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Last Updated: Tuesday, November 6, 2007 10:43 AM CST

Local counties rank high in poverty

BY HEATHER SCHAEFER - DAILY NEWS REGIONAL EDITOR -
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Vision 2020 campaign striving to solve problem

Every child matters and too many youngsters in the Northwoods are living below the poverty level.

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According to numbers provided by the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families (WCCF), 8.6 percent of Oneida County children are living below the federal poverty level (\$20,650 per year for a family of four).

The numbers are even worse in Vilas County, where more than 11 percent of children are impoverished, and in Forest County where a staggering 18 percent of the population under the age of 18 is dangerously poor.

Vicky Selkove, mobilization strategies manager for the WCCF, was in Rhinelander Monday to discuss the Vision 2020 campaign, an effort on the part of WCCF to end child poverty in Wisconsin by the year 2020.

The campaign is a collaborative effort of WCCF, the Wisconsin Community Action Program and Wisconsin Head Start Association.

According to Selkove, the goal of the campaign is to increase awareness of child poverty and its impacts on communities and to develop solutions that address its root causes.

The impact of poverty hits children in many areas, Selkove said. It causes them to need Medicaid or Badgercare and other public assistance programs, it keeps them from receiving proper nutrition which leads them to struggle in school, and in some cases it leaves them without homes.

The fair market rent in Oneida County was \$567 per month in Oneida County and, according to Selkove, 41 percent of renters in Oneida County were unable to afford that monthly payment because they don't have jobs that pay enough.

A person would need to make \$10.90 per hour to afford that monthly rent and jobs that pay that much are hard to find in the northern counties.

Selkove said one of the main goals of the campaign is to encourage policymakers (from city council and county board members to state legislators) to put the

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Headwaters' RAM Crew receives "Hall of Fame" awards
Headwaters' Rest Area Maintenance (RAM) crew has been acknowledged by RFW (Rehabilitation For Wisconsin) for their high standard custodial and maintenance care of the seven waysides they maintain in Vilas, Forest, Lincoln, and Oneida counties. Headwaters' RAM crew has received three "RAM Hall of Fame" awards for their work in maintaining the Vilas and Forest county sites in excellent condition. In addition, they received 100 percent inspection ratings at all seven sites during the months of June, July, and August. [READ MORE >](#)

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Dana earns the Daniel Carter Beard Masonic Scouting Award
Brian Walter Dana was presented the Daniel Carter Beard Masonic Scouter Award by John Tilley, P.M., Area Administrator, representing the Grand Lodge of Wisconsin at a Boy Scout Court of Honor held at the Masonic Lodge in Rhinelander on Oct. 29. [READ MORE >](#)

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eradication of child poverty at the top of their list of priorities.

Selkove says the public often has the perception that is impossible to get the attention of politicians but she said lawmakers have told her it can take as few as ten letters or phone calls from constituents to convince a legislator to take on an issue.

Selkove also said the campaign has a real chance of being successful, if the public gets behind it. Similar campaigns have worked in the past, she said.

From 1963 to 1974 the federal government declared war on poverty and poverty was reduced by 42 percent nationwide, she said.

"What could we accomplish if we translated that to one state?" she asked.

The Vision 2020 campaign is focused on four areas directly linked to economically healthy families: Family-supporting wages, safe and affordable housing, healthcare and quality early-childhood education.

Selkove said the council on children and families wants policymakers to focus on these four areas before a generation of Wisconsin children is lost to poverty.

"As a state we need to say we are not going to let this happen," she said.

Selkove's visit, which included a presentation at the Holiday Inn Monday night, was sponsored by Northwoods Regional Solutions Network, (NRSN). NRSN is the local arm of Wisconsin Women=Prosperity, a non-profit, non-partisan economic development initiative focused on issues affecting women and children.

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