

Aspire Johnson County
May 22, 2019
JC REMC

Welcome- Dana Monson

Steve Jarosinski- Aspire Steering Team Co-Chair

Round robin introduction

Talking about childhood poverty today. This is a big problem all across the county.

Bonnie Pribush- moderator

Tracy Smith- Director of Johnson County WIC for 19 years. Also chair of Maternal Child and Health for partnership, runs Baby and Me Tobacco Free program

Dawn Underwood, LJC alum, founder and director of Johnson County Learning Center, has served 1000 children in 9 years ages 3-5, started early childhood coalition.

Susan Crisafulli- Professor of English at Franklin College. Area coordinator for Dolly Parton Imagination library.

Dr. Cheryl Crane- Professor of sociology at Franklin College, experience in nonprofit leadership, interested in poverty in children and families.

2017- 11.5% of children under age 18 were living in poverty in Johnson County. 2017 36% of school children received free or reduced school lunch. These people are often invisible to us. We are going to hear from the panel about the direct impact of poverty on children. Will start with research and move to personal stories.

Susan- glad you shared the research. For free or reduced lunch, income has to be below \$42,000 for a family of four. That's extreme poverty. 36% families make 42,000 or less, is more accurate. Those families are struggling to make ends meet. Education and poverty are intertwined. Data that we can draw upon to make that conclusion- children living in poverty have lower access to books, books are tied to literacy, and literacy is tied to success. When they can't develop basic literacy skills they tend to stay in poverty. If a child can read proficiently, then that translates to any subject. Kids that don't read proficiently by 4th grade are less likely to graduate from high school, have lower access to health care, and are more likely to be incarcerated. 4th grade is reading to learn, not learning to read. Teachers don't work with them to developing reading skills any more after 4th grade. 68% of 4th graders are below proficient in reading skills, can't make connections to their own life. 40% are below basic- can't use context clues to figure out what's going on in a reading passage. Locally, 36% enter kindergarten without the ability to recognize letters or the sounds they make. They will struggle more in school and also to hit 4th grade mark. Kids that live in poverty don't have access to books. Strong correlation between poverty and access to books. Kids that live in poverty typically have 0 child appropriate books. You find 1 age appropriate book for every 300 children in poverty.

Cheryl Crane- one piece of the puzzle is the impact of poverty on health. If we're not well, learning becomes a lower priority. Effect of poverty is seen in chronic illness, immune system, and health outcomes for long-term health. Asthma, developmental delays, learning disabilities, attention deficits, anxiety, & depression. Wealth=health. Poverty is toxic. Sees strong relationship between wellness and

overall quality of life. Stability, food security- have a buffering effect on children. A safety net can help you. In poverty, the safety net isn't there. Lack of stability starts to wear- toxic stress and poverty. Elevated level of cortisol- related to chronic conditions- asthma, cardiovascular issues, increased visits to the ER. Children with chronic illness impacts attendance to school. Relates to their ability to learn- increases disadvantage. Without a buffering effect, poor health is translated from mother to child with low birth rate, low quality of health, 8-10 years lower life expectancy. Likelihood of being on disability is higher and their working years are shortened. Also, likelihood of injury because of being in more physical careers. Good health is tied to nutrition, housing stability and health care.

Tracy- WIC- Not enough access to food and a variety of food. Junk food is cheap. Sees anemia, lead in soil, nutrition assessments. WIC tests for iron levels in nutrition. Infant mortality, premature births starts with moms. Don't have access to knowledge about good behaviors, good choices, portion sizes. WIC offers a reading nook in their office. Lots of books, stuff from the library- comes to read every Monday there. Also have a support wall with things that help them make better choices. Recently saw an iron level 7, should have been 11.1 and above for a child. Don't know how to navigate finding doctor, or community resources. WIC does an assessment to find out they need a doctor, dental care, learn how to drink from a cup and get off of a bottle. They are in their own cycle. Shouldn't have a 3-year old with a bottle. Gives them a chance to have the same opportunities that we all have.

Dawn-Works with amazing families in survival mode. Foster care, incarcerated parents, homeless families, etc. Kids that she works with (ages 3-5) have been exposed to a lot of trauma. Not feeling safe, hungry, tired, don't know where they are staying next. Fight, flight, or retreat. See lots of anxiety, depression. Children that show up with fleas. All of the families love their children and when they know better, they do better. They might not have transportation, so they use ACCESS or Uber to get their child to preschool. Do home visits, and sees no furniture, maybe just a mattress and a recliner, no crayons, markers, scissors, glue, or books. They haven't had the experience of going to the orchard or a farm, haven't had someone reading to them. 45 million words are heard by age 4 in a professional class family, 22 million words are heard in a working-class family, 13 million words for a child in poverty by age 4. Library has Starling kit that you can check out and see how many words your child is hearing. Also sees families that have a lot of children. 4-year olds that are caring for younger siblings and not getting their needs met. Asking "am I safe" "can I trust you"? When they don't feel safe and loved, they can't learn. Had a graduation last night (100 kids) ask them what they want to be when they grow up. She often hears teacher, fireman, nurse, etc., heard new this year- You tubers, want to be Spiderman, want to be unicorns. Seeing the affects of devices. When she visits, she sees TVs and devices in homes, not books. 90% of the brain is developed between birth and age 5.

Bonnie had coffee with a participant of Bridges Alliance. She lost her home, moved in with her brother. Got a phone call from school that one of her children was reporting that they were afraid to go home. So, she uprooted her family and now is living in a hotel. Has a part-time job and is struggling. Can't afford soccer or transportation for kids to play soccer. 12-year-old was so stressed from the poverty he was feeling in his household, that he attempted suicide.

Look at the larger picture, not just how does it impact child, but the neighborhood, our communities:

Dawn- it affects children and we escape poverty through education. Susan said when children enter kindergarten, it's like the new 1st grade, you are reading by mid-semester. If they haven't had any school, it's a long stressful day. They come in 1 to 1 1/2 years behind their peers and it's hard to catch up. If you don't know how to hold scissors you learn to compensate- behavior, withdrawing, impact on

self-esteem. Feel like money should be spent on early childhood, so they are ready to enter kindergarten ready to learn. Have some high-quality programs here. Want to be able to offer scholarships and attend early childhood programs. Johnson County has 10,000 children (2016) from ages 2-5. 2300 are enrolled in an early childhood program (that is known). Out of 2300 that are in a known program 888 are in a high-quality program. Meaning, teachers are trained, environment is safe and healthy and state is regulating it. 66% of families are working and have children at home. Average cost is \$9000 a year for high quality early childhood program. Takes a great deal of their income to cover that expense. Families want to work but have no place for infants and toddlers to go, let alone full time.

Tracy- WIC- Look into early headstart (age 0-3). Can't go out and get a job if they have little kids at home. Need to find them the resources. Transportation is a challenge in Johnson County. Have to use Uber to get clients to doctor appointments. There is ACCESS and Medicab but you have to preplan for those. Immediate access is important for transportation. Their job is to identify silos of resources to open up communication, but the right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing. Challenges us to build relationships with clients, go above and beyond. When you build trust, people will come back to you. Her job is to find out what we're doing so she can send her clients to us. Also functions as a social worker.

Cheryl- more of societal level and how we're all impacted. Sees numbers moving in the right direction, people moving off of public assistance. Homelessness and housing instability went from 129 to 592 in Johnson county over the last 10 years. Relationship between safe, reliable, place to go outdoors to play. Increase likelihood that they are abused, sexual assault when they are making desperate decisions about where their families are going to sleep at night. Even if those risks aren't present, not knowing where you are going to sleep at night has a tremendous impact. See likelihood that children in poverty will drop out of high school. Increased risk of teen parenting, or incarceration. You can choose to invest in Early Head State with 0-3-year olds, or you can invest in them as adults when you are supporting them when they are incarcerated. Number of CHINs (children in need of services) 7 to 259 increase. Most of the families are working poor. They can't read to their children because they are working 2-3 jobs and not around. Has a snowball effect with instability, lack of education, children grow to become adults. Leads to \$500 billion decrease in productivity, increased crime, and healthcare costs.

Susan- when we investigate the issues with literacy, there is a correlation. 70% of welfare recipients have low literacy skills. 85% of inmates have low literacy skills. Agrees that education offers an opportunity to have a preventative angle to help the future of our society.

If you were queen for a day, what would you like to see nationally or locally that could make a difference?

Susan fully fund preschool education for all children in Indiana. Also have state legislators provide funding for Dolly Parton imagination library. Tennessee and NC receive funding for that program from birth to age 5 (get 60 books). Reduces stress for parents, helps them do better in kindergarten.

Cheryl- in addition to childcare, money for housing. Housing and childcare would go a long way to increase stability. When families move, children have to change schools. Need affordable and safe housing. Working poor families and income stagnation-need increase to wages. Reaching 200% of federal poverty line connects to a decrease in abuse. This would mean an increase of \$1000-\$3000 in annual income. We would see an increase in SAT scores, math and reading scores. =.50 an hour to \$1.44 per hour to more of a livable wage.

Tracey- If she had a superpower, she would want to give people in poverty the same opportunities to excel but without the challenges and barriers. Empower families so they can get back on their feet. WIC may be the only people they see that are providing encouragement. Example- family new to the program. Came from overseas, low iron, no healthcare, left Indiana for California. Didn't know how to get hooked up with WIC services. Called Tracey to get them set up in California. Called again yesterday- needed help with rent in California. Didn't know where to go- don't know what questions to ask, don't know who to call. Empowering them to make the phone calls and ask for services.

Dawn- Working with families in poverty, they are isolated. Families want to feel safe and loved. They serve families and children. Susan mentioned that she would like preschool. On My Way PreK program that the state is working on, but Johnson County hasn't been chosen to offer it. Need businesses invested in early childhood. Make sure programs meet state levels for high quality. Level 4 is highest quality. Level 1 is basic level of health and safety. Have great programs but help them to increase their level of quality. People in early childhood get comfortable and don't see the need to improve. Businesses can offer incentives if people take their children to a high-quality childcare provider.

Bonnie- With people in poverty at Bridges Alliance, what she hears is how rewarded they are to have people around them. They feel looked down upon by others in society for being in poverty. We have to pay for the jail expansion, the results of people in poverty, but we need to put the money upfront to help with education.

Questions:

Steve- so many trillions/ billions of dollars have been invested by government and non-profits, is the problem being addressed? Grassroots problem is family based, generational. Are we really addressing that as society? Are we throwing too much money at this?

Jack- government is set up to be reactive. Can see how we are more political with decisions and being reactive rather than proactive. Jack- Has learned that homeless doesn't mean they're on the street. They could be living in Franklin with grandparents. School has to send a bus to pick them up. Automatic stigma that goes along with poverty- how could they be that way? They might get a better paying job, but then lose childcare. Also, knew of parents in poverty that didn't want their child of free and reduced lunch, wouldn't complete the paperwork needed. So much that goes into it.

No child wants to live in poverty. Want to empower people to get out of generational poverty. Need to understand things have changed, but there is still room for improvement. There will always be poverty. People are working 2-3 jobs, but they can't make headway.

Perry study from Michigan-See years later that for children in poverty that attended a preschool program have higher earnings. More likely to graduate from high school, less teen pregnancy.

In 1965, started the war on poverty, by mid-late 70's poverty rates decrease to lowest levels in last 50 years. In 1980's programs were cut. 1996 welfare reform act did a lot of things that needed to be done. A handful of people were abusing the system, but now have stringent time limit on cash assistance. We see that people cycle on and off assistance, most using no more than 24 months. TANF has a 24-month limit and 64-month lifetime limit. Have no more access after that time. Number of cases enrolling decreasing from welfare also means that they are no longer eligible. Would have been eligible

previously before time limit change. Seeing the effects of that now- now having to use community based, non-profit resources to address needs.

Natalie- we don't connect our programs. Boys and Girls club families, 26% make less than \$11,000 per year. We need to figure out as a non-profit programs; we're not using each other. Encouraging families to use the wonderful programs that we have.

Bev Martin- Transportation issues are dire in this county.

Karri- Is there a best resource for Johnson County to direct people to that are in need? How much high-quality early childhood education do we have?

Resources- you know about WIC, Bridges Alliance, join groups like Aspire to learn more. She needs to know more about all of us, so she can refer her clients. The best thing is 211. Also, United Way Helpline-tons of resources, or call WIC. The helpline is a community directory for social services. Johnson County library has a list of resources: <https://www.pageafterpage.org/basic-needs-assistance> . ELAC- early learning advisory committee. Dawn attends their monthly meeting; has 2017-18 data for Johnson County. Coalition would love more people to get involved.

Bonnie- if you are skeptical, we want to talk to you. Thank you to our panel and to Dana and Jennifer for bringing this topic to you.

Why does JCDC care about this? To make Johnson County a better place to live, work and play. These kids that Dawn sees, they are the future. They are leading the way, taking care of us. We need to do these things now. Dana gives Ron West credit that he recognizes that we need to do something for prevention or we're never going to have a big enough jail.

ACEs (adverse childhood experiences) impact health long term. Dana's challenge is to learn how we can help and where can they go. Don't forget about the resources of the public library.

Carmen- in the process of doing a survey for Johnson County trails. Need public input- one more meeting in Trafalgar tomorrow. Link on Aspire website: www.aspirejohnsoncounty.org/explore-johnson-county-trails . Looking at macro level on how we connect our communities and popular destinations. Any input, feedback, please email Dana or Carmen and complete survey.

Eric-thanks to the panel. We all have family lives and business, great reminder that we can help our community. Last month, talked about the library and expansion. It's all connected. If we didn't have Aspire, we wouldn't be talking about Trails for our county. Invite friends to attend and come back next month to learn more.