

Community Focus



*Helping philanthropists meet
community needs.*



La Crosse County Human Services

Jerry Huber, director of Human Services states that the public system, in dealing with poverty is reactive. In fact, for someone to qualify for services, one of the 3 D's – diagnosis, disability, or deficit must be proven. The largest issue for individuals entering the public system is poverty; 80% of child welfare cases deal with families living in poverty.

La Crosse County has the fastest growing rate of poverty in the State. To counteract this, the county is involved with the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families which has a goal to eliminate poverty by 2020. The County Poverty Task Force was also formed; currently key leaders meet quarterly around four main issues related to poverty in La Crosse County:

- ◆ Education – young people graduating high school
- ◆ Safe, affordable housing
- ◆ Employment – livable wage jobs
- ◆ Health care – a lot of headway has been made but other programs have been cut because of health care expansion.

There are many area programs that assist people in poverty; some are highlighted here, others may be found on the [“Supported Agencies”](#) page on the [La Crosse Community Foundation’s website](#).

A Place of Grace

- ◆ This Catholic Worker House started on December 24, 1996 as a house of hospitality offering human dignity and advocacy done with a joyful spirit.
- ◆ Hosts lunch on Tuesdays and Wednesdays and offers laundry, food pantry, hygiene products, etc.
- ◆ A social worker is available from 2-4 p.m. on Thursdays to help people connect with services

St. Clare Health Mission

- ◆ A free clinic started by Sister Leclare Beres in 1993 and supported by Gundersen Lutheran and Franciscan Skemp
- ◆ Basic medical care for people who have no access to health care.
- ◆ This is a volunteer organization, there are over 250 doctors, nurses, pharmacists, social workers, and volunteers serving 5,000 patients per year.
- ◆ Tuesday and Thursday is a walk in clinic, and Wednesday is a chronic care clinic for individuals with chronic health issues such as diabetes or heart disease

Our Savior's Lutheran Church (Come for Supper and Women's Clothes Closet)

- ◆ The Come for Supper program started in 1996 and provides supper for 250-300 people. every Tuesday evening.
- ◆ The Women's Clothes Closet offers women free clothing so they may interview for jobs or get appropriate clothing for work or school. It is open Mondays from 10-3:30, Tuesday 2-7:30, and Saturday 11-4



Habitat for Humanity



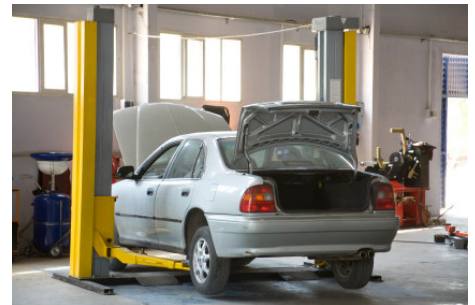
- ◆ Has been in the area since 1992 building "simple, decent, and affordable" homes in partnership with low income families
- ◆ Goal is to eliminate poverty housing – Habitat operates in 200 countries and has moved 1 million people from poverty housing
- ◆ Qualified families provide 350 hours of sweat equity into their home. They purchase the home with a 0% down 30 year mortgage and are responsible for taxes and insurance. Families also receive credit counseling and learn home maintenance skills

Coulecap

- ◆ Coulecap formed in the 1960s to fight poverty and help families achieve self-sufficiency
- ◆ Assist 10,000 people and 3,000 families per year in 4 counties
- ◆ Offers 35 different programs ranging from: shelter, job training, home buyer, youth, business start up, work and wheels, and people helping people

Front Door Ministry (St. Joseph the Workman Cathedral)

- ◆ A service for anyone who comes to the door at the church and can help with bus tokens, rent, utilities, travel for funerals, car repair, and identification.
- ◆ See many people returning to the community from the penal system who need assistance in order to find a job or obtain personal identification in order to be hired
- ◆ Of the 1,800 visits every year, 1/3 of people who come are homeless, and most people make less than \$8 per hour
- ◆ Significant increase in the number of people who have mental health diagnoses



Catholic Charities

- ◆ Serves 19 counties with mental health counseling, immigration services, legal assistance, adoptions, children who have disabilities and their families, emergency services, and financial counseling
- ◆ The Emergency Services program assists with rent, utilities, and transportation as well as refers to area agencies. Has seen a 37% increase in applications this year
- ◆ Financial Counseling offers debt management and credit counseling to people who are not necessarily poor, but in a situation of credit card debt or behind on mortgage payments. Participants are people who never thought that they would have to seek help



WAFER

- ◆ Wafer is a food pantry with donations from businesses and individuals; the largest single donation is from Rotary Lights.
- ◆ Wafer provides three-four days of food per family per month. Also provides hygiene products as the pantry's supplies allow.
- ◆ Wafer is open from 10:00 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. Monday through Friday and 4:00 p.m. - 7:45 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday.