

October 28, 2009

Loveland poverty rate detailed, discussed

Statistics from 2008 American Community Survey show 45 percent increase in poverty

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Despite national news reports trumpeting an improving economy, employees at Loveland's House of Neighborly Service know otherwise.

"This time last year is when it really started," Glorie Magrum, executive director at House of Neighborly Service, said about a poor local economy and increased demand for services from her agency. "Now, this year it's even higher than last year ... Even though the news may be wonderful — 'We're really coming out of this thing' — we're not."

The resource center has seen a 114 percent increase in emergency shelter requests between September 2008 and September 2009.

"There's the loss of jobs, which has put them (applicants) in a place where they're losing their homes, and they're in a homeless position," said Sheri Herndon, assistant director of House of Neighborly Service. "People who used to make a better wage are now working at the Taco Bell or the outlet mall. So, they can't afford either their rent or their mortgage."

On Tuesday, members of the Loveland nonprofit community and officials from the United Way of Larimer County's Pathways Past Poverty campaign gathered to discuss issues of poverty in the community and statistics released through the 2008 American Community Survey.

Although, the statistics show an increase in poverty throughout Loveland and Larimer County, many residents don't believe that a high level of poverty does exist, said Marija Weeden-Osborn, the Pathways Past Poverty coordinator.

"Our No. 1 problem is people from Larimer County and people from Loveland don't believe it's an issue," Weeden-Osborn said. "That's the thing we keep running up against. People keep telling us, 'I don't see it, I don't believe it's really there.'"

Pathways Past Poverty is an initiative started in 2007 in response to startling 2006 poverty numbers.

The 2008 American Community Survey released Tuesday shows the overall poverty rate in Loveland has increased 45.6 percent since the 2000 census.

Weeden-Osborn pointed out that because the numbers were recorded in 2008, the statistics are probably higher today.

"A lot of stuff has hit us since then," she said. "Next year, our numbers are going to look a lot worse than they look right now."

From June 2008 to June 2009 United Way of Larimer County's Pathways Past Poverty has seen a 21 percent increase in community kitchen clients, and a 54 percent increase in food stamp applications across Larimer County.

Pathways Past Poverty has worked with the community in establishing 12 goals, which Weeden-Osborn grouped into three different areas.

The first addresses foundational needs including: access to childcare, reliable transportation, affordable health care and affordable stable housing.

"It's really hard to (achieve) self sufficiency and be stable if you don't have these basic foundational things," she said.

The second area is to support economic opportunity and job training.

"Obviously if you're not making money, it's really hard to transition out of poverty," Weeden-Osborn said. "If you don't have some form of income, you're not able to grow that income."

The last area is to prevent poverty at its early stages by educating children so they don't end up in poverty as an adult, she said.

Several community groups also are involved in increasing financial literacy in Larimer County, and giving residents tips on ways to manage their money better, Weeden-Osborn said.

In addition, she encouraged community members to volunteer. Opportunities to volunteer are listed on Pathways Past Poverty's Web site, www.pathwayspastpoverty.org.

"Really do volunteer," Weeden-Osborn said. "A lot of agencies are in need of help right now because their budgets have gone down. Agencies are relying more and more on volunteers."

Additional Facts

Pathways Past Poverty

The 2008 American Community Survey released Tuesday shows the overall poverty rate in Loveland has increased 45.6 percent since the 2000 census.

Following is a breakdown of the averages from 2006 to 2008:

- The number of children in poverty has increased 98.7 percent.

In 2000, 936 children were recorded in poverty, and from 2006 to 2008 that figured nearly doubled to 1,860.

- The amount of people in poverty rose 81 percent. In 2000, 2,850 people were in poverty and between 2006 and 2008, 5,159 people were recorded in poverty.

- Single-parent households went up to 61.2 percent.

In 2000, 1,526 single-parent households were recorded, and between 2006 and 2008 that number rose to 2,460.

- The number of Loveland seniors in poverty went up 14 percent.

There were 308 seniors in poverty in 2000, and 351 seniors living in poverty from 2006 to 2008.

- The median household income also dropped 11.1 percent.

In 2000, the average income was about \$61,000, compared to an average of about 55,000 between 2006 and 2008.