

# Is "Happy Valley" Happy?

A new survey from the U.S. Census Bureau says that nearly **35,000** people, or more than **9.5%** of the people living in the Appleton/Oshkosh area, had incomes below the federal poverty level in 2006. This is a greater than 50% increase since 2004, when the Bureau reported that 6% of area residents lived in poverty.

In Winnebago County, 1 in 4 births was to a single mother; **41%** of single mothers with children under the age of 5 live in poverty.

Roughly **17%** of residents worry about having enough food for their families. St. Joe's Food Pantry provides assistance to about **20,000** households each year.

Over **800** individuals spent at least 1 night in the Emergency Shelter of the Fox Valley in 2007 because they were homeless; **175** of them were children. Harbor House sheltered/served over **400** women & children who were victims of violence last year; **95%** of them were low income.

In 2008, LEAVEN provided assistance to 6700+ households. Fox Cities Community Health Center provided medical services to over **6,000** un- and underinsured people who otherwise may have been unable to access healthcare. The Tri-County Dental Clinic provided over **3,000** dental patients with emergency services last year. ✨

# Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

Each spring, volunteers assist persons with low income as well as senior citizens and persons of any age with disabilities with filing their taxes. This program, VITA/TCE (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance and TAX Counseling for the Elderly), is free, and includes assistance with electronic filing.

Locally, this service is available at the Goodwill Community Center in Menasha on Mondays and Wednesdays from 1-6 pm; Thursdays 1-6 pm (February only); and Saturdays 8:00 am- 12:00pm (February 2 to April 10, 2010). Call 997-3272 for more information.

Taxpayers may also want to check on their eligibility for Earned Income Tax Credit which ranges from \$457 for a married couple with no children filing jointly to \$5,657 for a married couple filing jointly with 3 or more qualifying children. ✨

# PROJECT PROMISE NEWS

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[www.projectpromisefoxcities.org](http://www.projectpromisefoxcities.org)



## Single Mom Balances Multiple Priorities, Moves from Welfare to Self-Sufficiency

BY SANDI MOORE

Joelle Jahner knows what it is like to open the cabinet doors and see bare shelves. She knows the pain of needing to choose between buying back-to-school clothes and supplies for her 2 daughters or paying the phone bill. And when the minivan needs repairs, a potential crisis looms.

**"Go to school so you can get a career, not just a job. It isn't easy, but it is very much worth the effort..."**  
*-Joelle Jahner*

But through it all, she survives. Jahner, a 33-year-old Appleton resident, got tired of living from paycheck to paycheck. She was running an in-home daycare and working part-time outside her home. She grew up in Milwaukee, dropped out of high school in 10th grade, and worked a series of dead end jobs. She then had two daughters, Danielle and Makayla, and decided she did not want them growing up in the city, so she moved to Appleton in 2001 to make a new start.

Once both girls were in school, Jahner decided it was her turn. She contacted Fox Valley Technical College in 2006 to inquire about getting her GED and to get information on the Wo/Men's Educational Bureau (WEB), FVTC's single parent and displaced homemaker program.

Jahner signed up for her GED orientation and began career counseling. Three weeks later, she earned her GED! As she explained it, "I knew I wasn't stupid. I just felt like high school was a waste of my time. So I dropped out and got a job."

She attended the Starting Point Workshop at FVTC to gain confidence and develop a life-career plan. Less than two months later, the former high school dropout was enrolled in college.

Last December, she graduated with a technical diploma

from the Medical Assistant (MA) program. She began working as an MA in July 2009 for a pediatric clinic with Affinity Health. She loves helping children and making enough money so that she doesn't have to fret upon the arrival of every bill in her mailbox. She plans to continue her education at some point to earn a nursing degree.

But despite all of these accomplishments, Jahner's life has not been easy. Her older daughter has cerebral palsy; she is wheelchair bound and communicates through use of an assistive device. Also, since moving to Appleton, she separated from the father of her girls. She closed her daycare business. A good friend died of cancer.

Jahner said that her faith keeps her going as does the support of family, friends, and staff at FVTC and CAP Services. While enrolled at the college, she worked in the counseling office in a clerical support role and also for CAP Services as a receptionist. In fact, Project Promise holds a special place in Jahner's

heart. While working at CAP, she handled communications for Project Promise, as CAP was providing the clerical support to the initiative.

While at FVTC, Jahner received several scholarships; this made a considerable difference in her ability to work fewer hours so she would have more time for her girls and her studies.

Now that she has made great strides in her career and income, what advice does she have for other single parents who are struggling to make ends meet? "Go to school so you can get a career, not just a job. It isn't easy, but it is very much worth the effort. A lot of people think they do not have enough money to go to college but there is a lot of help out there - you just have to look for it!" ✨



**Project Promise Poverty Coalition (PPPC) Annual Community Meeting.**

**Open to public. January 15, 2010. See page 2 for details.**

**GET CONNECTED... GET ANSWERS... CALL UNITED WAY 2-1-1**

For connection to community services, dial 2-1-1. A 2-1-1 Call Center Specialist is familiar with the following services and hundreds of other resources. Together, we can help you find the best resources to meet your need. All area codes are 920 unless indicated otherwise. Call 2-1-1 for more information on any of the resources listed here.



<b>CLOTHING</b>		Veteran Services		ThedaCare on Call .....830-6877	
Bread of Life Salvation Army Extension.....	984-9305	Calumet County.....	989-2700	Tri-County Dental Clinic.....	882-5500
Community 2000.....	833-0277	Outagamie County.....	832-5697	Wisconsin Well Woman Program.....	731-7142
Community Clothes Closet.....	731-7834	<b>FOOD</b>		<b>HOUSING</b>	
Fox Valley Thrift Shoppe.....	954-9200	ADVOCAP.....	725-2791	C.O.T.S. / Men.....	734-3609
Goodwill Industries of N.C. WI.....	731-6601	ATC Storehouse.....	738-3800	C.O.T.S. / Women.....	831-6591
Helping 2nd Hands.....	779-6705	Community 2000.....	833-0277	Christine Ann Domestic Abuse Services.....	729-6395
Fox Valley Mother and Unborn Baby Care.....	733-7334	Double Portion Soup Kitchen & Pantry.....	235-1031	Emergency Shelter of the Fox Valley.....	734-9192
New London Community Cupboard.....	982-8500	Fox Valley Community Table.....	205-3220	Fox Valley Warming Shelter.....	277-1968
Outagamie County Home Consultant.....	832-5161	Hortonville Area Community Food Pantry.....	779-6705	Habitat for Humanity.....	954-8702
St. Vincent de Paul Stores		Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry.....	766-9131	Harbor House Domestic Abuse Programs.....	832-1666
Appleton.....	739-1679	Neenah/Menasha Emergency Food Pantry.....	722-2871	Housing Authorities	
Kaukauna.....	766-9221	Ruth's Pantry.....	836-2382	Appleton.....	739-6811
Neenah.....	727-1766	St. Joseph Food Program.....	734-9461	Kaukauna.....	766-4772
Urban Threads.....	460-0004	SHARE.....	1-800-548-2124	Outagamie.....	731-9781
<b>EMPLOYMENT/SKILLS TRAINING</b>		The Salvation Army.....	734-3324	Winnebago.....	1-920-424-1470
ADVOCAP.....	725-2791	WIC Program		Housing Partnership.....	731-6644
CAP Services Skills Enhancement.....	968-6365	Calumet County.....	989-2700	The Salvation Army Transitional Housing.....	734-3324
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.....	968-6219	Outagamie County.....	832-5109	Villa Hope.....	739-5337
Fox Cities Workforce Development Center.....	997-3272	Winnebago County.....	729-2945	<b>LEGAL SERVICES</b>	
Senior Workers Program.....	968-6301	<b>HEALTH CARE &amp; INFORMATION</b>		Lawyer Referral & Information.....	1-800-362-9082
Wo/Men's Educational Bureau-FVTC.....	735-5693	Affinity Nurse Direct.....	738-2230	Legal Action of Wisconsin	
<b>FINANCIAL COUNSELING</b>		City Health Departments		Outagamie & Calumet Counties.....	1-800-236-1127
Catholic Charities.....	734-2601	Appleton.....	832-6429	Winnebago County.....	1-800-236-1128
FISC (Financial Information Service Center).....	886-1000	Menasha.....	967-3520	<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	
<b>FINANCIAL (TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE)</b>		Neenah.....	886-6155	Dial-A-Ride Neenah/Menasha.....	886-6128
Bread of Life Salvation Army Extension.....	984-9305	County Health Departments		Faith in Action.....	450-7997
Financial Assistance		Calumet County.....	1-920-849-1432	FISH Community Services.....	733-6242
Calumet County.....	989-2700	Outagamie County.....	832-5100	Heart to Heart Care.....	423-3099
Outagamie County.....	832-5168	Winnebago County.....	727-2894	Making the Ride Happen.....	225-1719
Winnebago County.....	727-2882	Fox Cities Community Health Center.....	731-7445	The Connector.....	832-5800
LEAVEN.....	738-9635	Fox Valley Mother and Unborn Baby Care.....	733-7334	Valley Transit.....	832-5800
The Salvation Army.....	734-3324	Planned Parenthood.....	731-6304	Valley Transit II.....	832-5789

# Project Promise Poverty Coalition: The Non-profit Perspective

BY JENNIFER WANKE

Many people are surprised to learn that there are families in our community that are living in poverty. Most of us in the Fox Cities live fairly comfortably and it is hard to imagine there are others who struggle to pay for rent, food, utilities, transportation, or medication. Sometimes good people make bad choices or they find themselves in unexpected emergency situations through no fault of their own.



Poverty is not new to the Fox Cities; but our community has taken a new approach to address poverty. The Project Promise Poverty Coalition (PPPC) is the result of a series of community programs about poverty. In 2006, CHAT arranged a poverty plunge that resulted in a four-month emphasis on poverty. The community interest generated support for the creation of the poverty coalition to keep everyone engaged in related issues that impact our community. PPPC filled a gap in the Fox Cities by creating opportunities for analysis, awareness and action and has become a role model for other communities seeking to fill a similar gap.

As the Executive Director of a local charity (LEAVEN) that provides emergency financial assistance for basic needs, advocacy and referrals to community partners, I am very familiar with poverty. Fortunately for those living in the Fox Cities there is a support network in place to connect people to the multitude of charitable and government agencies. We must continue to work collaboratively to address emergency situations, while providing community resources that result in life long changes.

The PPPC is very successful because of the support provided by a caring and compassionate community that is willing to collaborate and share resources to benefit the whole. The model may or may not work as well in another community because it is the people in the Fox Cities that make a real difference! ✨

# Renewing the Promise: January 15

"Renewing the Promise" is the theme for the Project Promise - Fox Cities Poverty Coalition annual report to the community to be held Friday, January 15, 2010 from 7:30 to 9am at UW Fox Valley Communication Arts Center, located at 1478 Midway Road, Mensaha.

In addition to updating the community on the work of Project Promise, attendees will hear from Rev. Joe Urcavich, retired chaplain of the Green Bay Packers who served from 1999 to 2008. Urcavich helped motivate the Green Bay Packers and he will inspire and invigorate his audience on January 15. He will address poverty from multiple perspectives with a focus on emotional and spiritual poverty.

According to Urcavich, "What gives people of all social economic groups energy, life? It is the experience of someone letting them know, up close and personal, that they are worth it, even lovable. The poverty that overwhelms all other forms of depravation is in people not loving themselves. A performance-based society deals with externals; true investment in the poor begins with issues of the heart!"

Most recently, Urcavich was Senior Pastor at Green Bay Community Church. In early 2009 he and his wife Arlis moved to Memphis, TN, to be closer to their grown children and 5 grandchildren.

Urcavich is now the Senior Pastor of Forest Hill Community Church. He enjoys playing golf and providing inspirational seminars; he continues to have ties to the Green Bay and Fox Cities through family and friends.

Reserve your seat for this free event by e-mailing [projectpromisefoxcities@capmail.org](mailto:projectpromisefoxcities@capmail.org) or calling 920-968-6365 ext. 6365.

## Volunteer with Project Promise

Join the effort to eradicate poverty in the Fox Cities. Volunteer opportunities exist on the Executive Committee and the 3 subcommittees: Awareness & Education, Action & Impact, Analysis & Information. Visit [www.projectpromisefoxcities.org](http://www.projectpromisefoxcities.org), e-mail [projectpromisefoxcities@capmail.org](mailto:projectpromisefoxcities@capmail.org) or call 930-968-6365 for more information. ✨

# Project Promise: A Business Perspective

BY JON STELLMACHER

Every individual has hopes and dreams, wants and needs. Every individual clings to the promise of a good life in a wonderful community. The Project Promise Poverty Coalition also clings to a hope, a dream: that no one in this marvelous community lives in poverty.

We have a great community. But some of our neighbors are struggling. They are burdened with disadvantages, disabilities, and other challenges often leading to poverty and even despair. Over 20,000 people in the Fox Cities live below the federal poverty level. Seventy percent of children in poverty live in families that are headed by single women. One in five school-aged children qualifies for free or reduced lunch. As a businessman and as a citizen, I think these numbers are unacceptable.



Every one of us has a role to play in achieving the dream of a community without poverty. We know that solving poverty is not easy, but we cannot ignore it – after all, we're a community. When one hurts, all are lesser for it.

Project Promise is about generating awareness, education, and action that can bring about positive, collaborative, systemic change. The more we know about poverty, its challenges and pain, the more we all feel a sense of obligation and an urge to act.

Because we are a community that cares, we believe we must improve the lives of all people in this community. And in so doing, we will give those in poverty a sense of hope, a sense of dignity, and with hard work, a way out of poverty. To do this work, we'll need even more participation from businesses, non-profits, faith communities, and government, if we are to truly accomplish the goal of eliminating poverty.

Thank you to the many individuals and organizations that work every day to help those in or near poverty. To others: join us in the effort. It is noble work. ✨

# Project Promise Provides Impetus for Change

## Who are they?

Project Promise Poverty Coalition (PPPC) is a coalition of non-profit organizations, service providers, faith communities, and concerned individuals and service providers with the goal of ending poverty. They have come together to provide resources to those who may be living in poverty, as well as those who want to understand poverty and what they can do to help fight it in the Fox Cities.

By educating the community about the impact and complexity of poverty, and by facilitating collaborative action, Project Promise Poverty Coalition (PPPC) has become an important tool in the fight against poverty. PPPC is not itself a provider or funder of direct services to the poor. PPPC works toward eradicating poverty as we know it by using the following three strategies: Awareness, Education, and Action.

PPPC Steering Committee members are Jon Stellmacher (Thrivent Financial for Lutherans) and Jennifer Wanke (LEAVEN), co-chairs; Nicole Harrison (CAP Services), vice chair; Amanda Dietrich (Congressman Kagen's office), secretary; and Debra Cronmiller (Emergency Shelter of the Fox Valley), Treasurer.

In addition there are 3 subcommittees: Action and Impact, Awareness and Education, and Analysis and Information. Each of these involves another 8-20 individual members on the primary committee or on sub-teams.

## How did the coalition start?

An estimated 12,000 residents are among the "working poor" i.e. those who work, but have an income of less than \$20,000 for a

family of four. This group accounts for 6% of the Fox Cities population, and has grown significantly since 2001.

With that in mind, community members, led by the Community Health Action Team (C.H.A.T.), came together in January 2007 to create Project Promise, a four-month initiative to raise awareness and inspire action about poverty.

During this initiative, Project Promise featured a community book entitled, "Nickel and Dime: On (Not) Getting by in America" by Barbara Ehrenreich. Libraries throughout the Fox Cities led by the Appleton Public Library, and including Neenah, Menasha, Kimberly-Little Chute, and Kaukauna, participated in the community book read, and offered discussion groups so area residents could talk about the book, and the issues that it raised.

In addition to the book, poverty simulations were conducted to deepen participant's understanding about what living in poverty is like. Also, financial programs such as the Thrivent Financial Fitness Club and the Financial Information and Service Center were offered to help give people an understanding of how to better manage their finances.

An Action Forum at the end of April 2007 brought together the participants of Project Promise and several plans were laid out to further education/awareness about poverty in the Fox Cities and develop programs to lessen its toll.

As a result of Project Promise efforts, several new initiatives were launched including a Family Mentoring Program and the Fox Cities Project Promise Poverty Coalition. ✨

## Project Promise Poverty Coalition (PPPC) Speakers Bureau

Are you interested in having someone from Project Promise speak to your company, church, service club or non-profit organization on the work of the poverty coalition? If so, the PPPC Speakers Bureau has 20 volunteers that are available for community presentations. To schedule a speaker, send an e-mail to: [mary.wisnet@unitedwayfoxcities.org](mailto:mary.wisnet@unitedwayfoxcities.org)

# Poverty simulation an eye-opening experience

BY MARY HARP-JIRSCHELE

Project Promise's poverty simulation is designed to help participants understand what it's like for a typical low-income family trying to survive from month to month. Based on feedback from a number of participants, the simulation provides an effective, impactful look at the realities faced by low-income people.

"The poverty simulation was one of the most powerful experiences I had as part of Leadership Fox Cities," said Jenny Krikava, Community Relations Coordinator for Children's Hospital-Fox Valley. "I remember feeling so stressed and frantic throughout the exercise and thinking, 'This isn't even real – I can't begin to imagine the level of stress if this were my actual life.' With all of the worry about being able to pay bills and have enough for the family to eat, there was no time to devote to relationships within the family."

In the simulation, participants assume the roles of different individuals and families facing poverty. Some are newly employed, some are recently deserted by the "breadwinner," others are recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), either with or without additional earned income. Still others are senior citizens receiving Social Security or grandparents raising grandchildren. Their challenge is to provide for basic necessities and shelter during the course of four 15-minute "weeks."

The simulation is conducted in a large room (there are between 20 and 86 participants) with the "families" surrounded by community resources and services they may access. Included are a bank, Community Action Agency, employer, utility company, pawn broker, grocery, DHS office, payday and title loan facility, mortgage company, school and child-care facility.

The experience lasts from two to three hours and includes a debriefing period in which feelings and experiences are shared. "It was an eye opener," said Jaime Witt, market development manager at The Post-Crescent. "Between the red tape and paperwork, it's amazing that people get government help at all. And the ways vulnerable people are taken advantage of...it's appalling! I have no doubt that it's frustrating for individuals who are making an honest effort to make better lives for themselves and they can't because of the endless roadblocks. I know how frustrated I was during the simulation, and I can't imagine how it really feels."

"The experience really creates an open awareness of the challenges poverty presents," said Matt Mineau, associate principal, Appleton East High School.

For details on hosting/attending a poverty simulation, contact Betsy at [brozelle@capmail.org](mailto:brozelle@capmail.org) or 209-0760. ✨

## PROJECT PROMISE NEWS

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