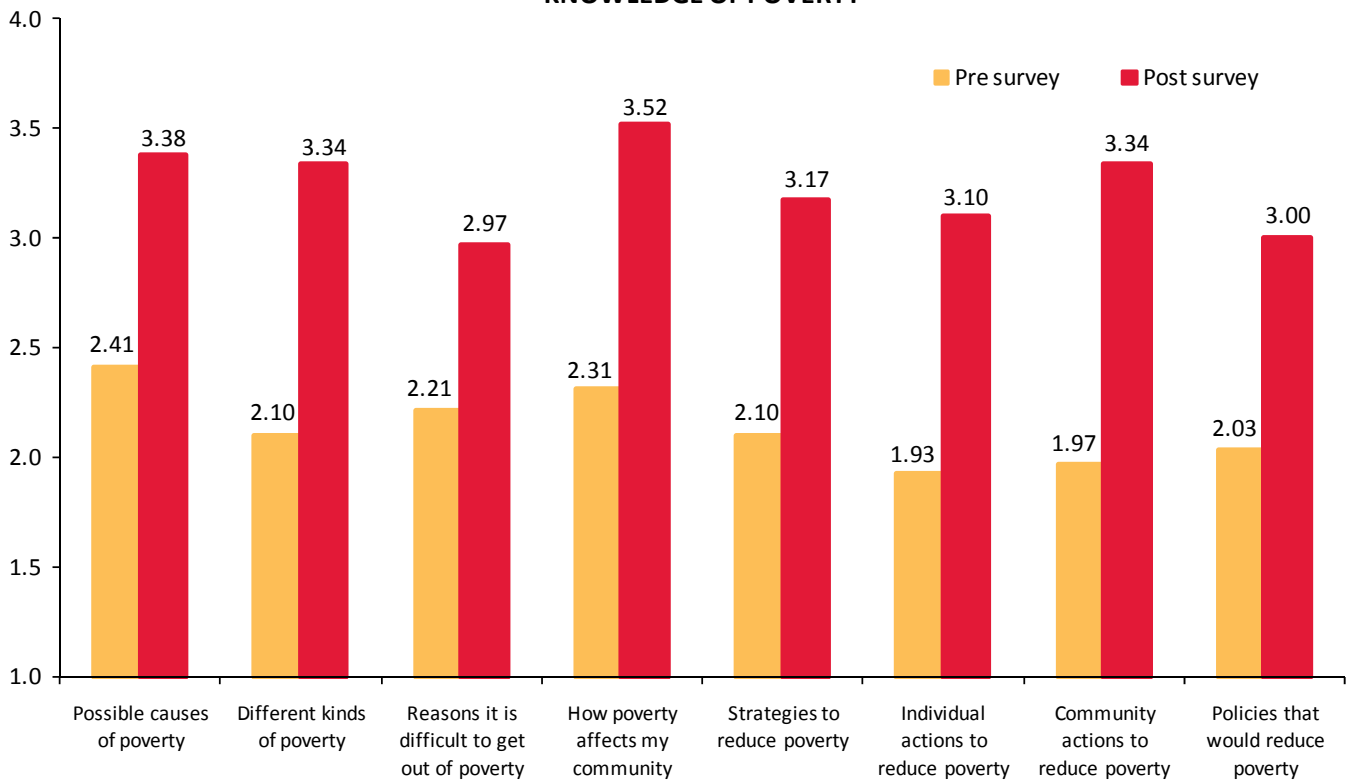


STUDY CIRCLES MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN FARMINGTON

Study Circles were the first phase of Farmington’s Horizons program. Led by trained local facilitators, small groups discussed demographic characteristics of the poor in the community, causes of poverty, and community-based solutions. After five two-hour conversations, an action forum was held to share poverty reduction strategies with members of all the local study circle groups.

Participants completed surveys to assess knowledge and attitudes toward poverty before and after the Study Circle experience. Farmington participants increased their knowledge about poverty, how it affects the community, and ways to reduce poverty. For example, participants—on average-- knew “a little” about strategies to reduce poverty before Study Circles, but reported knowing “a fair amount” after the five sessions. Survey results can be used in on-going Horizons discussions about ways to reduce poverty and build a thriving community.

**FARMINGTON [N=30]
COMPARISON BEFORE AND AFTER AVERAGE RATINGS
KNOWLEDGE OF POVERTY**



1 = Almost nothing 2 = A little 3 = A fair amount 4 = A great deal

The Study Circles had a very positive effect on participants' attitudes. **76.7%** said they agreed that "we can make a positive difference in our community" and **86.6%** agreed that "we can work to help reduce poverty in our community." This "can do" spirit will move the Horizons project forward. In fact, actions are underway. At the conclusion of the Study Circle discussions, **76.7%** had already taken individual actions to reduce poverty and **16.7%** reported they would speak out or support policy changes to reduce poverty. **[One Strategy]** was selected for short-term implementation. The other ideas will be revisited during the next two phases of Horizons -- LeadershipPlenty® and Visioning.

AN OUTCOME OF STUDY CIRCLES

Beginning in September 2008, ISU Extension facilitated Farmington's active involvement in Horizons activities including Study Circles, an Action Forum, and Leadership Plenty training. During this time, community members identified and prioritized needs of the community and then formed committees to take action on the ideas. One of the concerns that became apparent during the process was the need for a food pantry in Farmington.

The Farmington Horizons committee used their leadership skills to research the possibility of a food pantry in Farmington. The committee faced many roadblocks in the beginning. At first, they encountered difficulty finding a facility for the pantry. They looked at many different buildings and locations but usually the cost was prohibitive. Finally, the local bank volunteered the use of part of their building for the pantry. The steering committee then worked with local volunteer and youth groups to serve as staff for the pantry and collect canned goods for the shelves. The steering committee then received a private donation of \$5,000 and the committee is now working with other food pantries and non-profit agencies to expand their resources. The pantry is open one day a week and serves approximately 40 families each month.



Horizons is an 18-month program carried out by Iowa State University Extension with funding from the Northwest Area Foundation.

To learn more about the Horizons program visit www.extension.iastate.edu/horizons/ or contact Ruth Freeman, Horizons Director, rofreema@iastate.edu; 515-386-3611.

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