

Poverty Taskforce Town Hall Meeting Notes

Rogers 5-26-2010

Texarkana 7-15-2010

Little Rock 7-15-2010

Dumas 7-19-2010

Jonesboro 7-29-2010

Rogers, Arkansas

Poverty Taskforce Town Hall Meeting NOTE

May 26, 2010

Discussion Group: **BUSINESS**
Issue Area: **ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

What can be done to reduce poverty through economic and community development?

- Business Development
 - Attracting more small businesses
 - Recruiting
 - Streamlining processes to start small businesses
 - Creating pathways to turn ideas into business plans ----actual businesses
 - Support more business incubation programs like one at UALR
 - Helping match local artisans with new markets (e.g. custom turkey calls sold not on the front porch but via EBay)
 - (Respect) Working to identify skills inherent in client population and build on those. Identify job opportunities that match (e.g., farmers markets: niche markets for frog legs, etc.)
 - Hire low-/moderate-income individuals
 - Development of I-49 corridor will bring jobs and facilitate fast/easy movement of people
 - More cooperation/planning with neighboring states
- Transportation
 - Improve mass transit systems
 - Subsidized passes
- Childcare Costs
 - Conditions for receiving subsidy at DHS eliminate too many families (i.e., 30+ hours/week of work to qualify)

What is being done to reduce poverty through economic and community development?

- Planning
 - Making planning decisions based on regional needs/markets – in state
 - Updating land use plans and traffic patterns in Conway to make communities more walkable and livable.
 - Ft. Smith Chamber of Commerce Committee developing action plans to address curb appeal and arts, quality of life issues.
- Incentives/Attraction
 - Economic opportunity zones encourage businesses to locate in low/mod/distressed areas.
 - Ft. Smith attracting new tech jobs and providing training

What are the assets and strengths for economic and community development?

- People
 - Long terms residents (+/-)
 - People who care (+/-)
 - Expertise/knowledge/talent
- Institutions and Organizations
 - Community college
 - Church & community groups

What are the challenges and barriers for economic and community development?

- Community leadership
 - Effective first followers
 - Convincing people to give back
- Funds

Discussion Group: **GRASSROOTS/COMMUNITY**

Issue Area: **INDIVIDUAL ECONOMIC SUPPORT/SECURITY**

What can be done to reduce poverty through individual economic support/security?

- Employment/Workforce Development
 - Education/Skills/Career Training
 - Job Development/Training for area jobs
- Supports
 - Listen to clients' needs
 - New target population
 - Teach money management
 - Continue community action activities

What is being done to reduce poverty through individual economic support/security?

- Education/Job Training Programs
 - ARRA Job Creation
- Financial Stability
 - Tax Preparation Training
 - IDA Programs
 - Success due to case management
- Services
 - Energy Programs
 - Increase energy efficiency
 - Food Programs
- Family Development Programs – Youth to Seniors
- Other
 - Information Sharing
 - Outcome Measurement

What are the assets and strengths for individual economic support/security?

- Client interaction
- Importance of regular assistance programs
 - Accessibility to agencies
 - Agency-wide knowledge of programs
 - Agency/community partnerships
 - Knowledge of resources
- Information sharing
- Senior Assistance
 - Several programs
 - Transportation/meals

What are the challenges and barriers for individual economic support/security?

- Lack of a truly reflective needs assessment
- Resources
 - Lack of funding
 - Lack of resource network/partnerships
 - Need for increased staff education on all programs
 - Lack of access to technology and technology training
 - Lack of utilization of available training resources

Discussion Group: **NONPROFIT/GOVERNMENT/EDUCATION**

Issue Area: **HEALTH**

What can be done to reduce poverty through health?

- Coverage
 - Improve access to Medicaid for adults
 - Eliminate 2-year window between SSI and Medicare
 - Extend ARKids First to kids up to 25 if in college
- Personnel
 - Create and increase healthcare workforce/jobs
 - Lack of entry-level job training, help CBP's better provide
 - Access: Medical provider capacity challenges, especially specialists
- Access
 - Transportation challenges
 - Limited access to dental health services, especially adults
- Information
 - Better info/training for parents
 - Low health literacy levels, especially important for parents of SSI high-need kids
 - More info to Medicaid recipients on how to use

What is being done to reduce poverty through health?

- Health Care Reform
- Community Health Centers
 - Services and access
 - Enrollment/outreach
- Dental Services
 - Ft. Smith – free dental clinic
 - Conway – Interfaith Clinic – Dental
- Health Fairs (downside – not ongoing or sustainable)
- Child Find (EHS)
- Support for prescriptions – Pine Bluff
 - Area churches
 - Wal-Mart \$4 prescriptions; Target; Kroger
- Food Stamps

What are the assets and strengths for health?

What are the challenges and barriers for health?

- Funds
 - State
 - Federal
- Personnel
 - No dental school in AR (limits capacity – losing dentists)
 - PCP referral bottlenecks – not enough PCP's to refer.
 - High cost of setting up practices
 - No AR incentives
- Transportation/access barriers even if available (e.g. Medicaid)
- Need for more affordable plans – high premiums
- Raising community awareness, galvanizing community

Discussion Group: **NONPROFIT/GOVERNMENT/EDUCATION**
Issue Area: **TAX POLICY**

What can be done to reduce poverty through tax policy?

- Ensure low-income folks do not pay taxes
- Many tax proposals (e.g. Value Added) do not have protection for low-income families
- Extended Support
 - “Cliff” – once families are no longer eligible for public support (Can’t afford to work with higher costs of child care, etc.
 - Need to offer more support to families reaching benefit “cliff” (e.g., EITC) OR
 - Extend benefits during transitions to employment or increase salaries
- Corporate Share
 - Companies get tax credit for hiring more people
 - Increase taxes on supersized companies
 - Some companies take advantage of tax loopholes
- Add tax to cigarettes and alcohol
- Get a portion of lottery \$\$\$

Discussion Group: **NONPROFIT/GOVERNMENT/EDUCATION**
Issue Area: **EDUCATION**

What can be done to reduce poverty through education?

- Pre-K/Early Childhood
 - Good ABC program in the state
 - Good HeadStarts
- K-12
 - Year round school. Learn better and get fed.
 - Put basic living/trade skills in K-12 schools; add trades and tracks in K-12
 - Communities in Schools – After School Programs
- Postsecondary
 - Make a plan for training people for future needs like care for aging.
 - More free education for vocational/technical skills
 - SEARC in Pine Bluff met with business leaders about non-college skills training. Have set up training.
 - Everyone should have a chance to go to college.
- Supports
 - Resources to help parents help their child.

Discussion Group: **YOUTH**
Issue Area: **EDUCATION**

What can be done to reduce poverty through education?

- Pre-K
 - Make Pre-K programs more available.
 - Encourage/promote Head Start participation.
- Encourage year-round education (year-round school year)
- More youth programs that are educationally focused (YMCA, Boys & Girls Clubs, 4H, Junior Achievement, Summer Enrichment, Library, Summer Youth Employment)
- Emphasis of importance of education within:
 - Community
 - Youth/Young Children
 - Business
 - Family

What is being done to reduce poverty through education?

- ABC Program
- Arkansas Challenge Scholarship Program

What are the assets and strengths for education?

- K-12 test scores greatly improved
- Solid public education system – post 12th grade
- Increase in Child Nutrition Programs

What are the challenges and barriers for education?

- The Economy.
- Funding challenges – Pre-K
- Quality of education – math & sciences K-12
- Impress upon graduating seniors the importance/challenges and commitment needed to succeed and finish college within 6 years.
- Fear – going to, coming from and in school

Texarkana, Arkansas

Poverty Taskforce Town Hall Meeting NOTE

July 15, 2010

Poverty Task Force – Town Hall Meeting
July 15, 2010 – 6:00 PM

Individual Economic Supports

- Drug testing before welfare checks then drug rehab
- Huge drug problem
- General society doesn't want to help those on drugs/alcohol
- People need to be loved and cared for
- Texas school and Arkansas schools have paid cosmetology schools in high school
- Someone to listen to peoples' needs and give advice
- Welfare too easy?
- Need more mental health facility
- Not enough attention to poverty in Texarkana
- Sometimes leadership plays games – Like rental assistance in Pike County
- Find grants, let people know about assistance
- Not enough people interested; Aging volunteers
- Grandparents raising grandchildren; no money for higher education
- People get an education then leave the area
- Magnolia deals with it; They are pursuing other businesses
- Pike City hospital just closed
- Nashville has a chance at a new business but won't give tax credit
- Better vocational training in high schools; They have the regional center in Texarkana High right now; Texarkana College has some great collaboration
- An elementary school in Texas is doing "engineering training"
- Difference between Texas and Arkansas side
 - Cultural
 - Leadership

Economic & Community Development

- Jobs needed
- Obviously need community development
- Texas side has less poverty
- The state's work separately
- Must have jobs and economic development
- Business is on the Texas side; No income tax in Texas but Texarkana is exempt
- Nashville got an economic development council
- Murphreesboro not doing anything
- Huge drug problem!
- Loss of manufacturing jobs to Chinese / foreign countries
- Students lack hope of coming out of poverty
- If you are college bound you get out; Not college bound you lack skills
- Need a Camp Pfiefer in regions across the state
- Work Ethic

Education – Youth

- Had a program for troubled kids to teach them life skills. It was successful but lost funding.
- Need tutors and mentors; After school programs
- Targeted learning
- No YMCA; No Boys & Girls Club; No city pool
- Do have faith love and hope
- Not much being done
- Schools have volunteer programs; No good in high school

Tax Policy & Health

- Possible dental clinic at St. Michael
- Free clinics have closed
- AHEC
- Lack of primary and preventative care
- Lack of money closed clinics
- Prescription assistance needed
- Hope and Nashville have free clinics; Nashville has paid dental
- Need coordinated referral system
- St. Michael Med Van

Little Rock, Arkansas

Poverty Taskforce Town Hall Meeting NOTE

July 15, 2010

Please see the following notes which capture the discussion that took place during the Little Rock Town Hall meeting on July 15th, 2010. ----

The Arkansas Legislative Taskforce on Reducing Poverty and Creating Economic Opportunity continued its effort to meet with Arkansans from across the state on July 15th in Little Rock. Forty-four people attended the event hosted by Taskforce partner agency, Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families.

That same night, the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance hosted a gathering in Texarkana. These two events were followed by a town hall held in Dumas hosted by the Arkansas Public Policy Panel and an upcoming event to be held on July 29th in Jonesboro hosted by the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation.

These events are being held in addition to the Taskforce's Town Hall meeting which occurred in Northwest Arkansas in May.

The Taskforce is made up of legislators and community leaders and has been asked to submit recommendations to Governor Mike Beebe by this Fall.

The input from the town hall meetings being held across Arkansas will be incorporated in the Taskforce's recommendations.

NOTES FROM THE LITTLE ROCK TOWN HALL MEETING OF THE ARKANSAS LEGISLATIVE TASKFORCE FOR REDUCING POVERTY AND PROMOTING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY HOSTED BY ARKANSAS ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES. 7/15/10

Community activism and small business development group

First question: Introduce yourself and tell us how you are an activist.

- A lot of talk about empowerment and activism as, generally, a way to make sure that over wise excluded people are heard in the policy making process.
- Many people showed interest in education and achievement gap issues. One young man in particular shared his passion for encouraging his peers to succeed in school.
- One woman is working to help individuals boost their credit scores.
- Several individuals are delving into the possibility of microloans, particularly in the area of low-cost housing.
- Several people are interested in homelessness
- Food security and hunger issues also came up a lot.

Second question: What would you do, as an activist, with one million dollars?

- Instead of thinking about deficits, as we just did when we described the issues that fuel our activism, let's think about the investments that we would make and the assets that the communities we work with already have.
- Those interested in homelessness showed a particular interest in the importance of alleviating homelessness through permanent, affordable, supportive housing rather than homeless shelters.
- Another good idea that was voiced: help people help themselves while simultaneously alleviating a social problem
 - Example: alleviate food insecurity and promote a sustainable local food economy by hiring a poor person to cultivate an urban garden. In other words, help the environment by helping poor people or vice versa.
- Discussion of positive deviants, or those who, despite the odds, seem to thrive.
 - Example: the family with 14 children who all succeed who lives next to the family with 3 children who all end up in jail, a real-life scenario that happens all the time.
 - It is important that, in development work, we focus on the positive deviants and figure out what about them makes them succeed. Then, we can learn from their strategies for success and apply them to other families.
 - What made the family with 14 kids succeed while the family with 3 kids did not?
 - Personal motivation or motivation from the parents to work for a change
 - Resources, knowledge, and support
 - The belief that a better life is possible
 - Helping each other and working together within the family
 - Giving back once you've been allowed a chance
- Another young man had the brilliant idea to create a safe haven for his school-age peers, a place where they could make art, music, play sports, study, seek tutoring, find role models, acquire job training, and basically just feel at home. More places like this should exist. Thankfully CALs is working on it! However, this guy really highlighted the importance of ensuring that the people who would be directly affected by a policy change would be able to influence or design the policy.

EDUCATION/HEALTH GROUP

1.) Education & Poverty-

- · In order to reduce poverty, education is a necessary avenue to utilize; we must ensure that our education options are as open and as limitless as possible
- · Increased emphasis is needed on higher education preparation
- · Exposure and example is key; we need to show that there is a way out of poverty and provide examples of success
- · "Attainable life"
- · Must reduce the drop-out rate
- · Must increase number of available resources—Ex. Availability of school lunches
- · Literacy is an important issue to address, including adult literacy
- · Mentoring is key; some children need guidance in order to succeed

- Tools play an important role; children need resources in their homes, including calculators, word processors, etc. to be as successful as other students, or at least somehow need access to such tools
- Focus on confidence building; work on increasing student's perception of themselves and the success they can achieve outside of test scores, etc.
- Utilize other strategies—tutoring, alternate education programs (vocational studies), etc.
- Emphasis on teaching “basic” life skills

2.) Health & Poverty-

- Emphasis must be placed on the role of health and wellness in the overall well-being of children
- Healthcare needs to be accessible for ALL children
- Focus on preventive health; need to develop/foster healthier habits early on in children
 - Importance of exercise, offering more P.E. classes
 - Don't allow the state to take away recess/P.E. as punishment, children NEED this stimulation
- Simplify re-enrollment process for ARKids; work with the DHS and outside organizations to make the process more efficient and able to retain more children
- Address the provider issue, there is a shortage of PCP's who are willing to participate in ARKids
- Address immigrant populations/the issues that effect them, including language barriers and sharing information
- Increase availability of school nurses
- Provide better access/more community health centers in schools and their neighborhoods

3.) Miscellaneous—

- Utilities Issue:
- Need to reduce utility cost for lower-income populations; must find a better way to contain costs
- Need a state earned income tax credit
- Ideology:
- We must “think” ourselves out of poverty; thinking of Arkansas as a poor and impoverished state becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy
- Need to change the culture of low-expectations

4.) Challenges and Barriers—

- Too much segregation within our communities, this must be addressed (ex. Churches unwillingness to work with one another)
- Must empower individual communities to focus on their specific issues
- Focus on mental health/increase available resources
- Provide more year-round programs for both children and adults
- Consolidate school buildings

Dumas, Arkansas

Poverty Taskforce Town Hall Meeting NOTE

July 19, 2010

Notes for Poverty Task Force Meeting July 19, 2010

Dumas Community Center, Dumas AR

Meeting opened by Curtis Mangrum with Prayer at 6:20 pm

Mr. Rich Huddleston began the meeting by explaining the purpose to the crowd. The Arkansas Task Force on Reducing Poverty and Creating Economic Opportunity wants to come up with recommendations on how to reduce poverty & promote economic development. Sen. Joyce Elliot Led the charge in the creation of this task force to get state legislators talking about poverty as an issue.

Task force needs to come up with benchmarks, goals. Are we going to reduce poverty by 33%? 25%? There are 22 people on task force, they have been hearing from experts and grassroots folks over the past several months. Meetings held in Texarkana, Northwest Arkansas, Dumas, and soon in Jonesboro.

What are the major issues? What does the state need to do? What do communities need to do to give families a real chance to get out of poverty? Task force wanted to give everyone a chance to weigh in on what they will be doing.

Mr. Huddleston encouraged those in attendance to sign on to pledge "half in 10" in order to hold leaders accountable and ensure they address the issue of poverty.

The crowd splits into three groups:

Individual Income supports/ Health Care
Education
Community Economic Development/Taxes

Each group considers the following questions:

1. What can be done to reduce poverty through this issue?
2. What is already being done to reduce poverty in Arkansas through this issue?
3. What are challenges and Barriers?
4. What factors are out of your control that prevent progress and development?
5. If you could do one thing to change progress & development in AR, what would it be?
6. What should the state do more of to get AR out of poverty?
7. What should the state do less of to get AR out of poverty?

Each group had discussion for an hour and came up with the recommendations below. The groups designated one person to act as a spokesperson and tell the other groups what was

discussed. After all groups had presented, Mr. Huddleston and Ms. Bernadette Devone explained that these recommendations will go in a report to be submitted to the Arkansas state legislature, and afterwards, Mr. Curtis Mangrum closed the meeting with prayer at 8:45 pm.

INDIVIDUAL ECONOMIC SUPPORTS/HEALTH CARE

1. What can be done to reduce poverty through individual economic supports and Health Care?

- a. Increase wages for jobs that we have.
- b. Section 8 program needs to have a way to get from Section 8 Rentership to Home Ownership. Some places have it in AR, but in others, the county doesn't appropriate enough money for a person to do this. Need to ask County judge to appropriate money to Section 8.
- c. Start a program with three groups. The first group is made of successful people who are willing to share the keys to their success with others. The second group is made of people in poverty who have struggled but haven't been very successful. The third group is made of facilitators who ensure that the two groups share each others' experiences. The successful group will lay out a road map to their success, so that those in poverty can follow that road map and duplicate their success. The goal is to transform people in poverty to successful people.

2. What is already being done to reduce poverty through individual economic supports and Health Care?

- a. There isn't anything being done to reduce poverty in Arkansas. Other than meetings like this.
- b. There is the food stamps program, but you have to go through hell to get them. There are many policy problems in the food stamps program.
- c. Need more support in getting aid.
- d. This meeting is a step forward, but we need more discussions like this.
- e. Policy needs to change, help DHS do what they need to do. Need a commission to look at DHS policy and procedure. Recognize there are problems with the current set-up.

3. What are the Challenges and Barriers?

- a. Programs are both helping and hurting. They do not provide for the long-term (over 4 years)
- b. Receiving help from one program cancels help from other programs. The system is designed to keep people in poverty, and it only maintains the poverty level. We need new rules.
- c. There are no jobs for those who finish school
- d. Need money to make money
- e. Southeast Arkansas needs political infrastructure to get involved citizens into political office
- f. Legal challenges are costly and difficult to get money which belongs to people in poverty
- g. Need to help one another, stop putting each other down.
- h. This generation of kids feel that they are always being pushed down. They need more encouragement
- i. Females are supporting lazy men

4. What factors are beyond your control that are preventing economic progress and development?

- a. Make playing Field more level to borrow money. Some people have businesses but are still in poverty, they don't have capital to have enough cash flow.
 - b. AFDC System needs to be more fair.
 - c. Bank system needs to be fair to minority, rural communities
 - d. Lack of knowledge among residents
 - e. Local banking, local finance institutions are needed
 - f. "profit in poverty" keeps some in poverty to make others wealthy.
 - g. We don't make the rules. We need more grassroots people to make the rules about policy regarding poverty. A person who has never been in poverty should not be making the rules for people who are in poverty. More grassroots people running for office and making decisions
 - h. Disability services get denied until we have to take legal actions
- 5. If you could do one thing to change economic progress and development in Arkansas, what would it be?**
- a. More Jobs.
 - b. Challenge people.
 - c. The younger generation is too soft. Generations of people who were raised in the fields had to work hard to get where they are. Younger generation doesn't have the tenacity to make it on their own.
 - d. Education & training is needed.
 - e. Create young entrepreneurs think tank
 - f. Small communities need to hold elected officials accountable
 - g. Provide financial literacy to help people handle their money
- 6. What should the state do more of to get Arkansas out of poverty?**
- a. Everyone eligible for a grant should receive a grant.
 - b. Poverty In Southeast AR is not the same as being poor in NW Arkansas.
 - c. South AR should get the same attention as North AR. We are more than just farming. We have people here who are computer literate.
 - d. We need more resources from the government. They need to come talk to us. The governor needs to come down here
 - e. Provide preventative health care training (nutrition and smoking)
 - f. Better, more affordable health Insurance
 - g. State should provide some training through resources for colleges and community groups
 - h. Enforce good policies that are already in place
- 7. What should the State do Less of to get Arkansas out of poverty?**
- a. Stop talking, start doing.
 - b. Stop ignoring the big white elephant in the room: Malnutrition.
 - c. DHS Personnel needs to stop being rude. It's very degrading when you go there.
 - d. Job searches for unemployment office. Unemployment office needs to stop requiring you to do three job searches.
 - e. Health is a problem. We have high rates of high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, etc. Gould has a 70% Diabetes, 68% High Blood Pressure
 - f. Health institutions are in SE Arkansas, making money off of health disparities like diabetes, high blood pressure

EDUCATION

1. What can be done to reduce poverty through education?

- a. Early childhood development for children 2-3 years old
- b. Mandatory Pre-K (for 4-year olds)
- c. Parent training classes in conjunction with Pre-K classes
- d. Raising expectations and self esteem
- e. Teen pregnancy prevention and better sex education
- f. Quality After School tutoring
- g. Improving quality of teachers, especially in afterschool programs
- h. More Summer School programs
- i. Improving parks and recreation areas
- j. Stronger curriculum in schools. Need to challenge children and It will cut down own drop out and disciplinary problems.
- k. Having good schools will draw people to the city (an economic development engine)
- l. Address High Drop-out rate, More follow up with at-risk children.
- m. Summer and after school employment opportunities for Youth
- n. More funding to implement these solutions
- o. Encourage parents to educate kids before getting to schools, (Parent involvement)
- p. More computers and internet access
- q. Mentors for boys and girls
- r. Uniforms

2. What is already being done to reduce poverty through education?

- a. Tutoring, but not enough, need more.
- b. After School programs, but need better quality, they just go and hang out.
- c. Lunch & Breakfast programs at school, and during summer is a good thing.
- d. Benchmark test preparation is working

3. What are the challenges and barriers?

- a. Entrenched "good old boys system"
- b. Lack of communication
- c. Policy ideas at state level are not being implemented properly at local level
- d. Family and living circumstances prevents people from being successful
- e. Lack of politicians/elected leaders that represent us, and we don't hold them accountable
- f. Lack of Self esteem for young kids
- g. Loss of kids that go out of town for college (brain drain)

4. What factors are beyond your control that are preventing economic progress and development?

- a. Lack of Jobs and opportunities
- b. Crooked politicians, poor elected leadership
- c. Lack of assets among those in poverty
- d. No stores in town, no local businesses or services
- e. Flight of students, declining population
- f. Wages/income doesn't keep up with cost of living
- g. Racial and Class Discrimination in financial institutions and other institutions
- h. Poor quality of housing, run down houses
- i. Low working skills for young people. They don't know how to dress for job interviews

- j. Failure of church, home, and teachers in helping kids
- k. Kids raising kids, teen pregnancy
- l. Wage gap between white males and other ethnic groups and gender, specifically, single African American women. They are doing the same jobs and making less money
- m. Isolation and loss of community support and being neighborly
- n. More money to schools, better teachers, parent participation, lack of job opportunities, crooked politicians, lack of assets, businesses are leaving communities. No stores or local businesses and services. Flight of students, declining population.

5. If you could do one thing to change economic progress and development in Arkansas, what would it be

- a. More money to schools
- b. Better teachers
- c. More parent participation
- d. Hold leaders accountable
- e. Give supplies and clothing to low-income kids
- f. Give summer jobs to kids
- g. Smaller class sizes
- h. Less paperwork for teachers so they can spend more time teaching kids
- i. Stop telling kids that they are bad
- j. Shelters for school bus stops
- k. Provide more jobs
- l. Locally manufactured solar panels/green jobs/weatherization for low income people
- m. Public transportation
- n. Better educated leaders (get rid of current leadership)
- o. Redesign welfare system to help train people to be self-sufficient. Teach them workable skills

6. What should the state do more of to get Arkansas out of poverty?

- a. Provide more assets to help people create small businesses
- b. Business training programs in schools, better trade skills programs in schools.
- c. Utilize their funds better, stop stockpiling money in districts where kids need better education
- d. Hold schools accountable for the money they spend
- e. Enforce better standards for schools
- f. Mandatory professional development for teachers (continual

7. What should the state do less of to get Arkansas out of poverty?

- a. Stop messing up the money, no more fraud, embezzlement, etc. Need accountability
- b. Less state interference in schools
- c. Less consolidation of districts
- d. Stop sending kids home for disciplinary problems. Need more ISS where they are required to do work. They aren't learning anything being at home.

COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/TAXES

1. What can we do to reduce poverty in Arkansas through Community Economic Development and Taxes?

- a. Create Jobs
- b. Workforce development, educated workforce,
- c. Educate people on how to find jobs
- d. Financing/scholarships for training and education.
- e. Politicians need to take the issue more seriously
- f. Better on the job training.
- g. Training kids early on in trades.
- h. Quality of life issues, amenities, housing, shopping, schools, to attract businesses.
- i. Use training programs in High School to build better housing
- j. Make the community more marketable for businesses.
- k. Politicians should come to these meetings
- l. Hold politicians Accountable
- m. Job Pipelines
- n. Need more equitable opportunities
- o. ID more businesses and sub contractors that can do the work, ensure that minority-owned businesses get contracts
- p. Improve incentives for contractors to diversify
- q. Better recruitment and enrollment in successful programs
- r. Programs in High School for those who are graduating to learn how to access opportunities

2. What is already being done to reduce poverty in Arkansas through Community Economic Development and Taxes?

- a. Local businesses are good, need to help grow them, give support for small businesses.
- b. Pine Bluff has programs, but how are those programs helping people in more rural areas?
- c. More technology advancements, more broadband access
- d. Create better opportunities for small businesses. Ensure contracts are going to minority businesses. Need more equitable opportunities.
- e. Ding Dong Daddy Days is a good opportunity to get involved, need more minorities to get involved in it

3. What are the Challenges and Barriers?

- a. Heir property is keeping property unattractive and unavailable for development.
- b. Young people not being trained as apprentices for jobs like construction
- c. Politicians aren't engaged in community
- d. Living wage needs to be established. College Educated folks working for minimum wage. Race Relations need to be addressed. Young people don't know how to market themselves. Unwritten rules that exclude people
- e. Not enough individuals taking initiative
- f. Too many meetings, not enough action
- g. Low wages
- h. College educated people are working for minimum wage
- i. Young people don't know how to market themselves

4. **What factors are out of your control that are preventing economic development and progress?**
 - a. Too much Good Ol' Boy System, need more equitable opportunities for contracts, loans, capital, jobs, etc.
 - b. Statistically minorities more likely to be in poverty
 - c. Individuals don't pay enough attention to policy
 - d. Individuals don't hold themselves accountable
 - e. Race relations
 - f. Unwritten rules and habits that exclude people
 - g. People need to want to help themselves
5. **If you could do one thing to change economic development and progress, what would it be?**
 - a. Get college administrators, local officials, school board members at the table
 - b. Opportunities for youth who have a criminal record
 - c. Need a structured mentoring program to teach young people how to be successful and guide them in their path
 - d. Need to build more relationships.
 - e. Need to address discrimination and Racism, work to bridge gaps, change mindset
 - f. Need to bridge the gap between young and old
6. **What should the state do more of to get Arkansas out of poverty?**
 - a. Follow through after discussing issues
 - b. Make this issue a priority for state politicians
7. **What should the state do less of to get Arkansas out of poverty?**
 - a. (Did not have time for this question)

Arkansas Legislative Taskforce on Reducing Poverty and Promoting Economic Opportunity



JONESBORO TOWN HALL MEETING – 7/29/10 Group Conversation Results

COMMUNITY/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GROUP

- What motivated participants to come to meeting regarding reducing poverty?
 - Representing an agency that fights poverty
 - To see what else can be done to help
 - To be more involved
 - To build partnerships, support community and children
 - Learn how to bring the region together
 - 20% of Jonesboro lives in poverty, we need to reduce this.
 - Share ideas from ground level
 - Make NEA a better place

- What is currently being done to reduce poverty?
 - Access to affordable housing
 - Issues: crime not to pay rent, landlord responsibilities, lack of implied warranty of inhabitability
 - Northside initiative
 - Continued focus on education

Arkansas Legislative Taskforce on Reducing Poverty and Promoting Economic Opportunity



- Programs for targeted groups to seek employment (mature workers, disabled, veterans)
- Public transportation in Jonesboro
 - Issues: outlying areas, transportation to jobs, healthcare, school, shopping, JETS gets calls from surrounding counties
- Refocus of CDBG program on poverty issues
- Magnet schools
- Community gardens to promote cooking and nutrition, self-sufficiency, and gardening
- CRDC life skills and budgeting classes
- Strong and progressive leadership group at United Way
- HCSI to bring various cultures together
- Food Bank Programs (Backpack, Senior Pack, commodities, food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, new building)
- Salvation Army Shelter
- Meals on Wheels
- CityYouth
- Access to legal services
- Regional hospitals, health education
- Church Health center
- AHEC
- Chamber Workforce staff person

- What can be done to reduce poverty in Jonesboro?
 - Better collaboration between groups who have programs to fight poverty
 - Community one stop for resources
 - Recreation areas that are free of charge. More parks, sidewalks, wheel chair ramps, trails
 - More and stronger neighborhood organizations
 - Job fairs throughout region – utilize churches, libraries, and other outlets
 - Greater access to free education for adults, workforce training, etc.
 - Better utilize Americorps/Vista program
 - Neighborhood relationships with police
 - Tax incentives for companies to hire and train people in poverty
 - Better transition plan for dependency on programs (welfare, housing, food stamps, etc.) to self-sufficiency (People lose benefits when they become employed – no time to get back on feet.)
 - Job opportunities be more open
 - Affordable daycare
 - Address drug issue
 - Court system more friendly to people representing themselves
 - Mental health courts
 - More drug courts
 - Jobs for drug offenders to “prove” themselves
 - Transitional housing with case management (felons, homeless, CYS- aging out, drug)

HEALTHCARE/TAXES GROUP

- What motivated participants to come to meeting regarding reducing poverty?
 - Want to be part of the solution!
 - My experience can help

- To help create opportunity to help others help themselves
 - To learn
 - To help promote and continue with economic development in our community
 - To get our universities involved in the solution.
 - Find out how education impacts a child's future
 - Helping with basic skills/literacy
 - Our problems/obstacles with overcoming poverty
 - Apathy – we wait on others to do the work
 - Let's act, stop talking
 - Out of sight, out of mind
 - Lack of understanding, awareness, sensitivity
 - Turf battles
 - Engaging community impacted in the solution
 - Accountability
- What is currently being done to reduce poverty?
 - CityYouth
 - Other community centers
 - Senior centers
 - HIPPPY programs
 - Churches
 - Overriding theme of conversation: community investment
 - What can be done to reduce poverty in Jonesboro?
 - Neighborhood centers

- Send kids and parents to school together
- Connect program services

EDUCATION GROUP

What can be done to reduce poverty in Jonesboro?

- Drug awareness (prescription drugs)/Senior care
- Instill pride about area/mindset area change, family values
- Building self-esteem, value of working
- Male mentoring program (especially African American)/Female
- Instill the “value of education” in youth
- Develop a parental relationship in education (involvement) – parent, student, teacher
- Drug preventative program (mandatory in schools) – (certified preventionist)
- 2-year colleges get most for equipment, while others do not get enough (Increase money, especially in technology)
- Nutrition – make healthy foods cheaper
- Imbalance of education and experience for jobs
- Equal access to justice
- Equal access to housing
- Financial literacy in schools
- Increase technology in education
- Alleviate fines for rehabilitated prisoners. Give them a second chance
- Fund drug courts. Start at first offense.
- Educate foster children over the age of 18 of the available resources
 - Assessment taken (DHS) – all kids
- Volunteer-force for education system and community

- Increase community involvement
- Prisoner re-entry programs (recidivism)
- Uncover the gift within each child
- Eliminate doctor shopping
- Funding for public drug prevention
- Increase vocational and technical training
- Increase qualified educators
 - Public education after 12+ years
- Educate volunteers on the needs of the community
- Criminal record clearing
- Affordable housing and disability
 - Eliminate governmental dependency (Penalized for doing better)
 - Change antiquated landlord/tenant laws
 - Generational poverty – educate to break through
 - Make opportunities for people to work
 - Disabled but lose benefits due to income
 - Disperse information to churches and area volunteers
 - Better advertisement of available resources

INDIVIDUAL ECONOMIC SUPPORTS

What can be done to reduce poverty in Jonesboro?

- Look at the whole system rather than just parts
- Assess needs before giving money
- Drug prevention is being neglected – no state funds (\$0.50 per person)
- Fund money for prisons but not supporting them – no support for those once released

- Recognize upcoming generations' preparedness and teach them how to live individually
(in trouble with upcoming youth)
- Government upholds their promise of healthcare
- Disability system is not functioning properly by helping those in need
 - Services are too complicated
 - Resources are not known
 - System has lack of respect for individuals
- Why are able bodied individuals not working?
- Take individual assessments in community
 - Motivate people to change lifestyle and give them hope
- Family self-sufficiency programs need more money
- More community involvement
- Utilize established programs
- Additional services for young males
- Establish a trade school through universities
- Centralize programs in one area for easy access – one stop shop
- Give time to get established after new job – food stamps
- Initiatives in the youth and schools (equal amount of time as home)
- Affordable housing that's not substandard
- Adequate healthcare and transportation
- Equal opportunity for all races and background (i.e., Hispanic community)
- Immigration reform
- Establish charitable foundations for profit organizations and corporations
- Access private and hidden grants

- Need programs that makes an individual profitable (interviewing, money management, mentoring, etiquette, resume)
- Receive report on programs and tactics that are working and not working
- Implement new curriculum in K-12
- School financing