

New Center connects Alta residents to local resources

When the Horizons program came before the Alta City Council for endorsement, council member Pam Henderson was interested and ready to invite the program into the town she has called home her entire life. She is familiar with the faces of poverty in her community and saw the program as a way to move towards prosperity.

Horizons is a program directed by Iowa State University Extension with funding from the Northwest Area Foundation for communities of less than 5,000 with a poverty level of at least 10 percent. The program guides communities in the exploration and understanding of local poverty issues and establishment of goals that move the community towards prosperity for all.

“Horizons is working here. It’s bringing people together, helping us identify the needs and resources within our town,” she said. “Through the Alta Building Connections (ABC) group, people moving into Alta get information about local services. Our Resource Center is about to open and we are establishing more access to health care in the community. These projects are making an immediate difference.”



The Resource Center, soon to be opened and staffed by volunteers, is intended to be a one-stop shop for people with questions about local services and a base to sustain ongoing Horizons activities.

“Every day there are low income, frail elderly, new residents, and people whose life situation has changed that have questions about where to find help for financial assistance, housing needs, available childcare, health services and transportation,” said Kris Shannon, a Horizons participant and a resource center organizer. “This center is conveniently located on Main Street and will have answers to those questions. In large communities, service organizations create a strong network to be effective. But in small rural towns, the strength has to come in a good people network.”

Having dedicated volunteers who will not only staff the center, but encourage those in need to access available resources will be key to the Alta Center’s success, Shannon believes. One of those volunteers will be Cassie Bishop, leader of the Horizons health care work group. Bishop, a recent nursing school graduate, will provide blood pressure checks when she is volunteering at the center.

“Our work group discussed what options Alta has to increase access to local health care,” Bishop said. “We talked about getting a clinic in town, but the reality is that a town this size would struggle to support one. So, we talked to United Community Health Center in Storm Lake about having a clinic day in Alta once a month. They were very receptive to the idea and are working towards that. We are identifying other ways we can provide services to the people, like the blood pressure checks. We’d also like to get a wellness center started, but that’s down the road.”

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