

Resource Directory first major Horizons achievement in Sac City

In a rural community like Sac City, population 2,200, there are many “I didn’t know that” and “I haven’t met you” statements to be heard when a grassroots effort begins to explore an issue. As those comments were repeated in Horizons study circle discussions during the winter of 2007 the first Sac City Horizons project evolved and generated enthusiasm for the program that now has five action goals in progress.

Horizons is a program directed by Iowa State University Extension with funding from the Northwest Area Foundation. The program guides communities through the exploration and understanding of local poverty issues and establishment of goals that move the community towards prosperity for all.

“It was obvious during study circles that the community had many resources that people who needed them didn’t know about,” said Amy Clair, Horizons steering committee member. “We responded immediately by creating a Resource Directory, printing up 300 of them and distributing them. I have heard over and over how useful these directories are.”

Carol Groen, Sac City Horizons chairperson, believes the Resource Directory and the five community action groups illustrate what can be achieved when new people become involved. “We have more and different people working on community projects than we have had in the past,” she said. “Before Horizons, we sat back and let a few lead – without much grassroots involvement. This takes longer, but in the long run it is what is best for the town.”

One community action group is addressing issues related to the Senior Citizen Center, a small historic building where congregate meals are held and meals on wheels are sent out. The Horizons committee has been instrumental in bringing together community entities to address the out-dated, inefficient building. “First we had to find out who owned the building – it was the county,” said Groen. “The county supervisors have been very supportive, as has Chamber - Main Street, towards the remodeling of the building that will make it handicap accessible and a more pleasant, safer and greener place.”

Laura Zimmerman, Chamber - Main Street program director and Horizons steering committee member, is involved with the mentoring action committee. “At this time we have our plans all laid out to match financial mentors with families burdened financially,” Zimmerman said. “We are partnering with New Opportunities to provide the mentoring, because the last thing we want to do is duplicate what is already being done. We want to add to the current services, to help people go from being on assistance programs to being on their own. We know this is a big leap for families, and we want to help them span that threshold.”

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