

Vision 2020 E-Newsletter

November 2010



The Vision 2020 Campaign is a collaborative effort of the Wisconsin Community Action Program Association (WISCAP), the Wisconsin Council on Children & Families (WCCF), and the Wisconsin Head Start Association.

Welcome to those of you who have recently become part of the Vision 2020 Campaign! And welcome back to each of you that has been a long-time supporter. Help grow this campaign by taking just a minute to forward this e-newsletter to your friends, colleagues, and neighbors and encourage them to join you in becoming part of this perfect vision for Wisconsin.

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1. UPDATED VISION 2020 WEBSITE

We are pleased to let you know that the Vision 2020 website is now “new and improved” with better numbers and information. Additionally, we have some new sections and highlight in mind. Now that the website is up-to-date, we hope that you can use it and promote it.

To that end, we have a request and an announcement.

First, could you send us information about any Vision 2020 events in your area? If you are organizing or participating in an event that is focused on poverty issues, we would love to spread the information. For events, please email [Joanna Beilman-Dulin](mailto:Joanna.Beilman-Dulin@wccf.org) with the event name, website, date, time, and location. If no website exists for your event, some contact information would be helpful as well. We want to keep our [Events Page](#) as full and accurate as possible, but we need your help to do this!

Second, starting today, Vision 2020 will be highlighting one local organization or activity with each newsletter. They will also be highlighted on the Vision 2020 website! How better to strengthen the message and effect of Vision 2020 throughout Wisconsin than by sharing what particular organizations and individuals are doing with others throughout the state? Today’s newsletter features [Project Promise Fox Cities](#), which began in 2007 and recently hosted its second annual Faith to Face Poverty Week, bringing a variety of groups together to focus on and work on poverty issues through the Fox Cities. If you have an idea for a future “Spotlight On” section, please let Joanna know at jbeilman-dulin@wccf.org.

2. SPOTLIGHT ON: Project Promise Fox Cities – “Faith to Face Poverty Week”

What is Project Promise Fox Cities?

Project Promise is a coalition of non-profit organizations, business leaders and service providers with the goal of ending poverty. They 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.

How did Project Promise begin?

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 book entitled, “Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America” by Barbara Ehrenreich. Libraries throughout the Fox Cities participated in a 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 given to provide a deeper understanding about what living in poverty is like, and financial programs 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 continuing education and raise awareness about poverty in the Fox Cities and develop programs to lessen its toll. Project Promise evolved beyond a four-month initiative into a long-term organization.

What does Project Promise look like today?

Today, Project Promise is well-known throughout the Fox Cities, often serving as a resource for and providing guidance to other poverty-oriented groups. Project Promise works to eliminate poverty by building awareness of the causes and conditions of poverty in the Fox Cities, by educating the community about the impact and complexity of poverty and by facilitating collaborative action. A cooperative effort of providers, supporters of social services, businesses, community members and all others who seek to advocate for the needs of people living in poverty in the Fox Cities, Project Promise works to accomplish its goal through the work of its three sub-committees ([Action & Impact, Information & Analysis, and Awareness & Education](#)).

Recently, Project Promise organized its second annual “Faith to Face Poverty Week,” during which faith communities throughout the Fox Valley were encouraged to focus on poverty at the same time as one another. Project Promise is also engaged in a strategic planning initiative to chart its purpose and course of action for the next several years.

Tell me more about the “Faith to Face Poverty Week.”

Project Promise’s “Faith to Face Poverty Week” was the brainchild of several committee members, intended to be a way to coordinate the efforts of local faith communities as they focused on poverty. Recognizing that faith communities already focus quite a lot of attention on poverty issues, Project Promise hoped that a Faith to Face week could be a way to engage these communities that both honored their efforts and increased the impact of those efforts. The hope was that by focusing specifically on poverty issues during the same week as others, the impact of each faith community would be magnified and that awareness about poverty issues would be at the front of people’s minds in a new and stronger way.

How did Project Promise members organize Faith to Face Poverty Week?

Project Promise members reached out to faith communities about participating in whatever way made sense for them. Having developed a [Resource Binder](#) for the week, Project Promise encouraged local faith communities to share the message of poverty in their worship services, to participate in special events such as [a work clothes project](#), and to encourage their own members to participate in one of Project Promise’s poverty simulations.

The Faith to Face subcommittee worked to secure early support from faith leaders throughout the community. With their support, Project Promise mailed letters of information and inquiry to as many local faith organizations as possible. Then, subcommittee members met with interested faith communities individually to keep each faith community as engaged and excited as possible.

Next, Project Promise hosted a Kickoff Event over the summer. The kickoff event was designed to get people excited about and committed to being a part of Faith to Face Poverty Week. While the actual Faith to Face week was a few months later, the kickoff event set the tone for the event and got people investing in making the week a success. This fall, about 35 faith communities participated in Faith to Face week, so it was quite an undertaking!

During Faith to Face week, Project Promise members also devoted significant time and energy to organizing and hosting two [poverty simulations](#). Each simulation was designed to help participants understand what it might be like to live in a low-income family. Dozens of participants were divided into “families.” Each family was tasked with providing basic shelter and necessities, which proved to be an eye-opening challenge for participants.

What was the local response to the Faith to Face Week?

Project Promise’s Faith to Face Poverty Week received media coverage, which brought increased attention to the organization, its work, and the issues of poverty throughout their area.

Take a look at some of the stories:

- [Appleton Post Crescent](#) – event coverage
- [Appleton Post Crescent](#) – organization coverage
- [Fox 11](#)
- [NewsTalk 1150 WHBY](#)

Could a Faith to Face Week be organized in my/our community?

Think you might be interested in organizing a Faith to Face Week in your area, or something like it? Here are some tools that Project Promise used. Perhaps they could work for you!

- [Resource Kit for Faith Communities](#)
- [Letter to Local Faith Community Leaders](#)
- [Faith to Face Poverty Week Save the Date flier](#)
- [Poverty Simulation signup flier](#)

More information can also be found on the [Project Promise Website](#).

What are some things to think about if we want to organize something like this?

A key element to organizing Project Promise’s Faith to Face Poverty Week was having the support of a core group of volunteers, each of whom committed to remain active in ways that made sense for their lives but went which “above and beyond” the average volunteer task. Subcommittee members took time to meet with faith community leaders individually, stay in personal contact with them, work to get media coverage of the week, and ensure that enough people signed up to participate in the poverty simulations.

Project Promise Fox Cities is one of many organizations that are hard at work addressing the issues of poverty throughout Wisconsin. As mentioned earlier, Vision 2020 will be highlighting an organization or activity in each newsletter. If you are interested in having your organization featured in a future “Spotlight On” section, please email jbeilman-dulin@wccf.org.

3. VISION 2020 FACEBOOK PAGE – up and running!

In addition to a recently updated website, Vision 2020 now has its own [Facebook page](#)! We will be using the Facebook to keep Vision 2020 members aware of what is going on around the state, as well as in the state capitol.

We will use the Facebook Page to share events and local groups' work to Vision 2020 supporters across the state. As more and more people "like" the Vision 2020 page, the more people will be tuned into the issues of poverty and aware of action that is taking place to eliminate child poverty in Wisconsin.

Additionally, with a new legislative session about to begin in January, we will send out messages periodically when an important issue is before the Wisconsin state legislature and citizen participation is needed to make a difference. Our state legislators are lobbied every day that they're in Madison, but contact from their constituents is most effective. We hope that the [Vision 2020 Facebook Page](#) can provide information so that citizens can have a voice on the important issues of poverty. All you need to do is keep an eye out for Vision 2020 action alerts. They'll come at key times!

4. WISCONSIN STATE BUDGET – A PRIMER

Speaking of "key times," the newly-elected Wisconsin State Legislature and Governor will soon be working to develop and pass a state budget. While it feels like the election was just yesterday – and it practically was! – it is important to prepare ourselves for the State Budget discussion. Just as was the case with each county's budget, the state budget will have a powerful impact on Wisconsin's children and families. The more active that Vision 2020 supporters can be in the budget process, the stronger the voice that will be heard on child poverty issues.

Because the state budget is so huge and the process seemingly complicated, we wanted to provide a primer for Vision 2020 members so that you can become more familiar with the process. The Wisconsin Budget Project (housed here at WCCF!) recently published an easy-to-read [overview of the budget process](#).

It's true that the state budget process is still a ways away. But the more that Vision 2020 members can convey what is happening on the ground level and how individuals and groups are impacted by state budget decisions, the more of an impact we can have for Wisconsin's children and families in poverty.

5. POVERTY MATTERS CONFERENCE – NOVEMBER 17-18

In just a few short days, the annual [Poverty Matters Conference](#) will be held in Appleton. Previous conferences have been well attended and we have high hopes for this one. Take a moment to consider whether you could get a group of Vision 2020 supporters together to attend. Wisconsin's children and families can use as many rejuvenated and focused people fighting for them as possible!

6. SOME RECENT ARTICLES AND ITEMS OF INTEREST

Last but not least, we want to share some recent articles on the issues of child poverty in America. These pieces have inspired us, and we hope they inspire you as well.

- [Op-Ed by Bishop Gene Robinson](#) – "These young victims, who have no voice in the political process, need someone to stand up for them and for the idea of America. If not you and me, who? If not now, when?"
- [Column by Katrina vanden Heuvel of the Washington Post](#) – "This devastating economic reality has the potential to create new political alliances -- and shape a 21st-century anti-poverty movement. Such a movement is urgently needed because the voices of the poor, of workers and of those struggling to get by are barely heard in the halls of power these days."
- [Article from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#) – "One Campaign Promise Worth Breaking"

7. WCCF Advocate and Lobby For Kids Day is Tuesday, March 29, 2011 – Mark Your Calendars, @ Bethel Lutheran, Downtown Madison, More details to come.

Finally, thank you all for your hard work throughout Wisconsin. With your continued efforts, we can – and we will! – end child poverty in Wisconsin by 2020.

Joanna

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Raising Voices to Make Every Kid Count