is \$709 a month. The income needed to afford such a rental is \$24,320 a year using a guideline of rent equaling 35% of income. That's 1.8 full-time minimum wage jobs. The poor often can find housing only in economically segregated neighborhoods that can breed crime. Some we interviewed said that landlords are sometimes reluctant to rent to those getting housing aid. Subsidies that provide decent housing and offer the low income a chance to own their own homes are essential.

Illnesses can quickly and unexpectedly devastate any household, especially low income ones. Preventive care, especially for infants and children, and education in healthy diet and lifestyle are essential.

Transportation presents a dilemma. Of all groups in the community, the low income are most in need of reasonably priced public transit to get to work, to stores, to clinics, to schools. But not enough people ride buses to pay for the system. Because there are few riders, there is little pressure to increase services needed by the low income. Often that means they must rely on old, high-mileage, breakdown-prone vehicles, further straining their budgets.

Despite good work by hospitals and groups such as the NEW Community Clinic, medical care often is either unavailable to those whose low-wage and/or part-time jobs provide no health insurance, or it is so expensive that the poor can't get the routine preventive care that can keep them healthy and avoid handing taxpayers big medical bills in their later years. This is despite the presence of high cost, state-funded BadgerCare.

Jobs are available. But many of those in poverty work in minimum wage occupations that offer little chance for a family's economic improvement. Wisconsin's minimum wage is

Maria, 47, married and the mother of four children, ages 24 to 15, came with her family to the United States in 1995 from Mexico and have lived in Green Bay since 2001. The father and two oldest sons work full time on farms. The younger children are in high school and their learning is the family's hope for a better future.

Maria's husband does not want her working in factories or as a housekeeper. She volunteers in schools and with community groups, sometimes as an interpreter or language teacher.

The family has been beset with medical bills and faces a \$14,000 debt one of her sons owes after an auto accident. Her dream, she says, is to own a home.

\$6.50 an hour. At that level, working 40 hours a week for 52 weeks will produce \$13,520 a year before deductions.

Education is universally seen as a path to self-sufficiency. But the path often must be followed for years while adult students and their families struggle to survive on a day-to-day basis. Schools sometimes do not offer classes *when* the working-poor can attend.

There is an immense amount of help available from government and private agencies. But despite efforts to streamline access, the aid system can be a baffling and frustrating maze, especially for those who have limited language and literacy skills and must work and care for young children.

While government help is essential and welcome, its systems often are inflexible. Most notably, benefits are cut quickly either after employment advancement or after a child turns 18 so that it is difficult for a needy family to get ahead.

Many of the low income are single mothers who receive little or no economic or other help from the fathers of their children.

Some are illegal immigrants caught in a shadowy world where the law makes it impossible either to get good jobs or to receive the significant benefits that accompany citizenship and/or legal residency.

A study by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops shows what a typical annual budget looks like for a family of four with income of \$19,307:

- Housing, \$5,329;
- Utilities, \$2,309;
- Transportation, \$4,290, for a used car, upkeep but no insurance;
- Food, \$4,102;
- Health care, \$2,132;
- Child care, \$2,300 with subsidies.

Add these figures and you get a total of \$21,902 – that’s \$1,785 over budget without allowing for spending on school supplies, clothes, toiletries, gifts, etc.

Another view of what the working poor face comes from an experienced local social worker who helped with our study:

“One can’t get a better job with low social skills and low education. One can’t get better social skills and better education because they have to work all the time. Throw in all the other issues that most of us take for granted: kid gets sick and can’t go to daycare, mom has to either stay home and lose a day of wages—and probably her job—or leave the child home alone and risk social services taking her child for neglect. I could go on forever about this . . .”

Helen, 35, is a single mother who first married while pregnant in high school and since then has divorced twice. She has five children, ages 19 to 3. She works in human resources and is going to school to improve her education to get a better job.

Helen is a Green Bay native who has lived in Alaska and Alabama. She lives now with her fiancée who has children of his own. They plan to marry in 2008. Her second-ex husband is \$20,000 behind on child support.

Medical bills and car problems forced her into bankruptcy in 2005.

Helen says that the lack of a stable family life when she was a child creates instability in her own life. She regrets that she did not continue education beyond high school. She is proud of her oldest son, an honor student at an out-of-state university he attends on scholarship.

7. Who is Helping

While the obstacles are daunting, our second set of interviews showed that help is available from an array of government and private agencies. Brown County United Way estimates there are some 1,200 federal, state and local programs serving the community. Most encouraging, many of those offering such help seem to be working together and understand that dealing with poverty is a long-term process.

We realize that we barely scratched the surface in talking to only 10 service providers. But we believe these 10 are a good cross-section of organizations dealing with the poor.

BACC directors questioned leaders of Integrated Community Services (ICS), Brown County United Way, Family Services, the NEW Community Clinic, Brown County Human Services, St. Vincent de Paul, Catholic Charities, the Green Bay Police Department, Encompass Early Education and Care, and the Green Bay Area Public Schools.

We were impressed with both the comprehensiveness of programs providing a broad safety net and the narrow focus of others developed to help the low income deal with specific problems.

Comprehensive efforts include:

- The Family Self-Sufficiency Program which is run by ICS and available to families receiving housing aid. Families volunteer to sign a contract to take part in a program that can last five years and include help in everything from resume writing to cooking.
- Family Services which has 30 prevention, intervention, counseling and treatment programs aimed at young people.
- The Green Bay Police Department's "community policing" effort designed to develop close ties with residents in neighborhoods to solve problems, especially those that contribute to crime.
- The Green Bay Public Schools' initiatives that include English as a Second Language classes, tutoring for low income students and outreach for families.

Examples of programs with a narrower focus include:

Manuel and Carmen ... He is 35 and she is 29; they are married with three children, ages 14 years to 10 months. Manuel has been in the United States since he was 16, works on a green card and is a foreman at a meat-packing plant.

Both are from Mexico and learned English, Manuel through Northeast Wisconsin Technical College and Carmen through the Literacy Council of Brown County. The couple was able to buy a home through a Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority program (WHEDA), showing the importance of their legal status as immigrants. Such help is not available to those here illegally.

Manuel and Carmen note that minority communities need some reliable way of getting information about work opportunities and other matters. They have felt accepted in Green Bay, yet believe more should be done to make people from other areas feel welcome here.

Manuel also notes that it will take him years to get an associate degree at NWTC because of the difficulty of attending school while working.

- Encompass Early Education and Care which has sliding fees that make quality day care available to low income parents.
- Catholic Charities which does budget counseling with individuals and families in programs that can last up to five years.
- NEW Community Clinic which fills gaps in the health care delivery system, working with at-risk schools and homeless shelters, and operating a dental clinic at Northeast Wisconsin Technical College.

8. What Would Happen If ...?

In our interviews, we asked three basic questions of those who provide help to the low income:

- What would you do if your budget was doubled?
- What would you do if your budget was cut in half?
- If you had access to an unlimited number of volunteers, how would you use them?

We asked that because, as volunteers, we believe the community's best hope of solving problems is the commitment of its members. No surprise, the service providers all could do more with more resources.

Examples:

Brown County Human Services could reduce its average case load, now around 400-500 for each economic support worker, to provide more individual attention to clients. Integrated

Integrated Community Services could open its programs to all low income residents, not just those eligible for housing assistance. United Way could offer more services to the elderly and recruit college and faith communities to help its many agencies.

Family Services could focus more resources on preventive programs in areas such as health and child abuse. The NEW Community Clinic would make more use of generic medications, hire interpreters to work with those who do not speak English and put more effort into preventive dentistry for children. St. Vincent de Paul could provide more case-management services, helping those in need find resources on a one-on-one basis.

The Howe and Fort Howard Neighborhood Family Resource Centers could provide space for more services closer to those in need, and extend their services into more at-risk neighborhoods.

Catholic Charities could extend its budget counseling services. The Green Bay Police Department could triple its community policing programs and add a full time nuisance

Carl and Tina are married with a 20-month-old daughter. Both work full time and own a home in the suburbs. They were thrown into a financial crisis when Tina became ill. They were not eligible for government or social-service agency funding when the crisis arose.

The illness left the couple with big medical bills and curtailed their earning power. Tina could not work full time because she was ill. Carl could not work full time because he had to care for Tina and their daughter.

The sudden onslaught of medical bills led to the couple being "always on the borderline" in meeting house payments and other costs. Both got help from their employers and from co-workers.

abatement team to identify and address problem properties. The Green Bay Area Public Schools could provide more tutoring, community contact and enrichment activities. Encompass Early Education and Care would hire more and better-trained staff and expand its sliding-fee options to cover more families.

If budgets were cut in half, providers obviously would do less in all areas than they do now. In general, cuts would mean a tighter focus on core missions. The result would be fewer people getting help and less chance that those people now in need would become self-sufficient.

Most notably, United Way would be able to fund only emergency services, not prevention efforts. Family Services would still try to run preventive programs, but would have to cut its staff by half. NEW Community Clinic would drop its school programs. The Green Bay Police Department would drop its community efforts and essentially just respond to calls. Green Bay Area Public Schools would have to seek donations to fund outreach programs. Encompass Early Education and Care simply would not be able to care for the number of families it now does.

All of the organizations emphasized the roles that additional volunteers could play. Most could use volunteers to serve as mentors.

Brown County Human Services sees a need for “resources for modeling behavior and keeping people out of institutions and in the community.” ICS could use help with child care and transportation. United Way could use help with grant writing and research. Family Services needs advocates for sexual assault victims and help with Teen Court.

NEW Community Clinic relies on volunteer physicians and nurses. St. Vincent de Paul needs help with child care, administration, one-on-one mentoring and fund-raising. Catholic Charities needs mentors for its credit-counseling clients. The Green Bay Police Department can use help in locating social services and programs for people in poverty. The Green Bay Area Public Schools need tutors and people to organize supply and clothing drives. Encompass Early Education and Care needs “extra hands and laps” of readers to children at the centers.

9. What Do We Do Next?

So where do we go from here? These and many more agencies are already doing great work, extending their resources as far as they can. Yet the interviews we have highlighted show that greater help is still needed. We are very fortunate to have the service agencies and funding that we do. And history has shown that we still haven’t developed a model that successfully deals with these problems in a free, capitalistic society.

As with any organization dealing with a problem, there is usually a solution ... one based on an understanding of the moral good that can be done; intense focus, measures and scorecards; constant publicity about the problem and the solutions being implemented; and effective implementation of just a few, most critical, most leveraging thrusts. We spent time analyzing what exists and its effectiveness, and then the common themes of need within the people we interviewed. From that analysis, we feel there are five areas of critical focus needed, and have worked with people in the community who can impact them, to develop the beginnings of plans that can be implemented to meet these challenges. Those areas are:

Children
Health Care
Housing
Neighborhood Services
Transportation

Children

Task Force: Randy Lawton and Rose Smits

Overview:

Learning begins at birth. Children from low income families often fall behind their peers long before entering kindergarten and remain behind for the rest of their lives. This is an issue of creating equal life opportunities for children in at-risk environments.

- Before entering kindergarten, the average cognitive scores of preschool-aged children in the highest socioeconomic group are 60 percent above the scores of children in the lowest socioeconomic group.
- At the age of four, children who live below the federal poverty line are 18 months below what is normal for their age group; by age 10 that gap is still present. For children living in the poorest families, the gap is even larger.
- By the time children from middle-income families with well-educated parents are in third grade, they know about 12,000 words. Third grade children from low income families with undereducated parents who don't talk to them very much have vocabularies of around 4,000 words.

To raise the general public's recognition that there is no wiser investment than investing in children today—all children beginning at birth, but especially those children living in poverty and without opportunities—is a major challenge. The return could be 15 or 20 years out, and this makes such an investment an easy one to put off. Yet, it is today's children who will be our doctors, laborers, teachers, and inventors of tomorrow. If they don't succeed, it will be difficult for this community and this nation to thrive. To positively impact the outcomes for children in poverty, provocative ideas along with out-of-the-box thinking need to happen now. What are the resources that our community can mobilize to address creating equal life opportunities for children and what are the best and most proven methods to have impact? The following proposals address our initial findings.

Recommendations:

1. Expand the existing Family Services Healthy Families home visiting program by adding three workers per year over three years, from the current seven to a total of 16 to further impact high-risk families. (One worker carries a caseload of 15 to 25 families.) Cost would be about \$26,000 to \$36,000 (including benefits) per worker. During January and February 2007, 41 high-risk cases had to be turned away for lack of caseworkers.
2. Improve the coordination of current early childhood education initiatives (e.g. Start Smart / Early Childhood Council, local school districts, United Way's Community Partnership for Children, etc.) by creating a paid position to coordinate existing efforts, monitor their impact, create funding options for high leverage solutions, and report measurable results. Cost would be about \$50,000 per year for a full time position with benefits, informational materials and coordinating/publicity efforts.
3. On the state level, work with existing high impact special interest organizations to raise state government attention and action regarding the challenge.

Health Care

Task Force: Rev. Paul Demuth, Regan Gurung, Pat Finder-Stone

Overview:

Most people in poverty are uninsured or underinsured even when they are employed. Full and part time jobs on the lower pay scale seldom provide health care benefits to them.

Some may be covered by BadgerCare, Wisconsin's program for uninsured low income families with children. Most people in poverty do not seek preventive health care; instead they react to personal or family sickness, often by using the most expensive form of care, emergency rooms. They also may seek help at the NEW Community Clinic, which is stressed both financially and in the number of personnel available to aid people.

Both people in poverty and health care personnel recognize the result of inadequate health care:

- Many people are one health care emergency away from a precipitous fall into financial ruin;
- There is lack of preventive care for both adults and children;
- Dental care and mental health services are poor or nonexistent;
- Stress on the family and children often results in antisocial behavior of children in the classroom and on the streets.

We realize that catastrophic health care issues can only be solved by legislative action on the national or state level. At the same time, we believe that the following proposals may begin to make a difference in the health care of the poor in our community.

Recommendations:

1. Establish a local reserve fund for emergency just-in-time medications and treatment (e.g. asthma, diabetes, antibiotics, dental care for pregnant women) and other needed just-in-case health care services, administered by the NEW Community Clinic.
 - Generic medications should be donated by the pharmaceutical companies who do business with the local health care community.
 - Monetary donations from multiple local businesses should cover the myriad, sometimes expensive incidentals that are needed to respond to non-emergency health care situations presented by people coming to the clinic.
 - Provide a staff person to work with the pharmaceutical companies to obtain donations of specific medications for people with ongoing medication needs.

Approximate need: \$50,000 per month, with donations by businesses coordinated by the Chamber of Commerce.

2. Create a one-time physical assessment program for at risk students—those who qualify for free breakfasts in the Green Bay school district—in kindergarten through third grade. This program would be administered by nursing students in the local baccalaureate program in conjunction with the school nurses. Funded as part of the Bellin School of Nursing clinical curriculum.

Housing

Task Force: Noel Halvorsen, Jim Liethen, Harry Maier, Judy Nagel

Overview:

A community should offer a variety of dwelling units of various sizes, configurations, prices and ownership to meet the needs and means of its households. From the perspective of people in poverty (whether acute or chronic), finding and maintaining decent and affordable housing is a critical challenge. This challenge involves the interplay of several factors:

- The skills and knowledge of householders: Key skills include budgeting, understanding credit, and knowing how to shop and negotiate for housing. Of course, there are more fundamental competencies that must be mastered first. Catholic Charities, NeighborWorks Green Bay, Integrated Community Services and the Green Bay Area Public Schools play important roles in this area today.
- Household income: Wages have not kept pace with housing costs. There are more than 33,500 households in Brown County that cannot afford a home priced over \$100,000 and fewer than 400 homes are available at or below that price.
- The quality of available dwellings: Although many of the dwelling units in our area are well maintained, many of the lowest cost units are also the most poorly maintained. Aggressive code enforcement is one means to increase the quality of housing; however, this can also contribute to the lack of affordability for some. Building new units or rehabilitating existing units are other means to provide quality housing.
- The size of available dwelling units: There are large families in small apartments and empty-nesters or singles living in large homes. Our community could do a better job of understanding the local market with respect to household size. We could also do more thinking about the life cycle of structures and the changing housing needs of families through time.
- The cost of dwellings in terms of lease or mortgage payments: If household incomes can't support housing costs, what action can we take? We can advocate construction of new, lower-cost housing. Workforce housing doesn't seem to be a community priority. How can we change this?
- The availability of support mechanisms, financial or otherwise: The community has some mechanisms in place to address deficiencies in the areas listed here. Credit and housing counseling are available. Life skills training is available. There are financial supports to improve or maintain affordability, but these are limited. How can we improve matters?

Recommendations:

1. Work to increase awareness of the Housing Choice Voucher ("Section 8") Program among working families experiencing acute poverty. Responsible Parties: Integrated Community Services (lead role); key supporters: nonprofit housing groups such as NeighborWorks Green Bay, Mutual Housing Association of Brown County, and the Green Bay and Brown County Housing Authorities.

2. Teach financial discipline to our children. Responsible Parties: public and private school districts (lead role); key supporters: Catholic Charities, UW-Extension, and Neighborhood Family Resource Centers.
3. Endorse increases in the minimum wage; encourage employers to pay a living wage. Responsible Parties: Green Bay Area Chamber of Commerce (lead role); key supporters: all social service agencies, Employers Workforce Development Network.
4. Support community efforts to renovate distressed housing stock. Responsible Parties: City of Green Bay, Brown County, business, and area philanthropists (lead supporters); key implementers: nonprofit community development organizations such as NeighborWorks Green Bay and area for-profit developers.
5. Support community efforts to develop new models of affordable workforce housing to meet the needs of our working families. Responsible Parties: JOSHUA Workforce Housing Task Force (lead agency); key supporters: nonprofit housing groups and government authorities.
6. Encourage community planners to better understand the changing demands of the population relative to housing and eliminate barriers to the development of housing that meets market demands. Encourage community planners to explore the connections between employment, wages, and availability of affordable housing. Responsible Parties: Green Bay, Brown County, and Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commissions (lead agencies); key supporters: local colleges and universities, Realtors, and area developers (both for-profit and nonprofit).
7. Continue to support programs designed to help working families achieve the dream of homeownership. Responsible Parties: NeighborWorks Green Bay, Options for Independent Living, Inc., Habitat for Humanity, local government, business, and area philanthropists.
8. Support financial literacy programs and family self-sufficiency programs in the community. Responsible Parties: Integrated Community Services Family Self-Sufficiency Program, Catholic Charities, UW-Extension, NeighborWorks Green Bay, local lenders, and Neighborhood Family Resource Centers.
9. Explore incentives for developers to better meet the housing needs of households earning less than the median income. Responsible Parties: JOSHUA Workforce Housing Task Force (lead agency) in cooperation with local government and area developers.
10. Explore inclusionary zoning and other tools to increase the provision of workforce housing in developing areas. Responsible Parties: JOSHUA Workforce Housing Task Force (lead agency) in cooperation with local government and area developers.

Neighborhood Services: Creating Accessibility

Task Force: John Gilman, Celestine Jeffreys, Rev. George Krempin, Rev. Chuck Mize, Dennis Rader, Tom Schumacher

Overview:

With an estimated 1,200 federal, state and local programs serving Brown County, it is difficult to create a comprehensive, all-purpose system for the needy poor to find help. Individual agencies provide helpful information by providing booklets and pamphlets and work well together by cross referring to other agencies. Some agencies have made services available on a more localized, neighborhood basis. The NEW Community Clinic, Literacy Council of Brown County, Community Policing Program and the Family Resource Centers at Howe and Fort Howard/Jefferson schools are models of making services geographically accessible to the poor. The challenge is to convert these piecemeal efforts into a concerted network of purposeful collaboration without proliferation or duplication of services.

One such effort is the new Brown County United Way 2-1-1 program, which provides a centralized, comprehensive information access point, via phone or internet. It is a proven gateway to direct those in need to the most appropriate program. It operates in more than 200 communities nationwide in 41 states. The United Way is also piloting 2-1-1 PLUS (Partnership-Links-Unity-Support) centers set up in schools, libraries, churches, convenience stores, etc., to provide access to those without phone or internet access.

The 2-1-1 program is not limited by geographical location, does not identify or isolate neighborhoods on a socio-economic basis, and it generates a neutral, non-parochial database that enables tracking of provided services. It is based on an information paradigm, rather than a localized service system. Currently the program does not compile individual callers' use patterns which could help identify not only the face of poverty, but also define its cyclical causes. However, this program meets immediate needs and can generate information, such as individual usage data, necessary to evaluate improvements of the system in the future.

Recommendations:

1. Support the 2-1-1 system in Brown County
 - a) Universally adopt the 2-1-1 and 2-1-1 PLUS programs as the de-facto gateway for area services by all levels of government, schools, businesses and human service providers.
 - b) Identify and enroll 2-1-1 PLUS sites to support true 24-7 accessibility.
 - c) Provide 2-1-1 information in media and locations where the poor live and work.
 - d) Ask the Chamber of Commerce to promote 2-1-1 and 2-1-1 PLUS to businesses.
2. Develop a tracking system without invading personal privacy which logs service provider contacts by person or family to provide better overall case management to identify cyclical causes of poverty and improved accountability in meeting the needs of the poor.

Transportation

Task Force: David Littig, Harry Maier, Mark Walter, Vince Zehren

Overview:

Ultimately, the transportation needs of the poor cannot be economically solved by public transportation because major employers are not located near each other, nor are shifts coordinated. Improving transportation for the poor in metropolitan areas characterized by sprawl is among the most neglected and challenging of tasks. In the Green Bay metropolitan area public transportation provides adequate weekday transportation for those living and working within walking distance of a Green Bay METRO bus stop ... but many employers aren't near a stop, and even where feasible, the ride is often an hour each way.

There is a direct relationship between residential density, transit ridership, and the quality of service. The higher the density, the greater the transit ridership, the better the service, and the lower the ownership of automobiles. Adequate ridership to support half-hourly local bus service, such as in Green Bay, can be generated by neighborhoods with seven dwellings per acre, which is represented by single-family houses on 60 by 100 foot lots.

Near east- and west-side Green Bay neighborhoods, largely developed before World War II, fall into this density of development. After WW II and the building of the Interstate Highway System after 1956, residential development began to sprawl farther away from the old Central Business District and major places of employment relocated to the periphery of the urban area adjacent to Interstate highways. The principal residential areas for low income residents continued to be located close to older urban areas with multiple family dwelling units, more rental units, higher population densities, and with the oldest housing stock.

Unfortunately, many jobs left the old industrial areas close to the central business district and relocated nearer to the Interstate and where they were inaccessible by public transportation. In short, contemporary urban/suburban land use development patterns are designed for the private automobile and cannot be adequately served by public transportation. A second transportation issue facing the poor is the increasing cost of transportation.


While housing takes the biggest percentage of a poverty family's income, a report by the Surface Transportation Policy Project states that a family in poverty spends 25%-to-40% of its income to get places. To meet life's daily needs – to reach jobs, doctors, buy groceries – most Green Bay families, including those who can least afford it, must rely on a car.

In an interview with the interim director of Green Bay METRO, a transportation planner, we discovered that there is no reliable data on the transportation needs of the poor. While the great majority of car-less people who rely on public transportation have low incomes, a survey focused on exploring the transportation needs of the poor in Green Bay has never been conducted. We believe solutions must be sought in the private sector by making auto ownership and vehicle operation less expensive and more accessible for the poor.

Recommendations:

Our recommendations are exploratory because we found no practical, tried-and-true solutions.

1. The Brown County Planning Department should develop and administer a survey on the transportation needs of the poor.

2. City of Green Bay should investigate permitting shared-taxi ride programs (possibly with funds from state/federal sources). Possible model: Red Cross's use of grants and volunteers.
 3. The city should encourage establishment of businesses which recycle used cars, including low interest loans for purchase. Possible implementers: Family Services' Wheels to Work program and Catholic Charities' Wisconsin Interfaith Needs Response.
 4. Encourage employers to develop creative ways to provide transportation or use of transportation at key times for their employees.
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Appendices

Interviews with Service Provider Agencies

Brown County Human Services

BCHS coordinates the county's social-help efforts. Working with a budget of \$97 million, it includes the 285-person Community Services delivery effort, the 140-person Inpatient Services of the Mental Health Center, plus administrative and oversight services. Community Services includes 130-plus social workers and oversees expenditures of \$60 million for such services as temporary financial support for medical, child care and housing assistance, youth overnight protection as well as juvenile court-related counseling and foster care, disabled citizen support and administration of subsidized day care and other family assistance (1,000 families), Medical Assistance (11,000 families), food stamps (5,000 families), low income energy relief and other services.

Brown County United Way

Founded in 1925, the United Way has grown into the single largest fundraising organization in Brown County. With the help of more than 100 volunteers and 13 staff, the private, nonprofit organization is dedicated to finding solutions to the community's most pressing human services issues. In 2007, more than 40 emergency, prevention and community-change programs and initiatives are being funded with the 2006 campaign which raised \$3.12 million.

NEW Community Clinic

For 25 years, the clinic has worked to provide care where there are gaps in the area's health care delivery system. It was created to provide services and referrals for specialty care to area persons who lack health insurance. The clinic offers services at three sites.

Family Services

Family Services is a nonprofit, human services agency dedicated to assisting children and families in need throughout Northeast Wisconsin. Supported by a broad continuum of over 30 prevention, intervention and counseling/treatment programs, Family Services provides the necessary resources to assist children and families in our communities to live safer and more productive lives.

Green Bay Area Public School District

Working with a budget of nearly \$200 million, the district enrolls 19,709 students in Green Bay, Bellevue, Ledgeview, Eaton, Humboldt, Scott and Allouez. The district operates 25 elementary schools (grades K-5) four middle schools (grades 6-8) four high schools (grades 9-12) and two K-8 schools.

Integrated Community Services/Family Self-Sufficiency Program

ICS works to bring people and housing together with quality services that promote self-sufficiency throughout Northeast Wisconsin. Its 60 staff members aid over 3,200 households with rental assistance and 3,000 with energy assistance each year. About half of those aided are children and 40% are elderly or disabled.

St. Vincent de Paul

St. Vincent de Paul uses proceeds from donations and a thrift store to operate a personal service center, offer rent and utility assistance and provide clothing and household goods to those in need.

Encompass Early Education and Care

Encompass has been serving children and families since 1919. Today the agency serves approximately 850 children each day in its seven state-licensed and nationally accredited centers and auxiliary programs. The \$5.5 million budget reflects government subsidies for qualifying families, parent pay, United Way dollars, grants and charitable contributions. A staff of over 200 provides quality education and care daily with a commitment to excellence, compassion and advocacy.

Green Bay Police Department

The department's mission is to provide service through a partnership with the community that builds trust, reduces crime, creates a safe environment, and enhances the quality of life in neighborhoods.

Catholic Charities

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Green Bay, rooted in the Gospel of Jesus, works to meet critical needs, address human suffering and promote and restore the well-being of those most vulnerable in our society. Catholic Charities is nationally accredited by the Council of Services for Families and Children, is a state certified mental health clinic, and is licensed by the state of Wisconsin as a child welfare agency. It provides marriage and family counseling, adoption services, parenting enrichment programs, budget counseling, resettlement and immigration services, aging/elderly services, children and youth services, community outreach, health services and emergency assistance referral.

Brown County Human Services

BACC members Randy Lawton and Phil Hauck interviewed Beth Manning, then-director of BCHS; Nan Pahl, economic support coordinator; Deb Mason, ACCESS Unit coordinator

Brown County's Department of Human Services administers a vast array of social service and counseling programs. Generally, these programs are creatures of the federal government with funds distributed by the state to pay for delivery personnel (social workers, economic support workers etc.); the county budget picks up the costs of administration, which runs into several hundred thousand dollars annually. While there are significant projects serving the elderly and disabled, our concern was for poverty-level families and children. We did not address the three questions as Beth Manning felt that they were not as relevant to this agency due to the entitlement nature of the benefits, its administrative focus, and the state dictating most of the programs. There are limited opportunities for volunteers in these programs.

Economic Support Services: These services are available to Brown County residents who meet non-financial and financial eligibility criteria. The programs are Medical Assistance (including Healthy Start and BadgerCare), FoodShare (food stamps), and Low Income Child Care Assistance. These are entitlement programs and there is no waiting list for benefits or services. The FoodShare program serves eligible families up to 135% (or \$32,000 for a family of four) of the federal poverty level and the Medical Assistance program up to 200% (or \$39,000), however these families are expected to make some payment. The FoodShare program currently covers about 5,164 families in Brown County and Medical Assistance between 11,100 to 11,500 families. In addition, about 1,000 families take advantage of dollars available for child care, whether through licensed child care centers, like Encompass or licensed or certified in-home operators. This is a major proportion of the services and monies dispensed to low income people. Energy assistance dollars both federal and state are contracted through BCHS to Integrated Community Services.

The role of the Economic Support department personnel is to determine eligibility for families and educate them as to what they must do so that they receive the dollars for which they qualify. Generally, when fully staffed, an Economic Support worker handles 400 families. They are also active in referring people to the Wisconsin Job Center, where they can both apply for jobs and receive interview skills and take work culture classes.

The county is largely responsible for implementing programs in accordance with state and federal rules and applicable law. The county figures out how to implement these procedures. The state is trying to make the process as simple as possible and do marketing outreach on the Internet. One can now receive Medical Assistance by mail and telephone so as not to interfere with families' work obligations or necessitate burdensome transportation. The county's goal is to make this entire process seamless for the user.

ACCESS: The ACCESS Unit serves as the initial point of contact and entryway for the Human Services Department and the Aging and Disability Resource Center. There are two social workers in the ACCESS Unit and one paraprofessional. The ACCESS Unit provides information and referral, intake into county programs, provides links to external community resources and is available for phone and office consultation. The ACCESS Unit remains current on general community resources and provides a specific intake role within department programs:

- Community Options Program and Waiver related services – children to adult/elderly

- Community treatment psychiatric/case management appointments/referrals – adults with mental illness
- Birth to 3 – Children under the age of three with developmental concerns
- Alcohol and drug – Adults with addiction issues needing assessment and treatment
- Parent/child issues – Parents needing support in their parenting role with challenging and/or disabled children
- Adult Protection Services and Elder Abuse – Services for vulnerable adults in need of protection
- Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) – Older adults over 60 years and adults with physical disabilities. The ADRC has been marketing itself by reaching out to community providers and through an updated website, which has resulted in an increase in referrals to the ACCESS Unit which handles approximately 800 contacts per month.
- Children and Adult Long Term Care Programs: Eligibility for these programs is determined by target group, financial and functional status by each program. Home and community based services are available to persons experiencing difficulties with infirmities of aging, physical and developmental disabilities, chronic mental illness, and alcohol or other drug abuse. Service plans are written based on eligibility and assessed need. Staff case managers assist in developing plans, assessing resources, making referrals to contracted provider agencies and monitoring services to assure progress and satisfaction with care. Participant cost sharing may be involved and service or funding lists may apply. Deb Mason, ACCESS Unit coordinator, indicated there is insufficient funding available to meet the needs of approximately 800 individuals (children and adults) currently on the long-term care waiting list. On a positive note, there is funding available through the Nursing Home and Intermediate Care Facility (ICF) Relocation Initiatives, Transitional Services and Intensive In-Home Programming for Autism.

Discussion about poverty: Poverty for some families is a lifestyle choice, as they have no GED or education and are stuck without advancing their education, others have jobs then lose them and ultimately learn to live within the system; they do not seem to be able to get from Point A to Point B on their own, some because of motivation and some because of low skills and lack of training. This is a constantly moving target as opportunities exist to help most individuals become employable to some degree, so developing processes to constantly move the un- or under-employed into more skilled and better compensated positions is and will be a constant part of our community's challenge. For others language is an issue. Legal immigrants are eligible to receive services. The families who receive these benefits are generally working in the housekeeping, retail, and fast food and customer service industries.

Brown County Human Services' current focus is two-fold: community living and early intervention. The department has been successful in relocating individuals from institutional settings into the community through a variety of state relocation initiatives. Additionally, the department continues to focus on early intervention with families using a strength-based model to keep the family intact whenever possible. In 2007 funds are being planned for neighborhood resources to build on the strengths of the family unit to support children in the community. This plan includes a partnership between the department and the community to develop/expand skills training, prevention and other programs designed to create stronger families.

Social Workers: BCHS employs more than 100 social workers covering a variety of areas, including AODA, mental health, juvenile court, parent education, child protection, adult protective investigation, supportive home care, alternative residential care, and several other areas.

Significant opportunities or gaps in services provided to families in poverty (not in order of priority):

- Dental care, especially for the adult population – The Medicaid reimbursement rate is very low and the reliability of the patients making appointments is low. The Brown County Oral Health Partnership is leading local efforts, but the need is still great.
- Transportation support – This is a constant source of logistical difficulties for people in poverty as they either cannot access the improved employment opportunities due to both lack of public transportation routes or schedules. Public transit is not available when and where it is needed, and unfortunately it is not economically viable for the city/county transit system to be as complete as needed.
- Support system – We should put more resources in place to help teach people in poverty to fend for themselves, for prevention and outreach recovery, to help them recover and reintegrate, and to put social workers into the neighborhoods (family resource centers, etc.) where they can help with parenting and budgeting classes.
- There is a lack of psychiatric care for uninsured/underinsured children in Brown County. Early Intervention Programs (i.e., Birth to 3 or In-Home Programming for Autism) enhance the development of these children.
- There is no ombudsman for the mentally ill; however, The Gathering Place and the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) are clear voices for the mentally ill in the community.
- Prevention –Resources are needed for modeling behavior and keeping people out of institutions and in the community
- Work with corporations in the community to hire the un/under-employed and formally address the language, child care, transportation, and training issues that are holding them back. This could be done with someone on site to integrate the support requirements. This is really mainstreaming and is an exercise in problem solving.
- Incentives for staying in jobs – When BCHS had the W-2 program they rewarded people for staying in jobs for 30 and 180 days and it had a positive impact on tenure.
- More assistance is needed at the Wisconsin Job Center, providing more work culture, skills training, and on-the-job training.

Brown County United Way

BACC member Toni Loch, former United Way president, provided information:

If you could double your budget, what would you do?

We would take the opportunity to build capacity within United Way and programs we fund and partner with. By building capacity, we could fund significant training for our partners and we would hire a grant writer that would be an expert and a go-to person for all the human service programs we partner with. The grant writer would write grants for programs in the community as well as assist other agencies with their grants. We anticipate we would be able to fund more programs than we do now, as we've been restricted due to lack of dollars. Clearly there would be more money spent with programs, especially on prevention.

Currently the Community Partnership for Children (CPC), led by United Way would receive extra money to provide greater service. This CPC initiative screens every birth in Brown County. Those families that have risk factors receive home visits, referrals to programs and information of resources in the community.

Areas we would put more resources toward include elderly, housing, transportation, emergency needs and diversity. Community engagement is something we would want to enhance with additional dollars. We want to recruit more involvement from the community in general, as well as college students, the faith community, retirees, and more.

If our budget were cut in half:

We would have to stop our initiatives, which are collaborative efforts that improve community conditions. If we stopped the Communities Partnership for Children, we wouldn't be able to get to the root cause of children failing in our community. We would stop the dental program for preschoolers and their mothers. Overall we feel we would only be able to fund emergency services, and no prevention or community change efforts. Emergency services would include childcare, housing, transportation and emergency healthcare. Programs such as Big Brothers/Big sisters, Boys and Girls Club, advocacy, outreach, and therapy would be discontinued. We believe we would lose the pulse of the community. We would no longer be able to research issues in the community and develop strategies to improve conditions.

There would be no money for training. We would definitely have to cut staff by half.

If we had all the volunteers we could use:

Volunteers would be able to do important projects that require many hours, versus the current volunteers who on average give 1.5 hours a month. We would have volunteers write grants, do research and specialize on a community issue. We would pair up volunteers with initiatives and programs that need volunteer help. We could possibly reduce staff if we have trained professionals volunteering. We would increase the pool of volunteers who do public speaking, educating the community on issues and how to help. We would have a booth at events such as farmers markets, community fairs, etc. There would be a desirable ratio of trained volunteer providers to clients. We would collaborate, network and work within neighborhood associations, have front porch talks, and establish help centers/personnel in the neighborhoods.

Volunteers could be utilized for helping in public policy issues.

NEW Community Clinic

BACC member Patricia Finder-Stone interviewed Bonnie Kuhr, executive director, NEW Community Clinic

Overview: The mission of the NEW Community Clinic is to provide access to care where there are gaps in the area's health care delivery system. In addition to the main clinic site, services are provided at three at-risk elementary schools, designated area homeless shelters, and special services at dental clinics located in area schools. The community outreach is extensive and the services are delivered with care and sensitivity.

If you could double your budget, what would you do?

To begin with, I would focus upon medications. For example, some generic medications must be taken several times a day for several days which reduces client compliance, whereas a more expensive medication may only need to be taken once a day for three days and a cure would be effected. Some generic medications are equally effective but still are costly for the client; pharmaceutical companies are distributing fewer samples, and many of those distributed are expensive. That means that the patient will get stabilized upon a costly product, and require its continuation. More generic medications could be dispensed if we had money to purchase in larger quantities.

I would also be able to hire more interpreters. We do use college student interpreters but they are not available when school is not in session.

Certainly dental care continues to be a huge issue, and not just for children. There is minimal care available for adults, and so many have teeth in such bad shape. Many of childbearing age have periodontal disease, and its transmissibility can cause problems not only during pregnancy, but also to the children when the microorganisms are passed with a maternal kiss, etc. Issues of pain can affect mom's ability to care for children and of course, diminished self-esteem with missing or decayed teeth cannot be minimized. Resources need to be available for preventive dentistry.

If your budget were cut in half, what would you do?

It would be necessary to cut back in services, and go back to our primary role here at the center. We would have to prioritize, not keep school programs or dental programs, or health care for the uninsured. We would do everything we could to try to stay afloat.

If we had all the volunteers we could use:

We certainly can use more volunteers. However, it is difficult to run a health care organization with only volunteers as health depends so much on continuity of care. We are fortunate in having a nice cadre of volunteer physicians as well as professional nurses. Our core staff is essential. It is hard to find dependable volunteers. They must be quick and safe. Having some knowledge of languages is helpful.

Teaching volunteers appropriate behaviors when at the receptionist area is challenging, (e.g., issues such as confidentiality, not trying to diagnose when hearing the patient's complaints, etc.).

Other concerns?

We are seeing a growing population in the 5- plus age group who have lost jobs or insurance and now work for service industries to supplement their income. Many of the jobs they hold now are difficult (lifting, carrying heavy loads, etc.) and are physically challenging to a population whose pride often keeps them from seeking free help for their problems before

they get serious. Many Hispanics are reluctant to seek help because of fears of deportation, etc., even though they are here legally. We see a number of veterans with both physical and mental health problems in our homeless programs, and of course, the younger uninsured population seems to increase.

It is a struggle, as we need to spend more time to do fundraising. Our United Way allocation has decreased, as philanthropy seems to be decreasing. We certainly appreciate the grants we receive as well as the funding from local hospitals, churches, organizations, and individuals.

Family Services

BACC members Craig Van Schyndle and Mark Walter interviewed Tom Martin, president.

Background on Family Services: Family Services is a nonprofit, human services agency dedicated to assisting children and families in need throughout Northeast Wisconsin. Supported by a broad continuum of over 30 prevention, intervention and counseling/treatment programs, Family Services provides the necessary resources to assist children and families in our communities to live safer and more productive lives.

- 70 percent of programs are focused on youth with the rest providing services for the Asian population, English as a Second Language services, citizenship classes, other mental health and human services.
- Examples include Homeless Youth program, Healthy Families, Choices, Coming Home Project, Teen Court, Day Treatment for Children and Adolescents, etc.

If you could double your budget, what would you do?

Tom Martin indicated that there are a number of gaps in the social system that need to be addressed. He feels that prevention is the key to moving children and families out of poverty.

We would go heavily into preventive programs such as Healthy Families, looking at child abuse cases. We would add staff to work with hospital employees in risk assessments on child care issues. A larger budget would allow us to have great support services to families and children on nutrition, medical help, and teaching parents how to be parents.

The Day Treatment program works with adolescents, but more needs to be done with elementary kids that Family Services is now receiving a lot of referrals on. These children need more intensive work, which means needing more staff to work one-on-one with the children. Several of these children have severe behavioral problems and they do not fit into the school system. More needs to be done with these children with alternative schooling and intensive counseling.

Need for better transportation for low income people to get to work and school. Green Bay does not have 24-hour transit which can limit the ability to get to jobs or force people to work more to pay for transportation costs.

The Ways-to-Work program (WaystoWork.org) provides small, short-term, low-interest loans to working poor families with challenging credit histories. Most loans are used to purchase vehicles. The US Department of Transportation has earmarked approximately \$280,000 in funds to develop a program in Brown County with an equal amount in local match required.

If your budget was cut in half, what services would you offer?

Program funding is not discretionary; therefore we would keep our programs, but lose staffing. 80% of our budget is for staff; we would have to cut our staff in half. We would still try and run our preventive programs.

If you had all the volunteers you can use, what would you have them do?

One of the biggest areas we use volunteers is for sexual assault advocates, and we are always in need of sexual assault advocates. The other area where we could use more volunteers is in the Teen Court program. We would also like to develop volunteer mentors for the Coming Home Project. These mentors would work with latch key kids to help them be safe and stay out of trouble.

Green Bay Public Schools

BACC member Dan Nerad requested information from Dr. David Zadnik, assistant superintendent

If you could double your budget, what would you do?

Increase staffing to provide tutoring programs to all of our schools, both with high and low numbers of low income students. Students of low income enrolled at our schools with a low percentage of poverty often do not have access to the same tutoring or after-school programming their peers have in the schools with a high percentage of low income students.

Transportation to/from after school activities. Summer school transportation for these same students.

Increase staffing of positions, which focus on community outreach for our families as well as building positive relationships for student success, by increasing parent involvement in school/educational activities. Research indicates when a parent provides support, insistence, and expectations to the child, that student is more successful.

Parent educational opportunities on how to support their children's education, what they can do, how they can help, and provide practical solutions/ideas.

Have gatherings for parents that involve food. Turnout is much higher when families are able to gather and brainstorm while eating.

Offer and fund experiential/enrichment activities outside of the norm for low income/homeless students.

If your budget was cut in half, what services would you offer?

We would make every effort to continue all the services we continue to offer but realistically we would not be able to.

Increase reaching out to community for donations to provide the extras to our low income/homeless students such as backpacks, gym shoes, supplies, ACT fees, any other academic or other extras we currently provide.

Some of our direct services to parents and students would be cut.

If you had all the volunteers you could use, what would you have them do?

Tutor students on a volunteer basis.

Organize school supply drives.

Develop and operate (day-to-day) a clothing closet for low income/homeless students.

Spread the word about the growing issue of poverty in Green Bay and increase community awareness and concern.

Speak with community leaders; use connections to continue the funding of programs designed to assist low income families in becoming self-sufficient and programs that support the education of our low income children in an effort to stop the cycle of poverty. Two things that

help one move out of poverty are education and relationships. Any additional funding we would receive would focus on the removing barriers to education for our low income students and strengthening relationships with students, staff and parents.

Integrated Community Services

BACC member Noel Halverson interviewed DonElla Payne, Family Self-Sufficiency coordinator

The Family Self-Sufficiency Program (FSS) is administered by Integrated Community Services (ICS). The program description below is adapted from the ICS website (www.ics-gb.org). Responses to resource questions were provided by DonElla Payne.

What is the Family Self-Sufficiency Program?

The Family Self-Sufficiency Program is available to all families on Housing Choice Voucher and Public Housing rental assistance. It is voluntary and designed to assist families in becoming self-supporting so they will no longer need to rely on public assistance. This program is available through Integrated Community Services and the only requirement is the desire, willingness and commitment to make a change in your life and to take the steps necessary to become self-sufficient. Hundreds of families all over the country are already making better lives for themselves through this program.

How does the FSS Program work?

The FSS Program is a cooperative program that provides support and assistance to families for up to five years. The head of household enters into an agreement with ICS in which an action plan is developed that identifies the family's employment goals. It outlines the activities and services required to achieve these goals. Regular contact with ICS is essential and will provide opportunities to problem-solve obstacles before they arise. A case coordinator provides support, takes an interest in the family's future and makes referrals to public agencies and resources available in Brown County. They assist families in achieving their objectives.

By combining rental assistance with a number of other services, ICS can assure better coordination and provide the maximum benefits needed to reach self-sufficiency.

Gradually, as the family accomplishes increased degrees of self-sufficiency by working and earning more, their portion of rent may go up (per the Housing Choice Voucher Program rules). Another advantage to the FSS Program is that as this happens, ICS establishes an escrow account that will be awarded to the family when they've successfully completed their FSS Contract of Participation. This account automatically saves for the family and could be a boost in reaching any goals or personal endeavors. The family will not have to give up their voucher when the contract is completed, but hopefully they will no longer need assistance at that point. Heads of households can even join the FSS Program if they are presently working or are in school. Families are not required to be on any public assistance other than the Housing Choice Voucher Program or Public Housing in order to qualify and if there are two adults in the household, both may be part of the program.

What kinds of resources are available? FSS Coordinators are knowledgeable about many supportive services in the community. They will assess needs and refer families to the services they need.

Some of the services could include workshops in resume writing, skill building, interviewing techniques, completing or adding to education, affordable childcare, food, job training, job placement, educational programs, career counseling, physical and mental health clinics, household budgeting, credit counseling, debt management and consolidation, home ownership, nutrition, parenting and many other services.

Through collaboration with other providers, ICS offers many opportunities unique to FSS participants such as an FSS Support Group, job skills workshops, Jobs In Focus presentations, cooking classes, computer giveaways, and much more.

What's the catch? Families must be receiving Housing Choice Voucher or Public Housing Assistance in order to participate in the FSS Program. In order to complete the program, they must meet all the goals and activities they've established for their family and be free of welfare (as defined by the FSS Program). Another way of completing the program is to simply increase income so that 30% of monthly household income exceeds the Fair Market Rent established for that household's size. This means that if another opportunity presents itself and leads the household to self-sufficiency, the FSS contract can be considered complete.

What is required of participants? Commitment is the key. Participants will bring their own unique talents, skills and strengths to the FSS Program. ICS will require determination and commitment in completing the activities listed in the training and services plan. Participants need to keep in touch with staff regarding progress towards self-sufficiency. Participants will be asked to meet with staff occasionally in order to discuss and update goals and activities. Participants must possess motivation and initiative in their quest for economic independence.

Why join the FSS Program? Joining the program could be the key to a family's success. People join the FSS Program to learn work skills and improve their ability to get and maintain employment. Along with the financial incentive is the feeling of pride when a family is free of all public assistance. Family Self-Sufficiency clients, as a whole, make impressive progress towards self-support.

If the budget were to be doubled ICS would:

- Open the program to all low income households in Brown County. At this time Family Self-Sufficiency staff is funded through HUD and the program is open only to households receiving Housing Choice Voucher or Public Housing assistance.
- Have the ability to help with the costs of daycare for any training, workshops, job search being done with our participants.
- Provide in-depth parenting workshops.
- Increase the Life Skills workshops, Job Skills workshops and Retreat currently being furnished with the program.
- The ability to help financially for services such as dental work, counseling, auto repairs would be added to the program.

If the budget were cut in half ICS would:

- Need to eliminate one staff position.
- Not be able to continue with expansion of the program.
- Still offer case management, life skills and job skills workshops.

If the Family Self-Sufficiency Program had plenty of volunteers:

- Once volunteers had CPR and first-aid training, they would be used to help with child care during workshops and monthly case management meetings.
- Volunteers would be used to help with transportation to counseling, dental, and job search appointments. Volunteers would be utilized as mentors for our clients, showing them ways to break down barriers, how to dress for success and how to set up budgets as needed.

According to DonElla Payne, if all of these needs could be met the FSS Program would have the ability to work with anyone in Brown County needing self-sufficiency assistance. ICS

would have the capacity of expanding needed services, provide services unavailable at this time and break through the barriers low income households face daily.

St. Vincent de Paul

BACC member Harry Maier interviewed Mary Marks, director of Social Services/Community Outreach

After more than 20 years working in the social services area, the issues have changed very little.

A major challenge is the need for more case management services. There is a need to help people get through the process. This can be achieved only through personal relationship building, generally on a one-on-one basis. Clients need advocates.

Many clients have a tendency to resist any imposed structure, especially among younger people in the 18-24 age range. This age group also seems to have a greater sense of entitlement. They resist accountability for their actions. The community owes them. It is difficult for them to adapt to the structure needed just to survive in today's living environment. They resist using public transportation, citing it is too difficult. They need time to factor in child care, bad weather and other related challenges to their time. The buses don't reach the places where there may be potential jobs and there is reduced service on weekends when many of those jobs are available.

Obtaining a driver's license is a big issue. Driver's education is difficult and passing a driver's test is not easy. Too many have prior violations, but they still face the need to drive. A car is a big issue, but it also is an economic challenge.

They don't realize that short-term decisions affect long-term outcomes. They have a difficult time thinking in terms of long-term gratification. Their lifestyle is focused on the short-term. They worry about today, tomorrow will take care of itself. Opportunities are out there, but they don't know how to incorporate them within their current lifestyle or adapt to maximize their potential.

Health issues are a major factor, especially in the area of mental illness. This is not being addressed.

Families can't manage family problems. Developing a parent/child relationship is a real struggle.

What would happen if the budget were to be cut?

St. Vincent de Paul most likely would reduce its role with rental and utility payment assistance.

A major help has been through Integrated Community Services, which has assumed the lead role in coordinating the utility assistance programs available in our community. In 2004, St. Vincent de Paul assisted 351 families with \$49,000. In 2005, the number had dropped to 160 families and \$14,000. In 2006, through June, the number was 17 families and \$1,864.

There has been strong collaboration among ICS, St. Vincent de Paul, The Salvation Army and Catholic Charities' budget counseling program in the areas of utility assistance. Plus, there is more client accountability. Clients are being asked to pay a share of the delinquent costs to maintain services from Wisconsin Public Service.

Need for volunteers:

There is a constant need for volunteer help, especially in the area of one-on-one work, child care, routine administrative help, fund-raising, data entry and other related activities. Long-term volunteers are difficult to find. It is costly in relation to staff time to have volunteers work only a short time, and then more time has to be spent training new volunteers.

Encompass Early Education and Care

BACC member Rose Smits, executive director, provided the following information.

Encompass was established as Green Bay Day Nursery in 1919 by the Catholic Women's Club. When men didn't come back from the First World War, women were left to provide for their families resulting in a need for childcare. Its name changed to Encompass Child Care in 1991 and to Encompass Early Education and Care in 2006. For 87 continuous years, the agency has been caring for children and families who need a helping hand. Today Encompass has eight licensed childcare facilities and additional programs such as the Ruth Helf Family Center – all located in Brown County. The agency touches the lives of about 900 children each day, has about 225 employees and a yearly budget nearing \$6 million.

Families come in all different shapes and sizes. Encompass needs to achieve a balance in order to continue helping families in need. That is, not every child cared for can or should be subsidized.

Moreover, if that were the case, the environment for these children would be less than desirable. Ideally, if 15% of the children in each center were subsidized and 85% were children from middle or upper income homes, the poverty that is now visible would hardly be recognizable. Unfortunately, the reverse percentages are true in the inner city centers. This overwhelming percentage of families living in poverty puts the kaleidoscope of their needs right on our table.

If your budget was doubled?

If there was a miracle and the budget would be doubled, hiring degreed, trained and experienced staff would be a priority. Research tells us that the training makes such a difference in the quality of care provided – and it's that quality that ends up returning to taxpayers anywhere from \$7 to \$17 for every dollar they invest in young children. Budget dollars would be invested to encourage current staff to get their early childhood teacher certification. Currently, Encompass needs to spend substantial dollars to provide the training to maintain the quality.

Next, I would greatly expand the sliding fee option for families. The very poor receive government help to pay for childcare, and the affluent can afford the cost (between \$8,000 and \$10,000 per year for full time care depending on the age of the child). The middle-income families are squeezed and simply cannot afford the cost. It is the kids of middle-income families who often are in inferior care.

Effective parenting is often learned, and parenting classes are frequently poorly attended. I would use dollars to offer incentives (e.g. free milk and a dozen oranges) to parents who attend classes, and I would provide childcare while they do so.

If your budget was halved?

Now, if the budget were cut in half, there would be an entirely different story to tell. Encompass could not continue to care for the number of needy families it now does. The focus would likely be to provide care for those who could afford it – similar to what most childcare centers do. Attempts would be made to continue assistance to some low income families, but the charitable culture and the legacy that took decades to build would likely begin to erode. And, our kids deserve more than this.

If more volunteers were available?

If Encompass had as many volunteers as it could use, those who would like to work with children could be the much needed extra hands and laps and readers to children at the centers. Any leftover volunteers could concentrate on fundraising and building community awareness on how important these early years are.

Green Bay Police Department

BACC member Craig Van Schyndle, former Green Bay Police Chief, provided information

If you could double your budget:

- We would triple the size of our Community Policing program. This program reduces police calls in at-risk neighborhoods by as much as 66%. It is also credited with decreasing crimes against persons and property in areas once considered lost. This has resulted in increased economic development, and more jobs in neighborhoods once considered economically depressed. Community Police officers build trust between citizens and police.
- We would of course update our technology. In-car cameras force each officer to be courteous and non-discriminatory, and protect us from false accusations.
- We would add a full-time nuisance abatement team and an attorney to identify and address problem properties. A full-time coordinator would help forward potential nuisance properties through the abatement process. We would build a high bandwidth wireless data connection allowing officers to upload reports, search our records management systems and better conduct field investigations. This would keep officers in the neighborhoods and reduce trips to the station.

If your budget was cut in half, what services would you offer?

- Salaries and benefits make up 93% of the department's budget, so we would lose people, a lot of people. The Community Police program would be a casualty.
- Several other services would be dropped or reduced, including responding to alarms, minor crimes like vandalism, minor traffic accidents and property crimes. We would essentially be there only to handle crisis situations. This would not be good. The broken window theory holds that if small issues are handled, major ones won't occur.

If you had all the volunteers you can use, what would you have them do?

Work with Community Police officers in locating different social services and programs for poverty neighborhood people.

- Conduct home security checks when people are gone.
- Provide home security improvement inspections for homeowners.
- Supplement our Speedwatch program reporting on traffic complaints in residential areas.

Our law enforcement volunteers are mainly used for follow-ups on police issues such as making call-backs on minor crimes to obtain additional information, and handing out crime prevention materials.

Catholic Charities

BACC member Rev. Paul DeMuth interviewed Karen Johnston, director, and Bobbie Lison, Budget Counseling manager.

If you could double your budget, what would you do?

A substantial increase in our budget would allow us to...

- Provide stability for the budget counseling we do for individuals and families in order to reach our goal of family self sufficiency.
- Extend our services to the entire county.
- We would not add new services. We have found our niche among the various nonprofit groups in the county. (With the exception of the UW-Extension office, we are the only agency who works in the area.)
- Of course, add auxiliary services related to the area of budget counseling include transportation, daycare, health coverage and housing.

Currently we have three staff assigned to the area of budget counseling.

Approximately 1,500 hours of one-on-one contacts have been made over the past year. Some only come once; others continue for as long as five years. Those who come only once, sometimes reappear at a later date. It takes a tremendous amount of effort to come for counseling because one is admitting the problem and coming for help.

Major issues for people in financial trouble arise from:

- Over use of credit cards
- Use of check cashing stores: often five to eight stores used by each person/family!
- Auto title loans given by used car lots.

The model we use is empowerment: Which of the above issues (or others) are negatively impacting you as an individual or family?