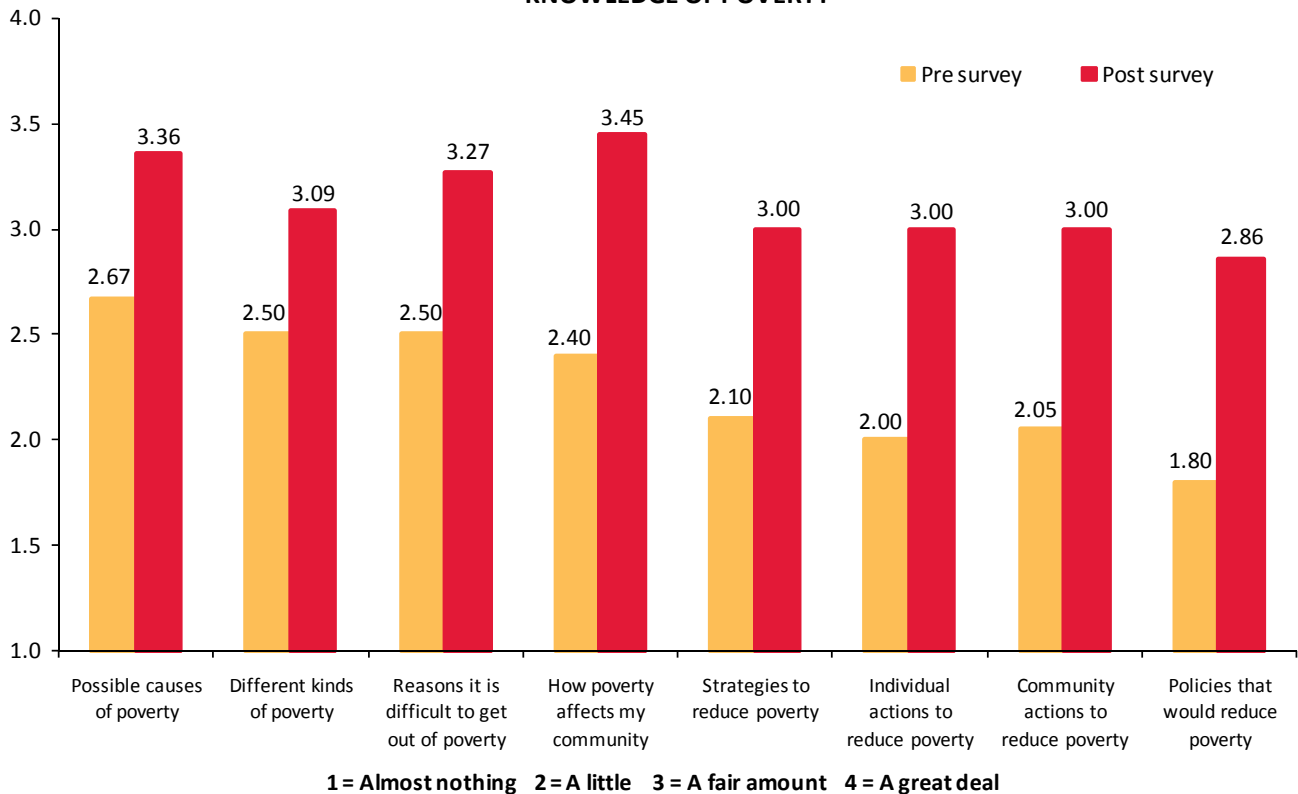


STUDY CIRCLES MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN HAZLETON

Study Circles were the first phase of Hazleton’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. Hazleton 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.

**HAZLETON [N=24]
COMPARISON BEFORE AND AFTER AVERAGE RATINGS
KNOWLEDGE OF POVERTY**



The Study Circles had a very positive effect on participants' attitudes. **87.5%** said they agreed that "we can make a positive difference in our community" and **83.4%** 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, **66.7%** had already taken individual actions to reduce poverty and **41.7%** reported they would speak out or support policy changes to reduce poverty. A community newsletter 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

Hazleton Highlights: New Community Newsletter

Residents of Hazleton and the surrounding area are learning more about their community through the new monthly community newsletter. The name of the newsletter, "Hazleton Highlights," was chosen in a contest with the winner receiving a prize from the local convenience store. The newsletter features introductions of new businesses, history about the town, news worthy items, notice of a date change (such as recycling day), and a calendar of events.

Suggestions for articles can also be submitted. Everyone is excited about the newsletter including the committee of retired residents who develops it every month to the businesses which have the newsletter available to their customers. One result of the calendar is that more residents know about city council meetings and are attending to share their thoughts.



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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