

BAY AREA COMMUNITY COUNCIL – May 12, 2009

PROGRESS REPORT: Poverty in Brown County – The Urgency of Moving People to Self-sufficiency

Since the Poverty in Brown County Report was published in 2007, major changes have occurred in Brown County as well as in the United States. A recession has escalated job loss, foreclosures, homelessness, and the level of poverty. Cutbacks in a variety of areas are announced daily. A new president was elected whose platform supports people in poverty. Affordable healthcare has become a major concern to all Americans.

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS:

Community Summit – Catholic Charities

- Catholic Charities hosted a Community Poverty Summit in January of 2008 that was well attended by area service providers and interested parties. The format used was based on the BACC Poverty Study, and it yielded 37 recommendations with a focus on programs yielding the largest benefits.

Children

- *Expand Family Services Healthy Services Program*
 - The Community Partnership for Children has commenced a five year \$5,000,000 fundraising campaign to provide early childhood development services to every family in need in Brown County. They have raised in excess of \$1,100,000 as of March 1, 2009 and are making good progress toward the goal. The Community Partners are also searching for government programs that will financially support this initiative.
- *Establish a Paid Coordinator for Early Childhood Education Initiatives*
 - The paid position is funded, so some of those functions are being performed by the Community Impact Manager of the United Way.
- *Link at the State Level*
 - There are many local people who are working with several Wisconsin organizations including Wisconsin Council on Children and Families and Partnership for Wisconsin's Economic Success attempting to raise the state's attention and pushing for action.

Health Care

- *Establish a local emergency reserve fund; provide a staff person to solicit donated medications from pharmaceutical companies to support chronic illnesses; and achieve monetary donations from local businesses.*
 - During 2007 United Way provided funding for a portion of a paid staff person and in the first year \$154,000 at wholesale prices was received. Schreiber Foods then extended the funding for two more years and similar benefits are being realized for donated meds supporting chronic illnesses. Local hospitals are donating medications and local donors monies but at smaller dollar levels.

- *Assessment Program*
 - Bellin College of Nursing in partnership with NEW Community Clinic and Encompass Childcare support a program that provides nursing services, education, and wellness at two Encompass sites for at-risk children. But currently no organization is providing leadership, ownership, and resources creating one-time physical assessments for these at-risk children; it is within the scope of the College to support but not to organize this program.
- *Dental care services are poor or nonexistent for people in poverty*
 - A significant impact in dental care services was made when the Dental Service Expansion Project, a collaboration between NWTC and Brown County Oral Health Partnership, expanded their dental hygiene clinic to a full service dental clinic with the capacity to do preventative and restorative work at NWTC.
- *Mental health services for people in poverty are poor or non-existent*
 - The Mental-health Outreach Resource Expansion (MORE) program was established to help persons in shelters and clinic environments who are homeless, abused, or disenfranchised have access to mental health counseling, medical prescription management, and an improved outlook. This is a collaboration led by American Foundation for Counseling Services including Golden House, House of Hope, NEW Community Clinic, New Community Shelter, Saint John the Evangelist Homeless Shelter, and Bellin Psychiatric Center and is significantly funded by a grant from the Green Bay Community Foundation/US Oil Open Fund.

Housing

- *Improve housing options for low-income individuals by increasing awareness of the Housing Choice Voucher Program.*
 - Since publication of the study, members of the Brown County Board have advocated reducing the number of vouchers in the community. This proposal has mobilized housing and poverty advocacy practitioners in the County to defend the utility of the program and argue for its continued need.
- *Provide financial literacy programs and family self-sufficiency programs in the community*
 - Based in part on our report, the United Way Basic Needs and Self-Sufficiency Impact Council is currently exploring funding initiatives in this area.
- *Develop new models of affordable workforce housing to meet the needs of working families.*
 - JOSHUA and others continue to meet to discuss workforce housing. JOSHUA has developed a video to educate leaders and citizens on the importance of workforce housing and have made more than one dozen presentations.
 - Brown County has incorporated traditional neighborhood design and workforce housing affordability principles in its plans for the Brown County Farm property.
 - NeighborWorks Green Bay has continued to promote Employer Assisted Homeownership Programs and has added a home health care company to its list of employers who subsidize home purchases by their employees.
 - NeighborWorks and JOSHUA are exploring the models used in Illinois and Milwaukee around Employer Assisted Homeownership and are contemplating the development of a legislative agenda that would offer tax credits to employers who promote homeownership.

Neighborhood Services

- *Support the 2-1-1 System in Brown County*
 - United Way of Brown County has done a very good job of rolling 2-1-1 and published an excellent pamphlet covering information from the tracking data they have accumulated.

Transportation

- *Survey Addressing Requirements of People in Poverty*
 - The BACC/St. Norbert Transportation Study led by David Littig and Harry Maier (BACC board members), David Wegge (St. Norbert College Survey Center professor) and Jenna Hendricks (student), along with an incredible outpouring of support from at least 26 local organizations and service providers (organized by Cathy Putman and others) completed more than 1,000 surveys during the Winter of 2008-09.
 - While the resulting report with recommendations will not be published until the late Spring of 2009, David Littig wrote an article published in the March 29, 2009 *Press-Gazette* with an early picture of the recommendations covering changing traffic patterns, the need to think and plan outside the malls, and the need for a regional solution.
 - This was a no-cost solution with private sector volunteers supplying virtually all of the labor and a small grant from St. Norbert to help defray the costs of analysis and printing. The public sector provided no assistance.
- *Shared-Taxi Ride* – No progress yet
- *Recycling Used Cars* – Family Services in 2007 established the Ways to Work loan program for low-income parents who can not get loans elsewhere to pay for a reliable used car to assist in sustaining employment. They can borrow up to \$4000 and must pay it back in two years.
- *Employers developing creative transportation options for their employees* – No progress yet

Additional Recommendations

- *Increase Neighborhood Centers for Support Services*
 - There was much interest by Social Services to set up offices within neighborhoods closer to their clients ... and there is local space for more educational programs and networking. Perhaps an expansion on the Howe and Fort Howard Neighborhood Resource Centers concepts.
 - Little progress has been made. Fort Howard has consolidated into the Family & Childcare Resources organization. Howe requires new funding efforts. Both are collaborating with other support services to provide space.
- *Increase Visibility of Volunteer Needs*
 - Fresh emphasis should be placed community-wide on the need for volunteers to help those who are in need become more self-sufficient.
 - Little progress. This remains the primary resource for getting additional needs fulfilled. Voluntarism and support for the Volunteer Center need major expansion and promotion.

The study Poverty in Brown County created a document that placed the entire community on the same page as it looked at the problem of poverty. It provided an outsiders' look into the community's poverty problems. It was used as an educational workbook and learning tool, and it supported a motivating collaboration of service providers, funders, and interested influencers who then provided leadership towards meaningful leveraging improvements.

Of particular interest was the synergy of disparate groups on recommended projects that created meaningful impact toward reducing poverty.

BACC's Mission is to examine anticipated community concerns affecting the growth and health of Brown County, analysis of those issues, effective communication of those issues, and engaging the community in the issues. This project has been quite successful by those standards, and yet there is that empty feeling of a task just started.

