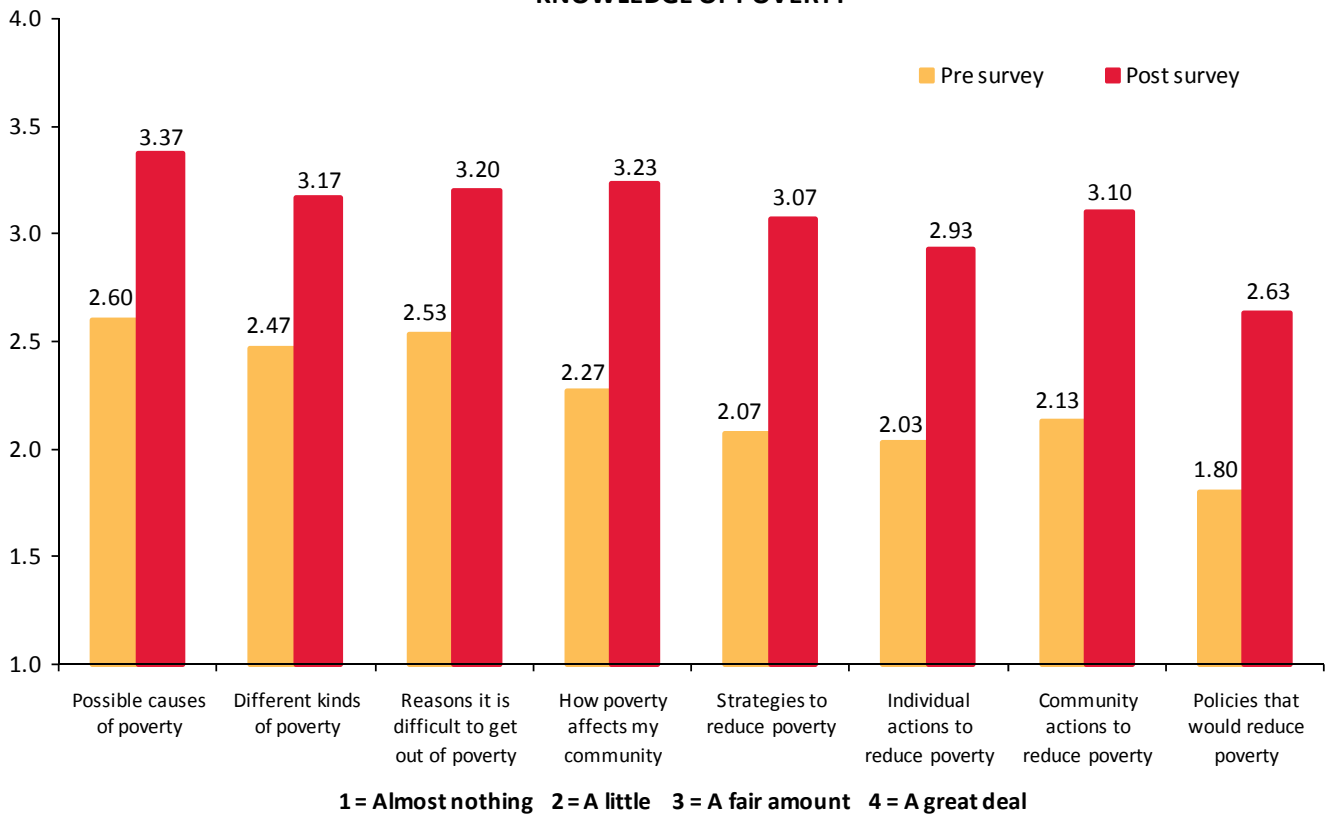


STUDY CIRCLES MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN VILLISCA

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

**VILLISCA [N=37]
COMPARISON BEFORE AND AFTER AVERAGE RATINGS
KNOWLEDGE OF POVERTY**



The Study Circles had a very positive effect on participants' attitudes. **78.3%** said they agreed that "we can make a positive difference in our community" and **78.4%** 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, **51.4%** had already taken individual actions to reduce poverty and **43.2%** 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.

OUTCOMES OF STUDY CIRCLES

Villisca held a Resource Day on January 24, 2009. 28 agencies provided information about their services for residents who visited the event. City Hall now has available a brochure with phone numbers for services and recreation in the community.

A letter writing campaign to Alumni by the Elementary students and a community dinner raised the remaining \$6,000 needed for the next step in the Armory project.



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, roffreema@iastate.edu; 515-386-3611.

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