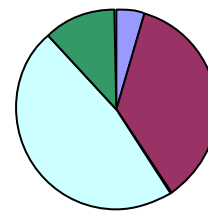


Community Partnership of the Ozarks, Inc.

Established: 1995



Caring Communities Investment



Local Inv	5%
In-Kind	26%
Participant Fee	
Other, State, Fed	62%
Caring Comm	7%

FY10 Result Achievement: Social Work Initiative

Crisis Intervention/Family Support in Tough Economic Times

September 2010

Community Profile:

Community Partnership of the Ozarks is located in the City of Springfield. Although the city's population currently stands at 151,823, its economic impact influences 27 counties and over 936,000 individuals. While the City of Springfield and Greene County serve as the geographic base of our service area, our programming efforts reach 20 other counties in Southwest Missouri.

Community Partnership of the Ozarks is governed by a 29-member Board of Directors, which is comprised of representatives from local government, the faith and education community, local businesses, civic organizations, the media, and other non-profit organizations. We also have the Ozarks Fighting Back Advisory Board, which oversees our alcohol, drug and tobacco prevention services, and a talented and committed staff and volunteers that work to facilitate and implement our tremendous diversity of programming and collaborative efforts.

Major Collaborative Accomplishment:

In an ideal world, every family would be stable and supportive, and every child would be happy at home and at school. In reality, many children and families in our community face daunting challenges. Single parents struggle to raise kids while working. Families live paycheck to paycheck, facing eviction and homelessness due to unemployment or other economic issues. Children fall behind in school and act out in response to things they face in their everyday lives. It is during these tough times that our social work initiative becomes increasingly important.

We work with 22 Title I Caring Communities schools and the community to help children and families cope with issues that arise at school, at home, and at work. Serving as a liaison between the school, the family and community agencies, we refer and help families access medical, mental health, and social services.

Last year, 489 families were served through our social work initiative, with a total of 1,300 family contacts, and 478 referrals were made to community agencies. We helped families attain or maintain housing through rent and utility assistance, and also walked many families through the process of applying for and obtaining emergency shelter, food, and clothing. Our social workers are not only able provide support during times of crises, but are often able to help when no one else can. This allows them to build trusting relationships with families that often have nowhere else to turn.

As a result of the high volume of requests in our community, we established an emergency fund. Unfortunately, due to the economic downturn and the increase in the number of families who found themselves asking for help for the first time, our emergency fund was not enough to meet the demand for help. In an effort to address the overwhelming need, we wrote for and received a Missouri Housing Trust Fund grant of \$21,175 to provide emergency rent and utility assistance for families in crisis. Through this project and our emergency fund, we helped 52 families avoid homelessness and attain a stronger sense of stability.

Supporting at-risk students is another important part of our social work initiative. This includes the development of the Lunch Buddy and other mentoring programs, attendance initiatives, and after-school clubs. In addition, we provide practicum supervision for social work students from local universities. Last year, 8 interns gave over 3,650 hours of service working with children and families. They facilitated 22 skill-building groups that served 170 students. Group topics included self-esteem, health & hygiene, developing friendships, and making good choices. They also mentored 52 individual students, providing them with support, encouragement and time to connect with a caring adult.

Funded through a grant from St. John's Force for Good, The Hope Project placed two social work interns at Boyd Elementary School to work directly with students and families residing in an area homeless shelter. The interns met one-on-one with the students to help them cope with the unique stress that comes with homelessness. They also worked closely with our Early Childhood Division to provide ongoing parent education and support to parents engaged in the project. Over two years, 250 adults and children from 93 families participated.

Collaboration is key to networking and leveraging resources to support the needs of families, as well as to providing the most efficient assistance possible – and we certainly could not do it without all of our community partners!

Collaborative Partners:

Missouri State University	Springfield Public Schools
Evangel University	Local Businesses
Chase Card Services	Willard Public Schools
Local Churches	The Kitchen Inc.