

Hamilton County Leadership Academy
Class of 2002

The Hidden Need

Project Team:
John Krom, Liz Tate & Sue Westermeier

"The Hidden Need"

Narrator: Rev. Rick Bell
Calvary Baptist Church
Noblesville

Many Hamilton County residents enjoy a quality of life that is reflective of what most Americans view as "The American Dream." The perception is that for all Hamilton County residents it is a world of plenty. This perception while wonderful, disguises the needs of those in our community who are less fortunate than the majority of Hamilton County residents. These residents are "hidden" from most of the community.

Much as been said about Hamilton County's growth and it's distinction of being the fastest growing county in the nation. Although this is true, most of Hamilton County is still rural, in spite of the economic growth of the past 10 years. With this tremendous growth those who struggle to obtain those basic of needs, food, clothing and shelter become more hidden to the community at large.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau in the year 2000, the population of Hamilton County was 182,740. 3.9% of this population lives below the poverty line or 7,126 individuals. Of the entire population, 32% is under 18 years of age. When you look at the percentages, they do not reflect high numbers of poverty as compared to state statistics, but what these statistics cannot show are the conditions in which some of our residents are coping daily to survive.

We do not have to look far to see examples of individuals and families in need of assistance. One surprising example is a family with children having to sleep under a bridge is found and assisted by an organization. Although this is the saddest example of a family coping with the loss of a job or a medical crisis, most of the time you would not be aware that a family or an individual is struggling to survive. It could be the lady standing next to you in the grocery store, or your neighbor down the street. The misconceptions are numerous.

Individuals and families come to Hamilton County because of our notoriety of being the most affluent and fastest growing county in the nation. The lure of a better life is what brings them here. However a new set of challenges face them once they settle here.

In 2001¹, 2500 families sought assistance from one our county's food pantries. These are some of the same families that seek medical assistance from the free clinics in our county. We are fortunate to have organizations both charitable and civic addressing these needs, however more attention needs to be paid to this area of our community.

We hope that you have a better understanding how individuals and families are dealing with poverty issues in Hamilton County. Some attention should be given to the issues

¹ According to statistics from Third Phase and Gleaner's Food Bank of Indiana.

Hamilton County Leadership Academy
Project Report
December 6, 2001

Poverty Awareness

Project team: Sue Westermeier, John Krom, and Liz Tate

Purpose of project: To create a tool that can be used to make the public aware of the poverty that exists in our county.

Project concept: 12 –16 minute video. Working title, “The Hidden Need”. This video and accompanying presentation script will be created so that various charitable organizations in our county can adapt it to their mission.

We plan to use local sources for production and filming of this video. A cross-section of families and individuals in the county will be interviewed. Local agency representatives will also be interviewed.

We have individual assignments, and have scheduled research meetings with key contacts in the county. Next meeting for project team, January date to be determined later.

Hamilton County Leadership Academy
Project Report
April 11, 2002

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Filming has taken place. Interviews took place in March and footage of these interviews is currently being edited. Approximately 14 agencies were interviewed. From these interviews, clients of the various agencies agreed to go on camera to tell their stories.

Our film crew consists of 5 students from Noblesville High School. These students are in the video production class at school. They took time out of their weekends to film the interviews and also stock footage that we will use in the video. They have been extremely helpful in putting this project together.

Attached Video