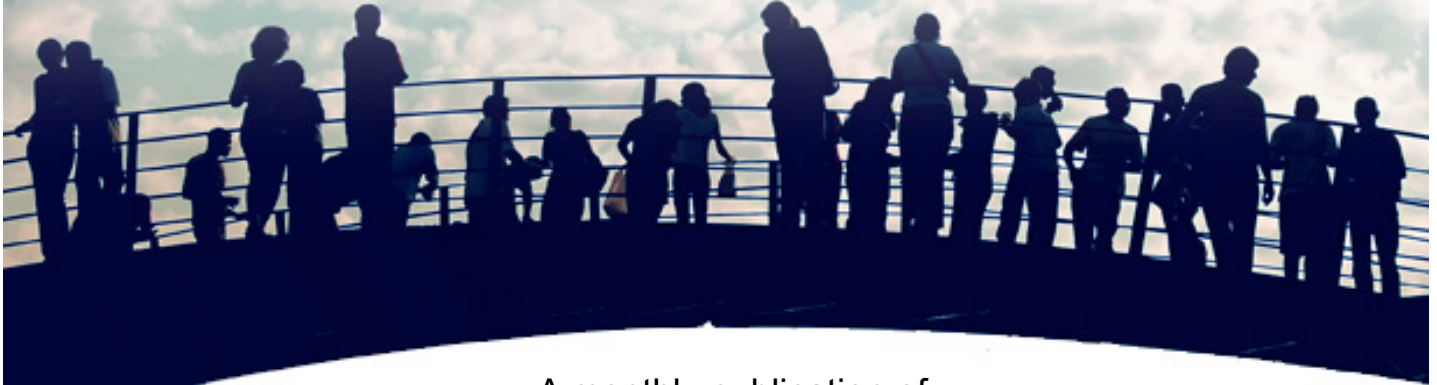


Changing mindsets. Building bridges out of poverty.



A monthly publication of

Unite Escambia's *Poverty Solutions Team*



## From the Editor

by Christy Emmanuel, Lender Processing Services (NYSE: LPS) / Poverty Information Group member

Only a month ago we published the last issue of *Bridges*. Much is happening in our community to address the plight of those living in poverty. While there are many causes, there are also many solutions to poverty. We count you as part of the solution. Stay informed. Become involved. Together we can achieve more!

To learn more about the Poverty Solutions Team, (PST) be sure to review [A Primer on Unite Escambia's Poverty Solutions Team](#). Posted on the Unite Escambia website at [www.UniteEscambia.com](http://www.UniteEscambia.com), the *Primer* includes our Mission, a Call to Action for both individuals and businesses, a Definition of Terms, Team Descriptions / Contacts, Training Programs and Sources of PST Information.

Thanks for your interest in, and support of the work of the Poverty Solutions Team!

We need your TIME, not money! *Bridges to Circles*, a new poverty initiative from Catholic Charities, is currently working with 9 families who are committed to moving from living below poverty to self-sufficiency. Every Tuesday night, the families meet with their community allies at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart from 5:30-7:30 pm for dinner and a program. The allies commit to attending at least two Tuesdays each month in order to build a relationship with their family, encourage them as they work their life plans, and serve as resources for them.

APPEAL  
for  
HELP!

In May, 38 more families are joining the Tuesday night community; **78 to 156 additional allies are needed** to partner with these families. Each ally is asked to complete an ally survey and a two-hour ally training class. During the 18 months that the family is working with their allies, the relationship is supported by the staff of Catholic Charities.

Contact Janet Westlake, *Bridges to Circles* community organizer, at 429-7296, ext. 18 or [westlakej@cc.ptdiocese.org](mailto:westlakej@cc.ptdiocese.org) to learn more, or join us on a Tuesday evening to experience *Bridges to Circles*!

## PROGRESS REPORT

A total of 39 enrollees in Getting Ahead in a Just Gettin' By World will graduate before May 11, and will then be poised to progress to *Bridges to Circles*.

- Five graduate on April 27 drawn from the general community, meeting at McMillan Center, taught by Mary Anderson, pre-kindergarten instructor for the Escambia County School District and Frances Gray, a retired school principal
- Thirteen graduate on April 21 drawn from the general community, meeting at Englewood Missionary Baptist Church, taught by Peggy Groves, community volunteer and Vicki Pugh, Early Learning Coalition
- Thirteen graduate on April 25 drawn from the Pathways for Change program and related individuals, meeting at the Boys and Girls Club, taught by Wanda Brooks and Britte Powers of the Department of Children and Families
- Eight graduate on May 4 drawn from the general community, meeting at the McMillan Center, taught by Sharon Kerrigan, a community volunteer, Modeste McCorvey and Linda Scott, both retired school principals

On April 3, 2009, ICL, the Escambia County School District, and Unite Escambia hosted *Hear Our Cry: Boys in Crisis*, an event titled after the book written by the event's speaker.

Approximately 125 participants met at First Baptist Church of Pensacola to hear Dr. Paul Slocumb, a consultant from aha Process Inc., present the what, how, and why of boys' behaviors and to discuss strategies for how to deal with these behaviors.

The Poverty Solutions Team co-hosted a program featuring *Denver Moore*, co-author of *Same Kind of Different As Me*, on April 14 at Olive Baptist Church. Moore shared the moving story of his emergence from a life of poverty and homelessness to that of a literate, well-functioning man of faith. A movie version of the book is coming soon starring Samuel L Jackson as Moore.

Mort O'Sullivan, managing partner of O'Sullivan Creel, a CPA and business consulting firm, was recently announced as the Champion for Northwest Florida Works. He will lead a 20-member planning team to develop the business case and raise the funds to implement the Cincinnati Works model in Northwest Florida. Dave Phillips, co-founder of Cincinnati Works, will advise the planning team.

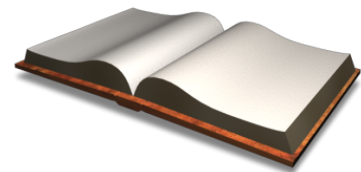


Cincinnati Works in Cincinnati, Ohio, is a nonprofit organization established in 1996 to increase workforce productivity through retention of employees in entry-level, unskilled jobs. A total of 800 employees earning \$8-\$11 per hour are placed annually with an unprecedented 84% one-year retention rate. Co-founder Dave Phillips presented a seminar attended by 150 people in January with an overwhelming response supporting implementation as a win/win for our community. Read more at [cincinnatiworks.org](http://cincinnatiworks.org).

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## BOOK REVIEW

by Kathleen Logan, Community Volunteer / Poverty Information Group Member



### ***A Framework for Understanding Poverty*** by Ruby K. Payne, Ph.D.

Did you know that there are different 'rules' for people who are poor, in the middle class, and wealthy? Or that schools and businesses operate from middle class norms? Or that these rules and norms are hidden and not directly taught to the people who need to know them? Or that a large middle class is a phenomenon of this century? Given what's happened to our economy recently, you DO know how vulnerable each one of us is to becoming poor due to circumstances beyond our control; that's situational poverty. Generational poverty lasts two or more generations.

According to Payne, two things help people move out of poverty: education, and positive, supportive relationships. Even more than money, people need emotional strength, coping strategies, social support, and connections to other people and resources. You can learn all this and more in this eye-opening, story-filled book.

Contact: *aha! Process, Inc.*, P.O. Box 727, Highlands, TX 77562; 800-424-948;; [www.ahaprocess.com](http://www.ahaprocess.com);  
1-4 books: \$22 each plus shipping / 5 or more books \$15 each + 8% shipping

## SCHEDULED TRAINING

- May 5, 3-5PM -- **Orientation for new members of the Poverty Solutions Team (PST) Board of Directors**; Workforce EscaRosa facility
- May 21, 8:30AM–4PM -- **Bridges Out of Poverty One Day Training**; required for anyone wishing to become a nationally certified trainer (prerequisite for *Trainer Certification Workshop*); gives much greater depth and detail into the foundational constructs adopted by PST as compared with the *Community Orientation to PST*; valuable to those not desiring certification but interested in local poverty solutions, including *Gettin' Ahead* facilitators and *Bridges to Circles* allies; First United Methodist Church
- June 2, 6:30-8:30PM – **Community Orientation to PST**, Perry Hall, First United Methodist Church
- July 17, 10-11:30AM -- **Community Orientation to PST** (thru UWF Leisure Learning program), UWF Downtown Bowden Building
- Early or Mid-summer, dates TBD -- 3-1/2 day **Trainer Certification Workshop\*** (both Bridges and Frameworks) by Aha! Process in Pensacola; location TBA

\* The **Trainer Certification Workshop** will certify participants as trainers in either Bridges or Frameworks. The *Bridges* Trainer Certification Workshop is for Human Resources officers from business and government organizations who will use the knowledge within their own organizations to train personnel supervisors and/or employees, and for agency staff and private individuals who will assist the Poverty Solutions Team to reach the broader community at large. The *Frameworks* Trainer Certification Workshop is specifically designed for educational professionals, both teachers and administrators.

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## STEPPING UP *Motivation for working to eliminate poverty in Escambia County*

by Kathleen Logan, Community Volunteer / Poverty Information Group Member



“A chain is only as strong as its weakest link.” The same concept holds true for communities. When one link— an individual or family—falls into poverty, our collective strength is sapped. I need the butcher, baker, garbage collector, banker, doctor, and preacher. Losing even one of them diminishes my life physically and spiritually.

I’m working to eliminate poverty in Escambia County for two main reasons: (1) my faith, ethics, and morals tell me it’s the right thing to do; I am indeed my brother’s keeper; and (2) financially, it makes sense/cents. For example, people who are impoverished don’t have health insurance so when they get sick, ALL OF US pay the cost of ‘free’ care that hospitals are obliged to provide. Poverty is costly to everyone.

Bottom line: when one individual or family prospers, we all prosper and this beautiful community we claim as home thrives. That’s why I’m helping.

## CALENDER OF EVENTS

**Bridges to Circles** weekly community meeting – Every Tuesday from 5:30-7:30 pm at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, 1212 E. Moreno on the corner of 12th Avenue – Weekly session includes dinner and a program focused on individual self-sufficiency and eliminating the systemic barriers caused by poverty. Community members invited.



**Hands-On Ally training** – Thursday, May 7 from 5:30-7:00 pm in the Resource Room of the Catholic Charities Outreach Center, 1815 N. Sixth Avenue – For those interested in being an ally to an individual moving to self-sufficiency.

**Getting Ahead Fair** – Saturday, July 25, 8AM-12 noon at the Boys and Girls Club on H Street. Need hosts to represent agencies in describing their services and sponsors to provide door prizes for the 400+ low-income families expected to be in attendance (screening provided by Catholic Charities). Families will also receive 40 pounds of food and hygiene products from Boys’ Base and Feed the Children coordinated by Oliver Jones.

# STEPPING OUT

## A Guide Through Troubled Waters

by Peggy Dekeyser, Florida Catholic Pensacola-Tallahassee Bureau Editor

Alison Richards, standing, is an ally to Circle leader Denise Dean and her son, T.J., 21 months, as the young family progresses through the Bridges to Circles program sponsored by Catholic Charities. The program pairs people living in poverty who have a strong desire to improve their lives with allies who provide emotional support and assist with complex issues.



Pensacola's Denise Dean never expected she would be in a position to sign up for the Catholic Charities-sponsored "Bridges to Circles" program. A professional with a job in social work and a toddler son, she took some unexpected turns in life that led her to the program.

"I work for Head Start, and last September I saw the flyer from Unite Escambia's Poverty Solutions Team about Bridges to Circles. Because of life circumstances and because my income as a social worker is limited, I decided to enroll in the 'Getting Ahead' class. I knew I needed to do some reorganizing in my life to get my finances in order, and thought that the program would also equip me to be better able to help others," Dean said.

As a "Circle leader," Dean meets with "allies" who work with her to develop the resources needed for self-sufficiency and stability. Depending on the needs of the family or individual, those needed resources might be emotional, intellectual, financial or spiritual. The 10-week "Getting Ahead in a Just Gettin' By World" class is a prerequisite to being teamed with allies.

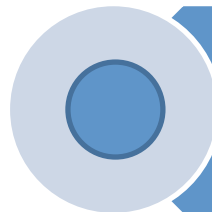
Kelly Richards was looking for a way to give back to the community when she became interested in Bridges to Circles. Her adult daughters, recent college graduates who were both looking for full-time work, also needed something "more to focus on," she said. All three enrolled as allies in the Bridges to Circles program.

Required ally training includes participation in a "Circles" overview class and a "Bridges Out of Poverty" seminar. "Allies are different from traditional mentors," said Janet Westlake, Bridges to Circles community organizer. "Allies engage in an intentional befriending relationship with an individual or family Circle leader. It's more of an equal relationship than a traditional mentoring relationship would be."

Haley Richards, 24, Kelly Richards' daughter, said that her Catholic school education instilled in her a commitment to community service. While trying to land a full-time teaching job as a secondary social studies teacher, she found she had time available to commit to becoming an ally. "It might sound like a cliché, but it really is a hand up, not a handout."

Alison Richards, 23, echoed her sister's thoughts, saying, "I have been so fortunate. I really want to give back. I also can bring a young perspective to our Circle." She is helping out while looking for work in her field, exercise science.

Kelly Richards' 25 years of experience as a criminal defense attorney who spent years in the public defender's office gives her a firsthand understanding of poverty's impact upon the community. "I can easily see the need. My clients were not all bad people. Many are trapped in poverty. With some guidance, they could turn their lives, and the lives of their families, around. Bridges to Circles is another way to network to solve the problem of poverty," she said. "I'd like to see everyone who is involved in our judicial system taking part in this."



To learn more about *Bridges to Circles* and how you can help, contact Janet Westlake at 850-429-7269, ext. 18; or [westlakej@cc.ptdiocese.org](mailto:westlakej@cc.ptdiocese.org).

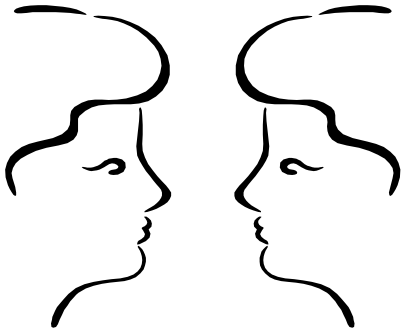
## POVERTY SIMULATION

by Jean Norman, President and CEO of United Way of Escambia County and Poverty Solutions Team Leader

The poverty simulation, conducted by Dr. Michael Gutter, Assistant Professor at University of Florida and sponsored by the Unite Escambia Poverty Solutions Team in March, made 55 participants grapple with hard questions in a fast-moving, stress-filled couple of hours, demonstrating the frustrations of trying to survive with few resources and plenty of problems.

The simulation is designed to help people understand how 15.8 percent of Escambia County residents live on \$21,200 a year, the federal definition of poverty for a family of four.

The goals are simple in the simulation: keep your home secure, feed your family, keep your utilities connected, and meet unexpected situations.



Grover Robinson, IV, Escambia County Commissioner, played a 17-year-old gang member during the simulation. His imaginary “family” decided they needed to come together as a family, to chip in and get to work if they were going to make it.

“I saw what it was like to walk in someone else’s shoes. I learned that people need to make a choice that they want to leave poverty, but there needs to be support to assist them like employment and transportation.”

“The implication for the political realm is that when we have scarce resources, we must pull together and partner as a community. We must have teamwork. This experience strengthened my opinion of how critical public transportation is if we are going to break the cycle of poverty.”

Sam Hall, Pensacola City Councilman, played a 40-year-old father whose wife and mother of their two children abandoned them.

“I spent so much time just trying to live, I did not have time to go to work,” Hall said of the simulation. “The time I needed to spend at the social services office is time I wasn’t at work. The time I spent trying to sell something to get money for gas was time I wasn’t at work.”

In real life, as a young married man, Hall experienced situational poverty, but he had a network of friends to fall back on. “I wanted to ‘win’ this simulation, but I could not win,” he said “I think there are many people in poverty who have just given up trying to win.”

Hall is one of about 20 local people (and growing) who volunteers as an ally.

To learn more about becoming an ally or to participate in future poverty simulations, contact Janet Westlake, Bridges to Circles Community Organizer, [westlakej@cc.ptdiocese.org](mailto:westlakej@cc.ptdiocese.org), 429-7296, ext. 18.

Please send your comments, questions and suggestions to [christyemmanuel@aol.com](mailto:christyemmanuel@aol.com). And don’t forget to tune in to *Bridges Out of Poverty*, which airs on WUWF-TV in various time slots each week with program changes each month.

