

Who's Doing What in Iowa



When the Child and Family Policy Center received a two-year grant from the Northwest Area Foundation to broaden and deepen the dialogue and public awareness on poverty and poverty reduction strategies in Iowa, we knew that a key element to the success of this work was to tap into individual expertise and the many organizations in Iowa already at work to confront the dilemmas of poverty. We were heartened to find numerous efforts in place throughout the state tackling the tough issues around poverty with the goal of helping Iowa families succeed. We want to share with you "who's doing what" in Iowa and invite you to let us know of any new or on-going poverty initiatives that should be added to this list. Contact Tiffany Smith at 515-280-9027 or tiffany@cfpciowa.org.

Community Dialogues and Action Around Poverty

Iowa State University has a Northwest Area Foundation Horizons grant. The goal of the grant is to build leadership skills in rural communities with a population under 5,000 to reduce poverty. **Study Circles** and a community leadership program are used to explore effective strategies to reduce poverty. For more details contact Cindy Fletcher at 515-294-8521.

Frank Spillers with **Global Horizons** will be hosting three community dialogues in southwest Iowa using the **National Issues Forums Institutes' 'Making Ends Meet' discussion guide**. The NIFI developed this guide in collaboration with the Kettering Foundation. Contact Frank for more information 712-254-1645.

The **United Methodist Conference Center** is planning regional forums to focus on **children in poverty**. For more details contact Inez Dawes at 515-283-1991.

The 18 **community action agencies** serving all 99 counties in Iowa are implementing a

statewide pilot project called **Developmental Assessment and Resolution Program (DARP)**. The goal of the program is to improve low-income families' utility payment history and assist families in maintaining uninterrupted utility service. DARP will serve 2,500 families during the year long pilot project. Community Action Agencies also offer the **Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)**. For more information contact Lana Ross at 515-283-4525.

Making Work Pay

Working Families Win is a project of the Americans for Democratic Action to focus attention on economic "pocketbook" issues (**fair wages, job security, health care**) and to build support among Iowa's working families for a new direction in the nation's policies and politics. Check out www.wfwin.org. WFW promotes **grassroots neighbor-to-neighbor strategies** (house meetings, town hall gatherings, meetings with candidates) to hold elected officials and candidates accountable on the issues most important to working families. Contact

David Leshtz at 319-621-4205 or dleshtz@ia.net for more information.

Making Connections Des Moines, Iowa Public Television and Mercy College of Health Sciences hosted a premier screening and discussion centered on the documentary "**Waging a Living: Opportunities for Action**" on August 29 at Mercy College. The Des Moines Perspectives video, in its final form and featuring a total of four stories, will be available for use by any interested groups in October. Contact Ellen Wonderlin at 515-282-3945 for further details.

The mission of the **Iowa Policy Project** is to promote public policy that fosters economic opportunity while safeguarding the health and well-being of Iowa's people and the environment. IPP has numerous articles regarding **minimum wage and health coverage**. Visit their website at www.iowapolicyproject.org.

Providing Work Supports

Early Childhood Iowa's vision statement is that every child beginning at birth will be healthy and successful. ECI has five result areas for Iowa's youngest children: healthy children, children ready to succeed in school, safe and supportive communities, secure and nurturing families and secure and nurturing early care and education environments. For more information visit their website www.earlychildhoodiowa.org.

AFSCME Iowa's Child Care Providers Together (CCPT) is the only Union in Iowa

for Child Development Home providers; the providers that voluntarily meet health, safety, and training standards. CCPT is in the process of a statewide membership drive. They are also electing a statewide bargaining team to meet with the Department of Human Services. Objective: To help improve the quality of Iowa's child care and early education as it pertains to provider issues and how those issues impact the services provided to working (or training) families. Contact CCPT at AFSCME Iowa 515-246-2659, 1-800-372-6054 ext. 19 or ccpt@afscmeiowa.org.

Beyond Welfare (BW) is an organization committed to building communities of caring across socio-economic class, race, ability, age, gender, life experiences and other "differences" so that everyone has enough "money, friends and meaning." For more information about BW community engagement processes and the weekly Community Leadership Team gatherings, please contact Lois J. Smidt, Co-director: email beyondwelfare@midiowa.net or Cindy J. Weigel, Co-director: email bwindy@midiowa.net phone: 515-292-5992.

Covering Kids and Families is a statewide collaborative effort of state and local community-based agencies, child advocate groups and professional organizations designed to increase access to **health care for children**. Contact Beth Jones at 515-242-6382 for more information.

The **Off to a Good Start Coalition for Children's Healthy Development** consists of a broad group of members and organizations in Iowa. The purpose of the Coalition is to promote evidence-based **public policy and funding** at the state and federal level that improve children's healthy development (prenatal through age five) through **Medicaid, hawk-i and private insurance**, starting with primary health care and linking with other supports and services. Contact Carrie Fitzgerald at 515-280-9027 for more information.

Investing in Education, Skill Development and Entrepreneurship

Jason Friedman is a nationally recognized expert on **entrepreneurship development** and **asset development** programs for underserved populations. He works across the US to help non-profits improve performance, outcomes and sustainability. For more information you can contact Jason at 319-341-3556.

Iowa Works Campaign, with support from Jason Walsh of the Workforce Alliance, is a nonpartisan coalition of diverse organizations seeking consensus solutions to Iowa's economic challenges that benefit workers, businesses and communities. The Iowa Works Campaign believes that Iowa needs an educated and skilled workforce in order to ensure its economic success and the success of Iowa families. For more information call Jason Walsh 608-310-9508 or email him jasonw@workforcealliance.org.

Welcoming New Workers

The University of Iowa – School of Social Work received a disproportionate minority confinement four-year grant from **Northwest Area Foundation** focusing on the Latino population in rural communities, specifically Marshalltown. Issues such as immigration policy, educational opportunities, worker's rights and employer cultural competency will be targeted. A goal of the grant is to organize communities in rural environments and build community capacity. Contact Diane Finnerty at 319-335-4933 for more information.

Iowa Legal Aid offers outreach on the **EITC** to people using English as a second language. They also provide community legal education and website resources. For more information contact Pat McClintock at 515-243-2151.

Promoting Savings and Addressing Debt

The **Coalition Against Abusive Lending** is a broad-based coalition of housing, human service, civic, church and labor groups working to curb abusive lending practices in Iowa. One of the Coalition's purposes is to increase public awareness and public education on **predatory lending practices**, such as payday, car title and tax refund anticipation loans, as well as, predatory home mortgages. For more information contact Victor Elias at 515-280-9027.

ISED Ventures (Iowans for Social and Economic Development) helps Iowans increase income and acquire assets through

job placement in construction trades and health care, small business training and technical assistance, access to business capital, **financial education**, and savings through a **matched savings program** (Individual Development Accounts). ISED Ventures also provides **free income tax preparation** assistance. For more information, visit www.isedventures.org or call Debra Carr at 515-283-0940.

Earned Income Tax Credit Campaigns exist in 33 Iowa counties for anyone in the state to access. These allow for **free tax preparation with a focus on earned income tax credit** for low-to-moderate income individuals and families. Sites will be open in mid-January. For more information contact Mary Achelpohl or Jay Kerrigan at 515-283-0940.

General Child and Family Advocacy

Every Child Counts (ECC) is building a **grassroots network** of powerful advocates to speak out on important child and family issues. ECC is focusing on **early learning/school readiness, child safety & well being and family economic self sufficiency**. ECC provides their members with newsletters, policy statements, legislative updates, resource materials and advocacy training and tools. For more information or to join the network, visit www.everychildcountsiowa.org.

United Way of Central Iowa is a broad-based human service agency that is currently forming a statewide policy coalition representing 32 United Ways

across the state. Their statewide policy agenda will be formalized in December with a likely component focusing on supports for the low-wage working families. Contact Nicole Beaman, Vice President for Community Impact for United Way of Central Iowa, at 515-246-6500.

The **Every Child Matters Education Fund** provides opportunities for focusing public attention on important children's issues including the **prevention of child abuse and neglect, improving the health of low-income children**, and finding solutions in child care, early childhood education, after-school programs, and **responsible decisions on federal budget and tax issues**. Visit their website: www.everychildmatters.org.