



Alliance Partners

Adult Learning Centres:
Grey Bruce Georgian

Bluewater District School
Board

Bruce County

Bruce Grey Child and
Family Services

Bruce Grey Catholic
District School Board

Bruce Peninsula Associa-
tion for Community
Living

Community Living Owen
Sound and District

Grey Bruce Health Unit

Grey County

Keystone Child, Youth
and Family Services

Kids & Us Community
Childcare and Family
Education Centres

Owen Sound and Area
Family YMCA

Regional Support Associ-
ate

Thames Valley Children's
Centre

The Women's Centre

United Way of Bruce-
Grey

It's Our Business Too!

JULY 2013

Poverty Forum 2013

The May 16th Poverty Forum held at the CAW Family Education Centre in Port Elgin was hosted by the Grey Bruce Children's Alliance. The Forum deepened our discussion about how we can work together to better support children and families living in poverty across Grey and Bruce Counties.

The Grey Bruce Children's Alliance works with children and families living in poverty. The mandate of the Alliance is to build on the collaboration between providers of children's services in Grey Bruce, improve the interactions between our various organizations; and to provide an integrated system of supports for children, youth and their families.

The issues related to poverty are very complex and require action at multiple levels to address them effectively.

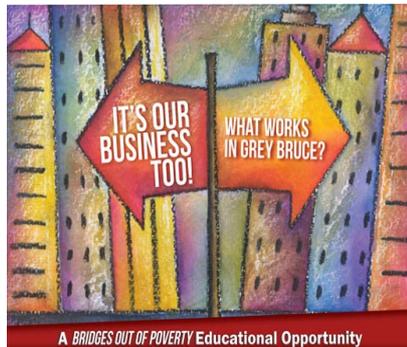
We know that the family plays the most influential role on a child's development.

We know that children in low income households experience a higher risk of health problems throughout their life-spans. These patterns can also be passed on to the next generations.

We know that socio-economic factors influence the safety of the environments children and youth grow and play in, particularly adequate and affordable housing.

It can be frustrating for families living in poverty to get the help they need. And challenging for the people in organizations and employers that work with these families to effectively support them.

Lori Wilder, Co-Chair Grey Bruce Children's Alliance and Superintendent, Bluewater District School Board.



Who was there?

The Poverty Forum brought together 177 people from the business, political, social/health, education sectors including employment agencies First Nations communities and poverty advocates. Participants came from across Grey, Bruce, Simcoe

and Perth Counties members including from 2 First Nations.

Getting Ahead graduates from Grey County shared their lived experience. Employment agencies such as VPI Inc, YMCA Employment Centre and Saugen First

Nations Employment Centre were also there. Educators across 4 counties attended including Georgian and Conestoga Colleges.

For a copy of the Network List contact Jill Umbach, 519-377-9406.

Jill.umbach@gmail.com



Gayle Montgomery
Circles® Coordinator
County of Lambton
Social Services Division.

Bridging Business and Social Services in Lambton County

Gayle Montgomery gave us a reality check on living in poverty. In Canada, the Low Income Measure for a family of 4 is \$24,745 but the OW Maximum Rate is \$22,137. Welfare rates of 22.6% were slashed 25 years ago. In 1990, families received more funding than they do today. Inadequate to cover basic needs. The system does not “make sense”. 86-90% of single parents are women and women make 85 cents to a man’s dollar.

Based on Ruby Payne’s analysis of poverty Gayle explained there are ‘hidden rules’ which distinguish the thinking, values and behaviours of people in poverty from those who are middle class or wealthy. And because most schools and social services staff come from middle-class backgrounds, it makes it difficult for them to relate with students who live in poverty.

So how do we affect change?

Circles is a supportive, intentional, reciprocal, befriending relationship comprised of a Circle Leader, a family working to get out of poverty, and 2-4 community Allies, middle class people who are willing to befriend the family and support their way out of poverty.

Martine Creasor, Circles Caseworker presented the Lambton County models. The intensive college-based program is a 2 year commitment with 50-60 people supporting 10 Circle Leaders. The college supports the program through child-care and food services; and mentors. The church-based program has 15 families involved and the church provides meals.

Overall, a lot of resources go into supporting the program to bring together families and Allies/mentors together on a weekly basis.

A Guiding Coalition exists to provide the inspiration, support, planning and leadership necessary for Circles to

be successful. It is a potent force for changing the mindset of the community and addressing issues that require systemic change.

The program has a slow intake – it may take 2-3 years for families to reach self-sufficiency. 32% of leaders have graduated through the Circles initiative.

Cindy Dubois, Lambton County Human Resources Administration, spoke of her agencies experience of putting resources and assets in place to stabilize workers. People with criminal records or prior addictions need to be given “that one chance” and in her experience this has resulted in great employees who are dependable, loyal and trying their hardest.

A good relationship at work can contribute to people becoming positive and contributing members of their community. The business community has a strong role to play in changing lives.

“The only future story I was told was that I should get married and not go to school. I wanted my girls to have a [different] future story.”

- Clare Tolmie

**Clare Tolmie,
Getting Ahead
Program Graduate**



Getting Ahead Graduates Speaking Out

The Getting Ahead program is part of the Bridges out of Poverty initiative in Grey County.

This forward thinking, landmark project consists of a 15 session program designed to help people create their own path for making a stable, secure life for themselves and their family.

Over 100 people have graduated from the local program and more sessions are planned.

The program is NOT about saving or fixing anyone. It is not about judging lifestyle or choices. It is a partnership based on mutual respect with people to address poverty in a systematic way.

Clare Tolmie was one of my graduates who shared her journey. She spoke about her struggles to leave an abusive marriage, stand on her own and gain the respect of her daughters.

In Getting Ahead participants are considered investiga-

tors: they do the work to discover the solutions, they are in charge of their own change and from there they can create a plan for their future.

Clare has graduated from the program and is a co-facilitator. She encouraged her daughter to take the program and she is now enrolled in college going into her second year. Clare herself is enjoying her new outlook on life and is looking forward to what her future will bring.

Business Leadership



Members of the business community participated in the day.

Bert Loopstra spoke of the need to educate more members of the business community “one-by-one” and build closer relations.

Pier Donnini, Owner of Queen’s Bar & Grill in Port Elgin and Presi-

Bert Loopstra, Owen Sound Chamber of Commerce and Pier Donnini

dent of the Rotary Club of Port Elgin challenged other business owners to come forward and taken action in their own communities.

Saugeen Shores is one of the richest communities in Ontario but poverty still exists.

The Saugeen Shores Help and Resources Planning Partnership. (SSHARPP) has been able to build a lot of social capital around the table to achieve action.

They have coordinated meals and food distribution in the community, run kitchen gardens, engaged with the Town planners on decisions impacting people living in poverty and held fundraisers.

Donnini coordinated over 80 volunteers to host a free Christmas dinner and hosted a Changing Courses poverty awareness dinner.

SSHARPP is now recognized as a focus group for the Town if they are looking at poverty-related issues. Coordination gives SSHARPP an ability to analyze needs and take action.

Ask for “our views”.
Make connections.
Engage us in community groups and Boards of Directors.

- Getting Ahead graduates

Recommendations from participants

Working Bridges Model in Grey Bruce

Pilot a “Working Bridges” model with existing Employers’ Networks through YMCA Employment Centre, VPI Inc., LEADS and/or Saugeen First Nations Employment Centre.— agencies that have developed relationships with job employers.

Hold a series of “free” ongoing Bridges Out of Poverty awareness sessions to small groups from the business community in partnership with business networks such as BNI, Chambers of Commerce, Downtown Improvement Areas, Business Enterprise Centres, Grey Bruce Regional Economic Development Partnership.

Educating Bridges Model

Create an Education Support Network (ALC, Quill, Georgian College, etc) for Getting Ahead graduates attending schools.

Provide Bridges Out of Poverty training to all members of Education Support Network and teachers/students.

Offer Getting Ahead program to high school/college students.

Partner with School Board to introduce Bridges to students.

Offer Circles in our school community.

Getting Ahead/Community Voices Working Group (s)

Listen to the graduates speak and validate the benefits of the program.

Have people living in poverty involved in the process of: education to the middle class about what it looks like to live in poverty, education to educators and education to employers.

Do more planning focused on the clients with clients. Make resources/tools available that are more ‘client centered’

Provide more support in the transition from poverty to the middle class. Provide more Getting Ahead groups

Expand the Circles model to our community. Keep previous grads at hand so they can help many more people in that aspect.

Bridges Out of Poverty Training

Offer Bridges Out of Poverty Training to: healthcare staff, First Nations staff/people, local charitable foundations like Lions, Kinsmen, Rotary, etc., front line workers working with unemployed individuals, women’s centre staff and clients, service providers within the community, correction workers, politicians/policy makers and middle class/wealthy people.

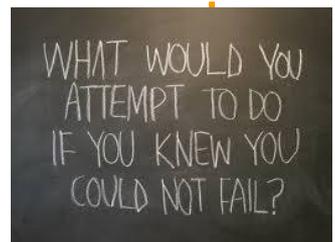
Hold more Poverty Forums in local towns so they are accessible.

Resources

Create more advertising for Getting Ahead and Bridges Out of Poverty.

Provide access to resource materials through print, social media.

Let the community know about this program so we can be better educated.





GET INVOLVED LOCALLY

To join or learn more about the
Grey Bruce Children's Alliance
and/or the
Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force
please contact:

Jill Umbach

Phone: 519-377-9406

E-mail: jil.umbach@gmail.com

Join the Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force

The Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force came together in July 2012 to initially promote coordination and cooperation amongst agencies in Owen Sound. It has expanded its membership to include 28 agencies/groups across Bruce and Grey Counties.

The Task Force focuses on building partnerships with key community stakeholders and networks; working together to eliminate poverty, and enhancing our common understanding of poverty issues through solution-based research, knowledge development and information sharing.

Currently, the Poverty Task Force meets monthly, alternatively between Bruce and Grey Counties hosted by Bruce or Grey County. 4 new Action Groups have been formed to provide opportunities for community stakeholders to become involved in poverty elimination efforts around specific sectors: Housing, Income Security, Food Security and Transportation.

Resources

LOCAL REPORTS

Two reports were circulated at the Poverty Forum.

For an electronic copy contact of **Grey Bruce Children's Alliance Annual Report Card 2010** contact Jill Umbach at jill.umbach@gmail.com.

For a copy of **Mapping Opportunities for Healthy Eating and Healthy Physical Activity in Grey-Bruce**, Spring 2012, contact the Grey Bruce Health Unit.

Check out The Agenda's video on rural poverty in Grey Bruce:

<http://theagenda.tv.org/blog/agenda-blogs/grey-bruce-poverty-outside-city>

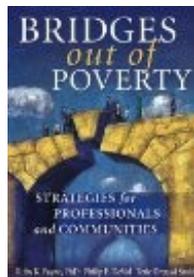
BRIDGES OUT OF POVERTY

For information on Bridges Out of Poverty approach, methodology, seminars and online training go to:

www.bridgesoutofpoverty.com/

A catalogue of available books and resource material is also available.

You may find the catalogue online at: www.ahaprocess.com/files/ahaCatalog.pdf



Or you may purchase referenced Bridges Out of Poverty books on Amazon at:

<http://amzn.to/164VzHw>

Scott Miller's book **Until It's Gone: Ending Poverty in Our Nation, in Our Lifetime** also available from Amazon at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/1934583014>

To keep in touch with what is happening with Bridges Out Of Poverty you may also go to their facebook site:

<https://www.facebook.com/bridgesoutofpoverty?fref=ts>

For more information on activities in Lambton County and the Circles program go to:

www.lambtoncircles.com