

Seymour adds family resource center, removes unsafe properties

NEST, a parent education program, has been offered in Seymour for only two years, but already has twenty-three young Seymour families with children zero to five years old enrolled. It has moved to a new location to accommodate the increased clientele. At the weekly educational sessions, parents receive information that helps them make good parental decisions.

Ruth Castor, director of the Seymour NEST program, was a Horizons participant and encouraged to expand NEST to include a Family Resource Center in her hometown. "Horizons has been a good thing for our community," she said. "There is more community awareness of things that need to be done. It has increased peoples' awareness that there are many reasons people are living in or near poverty."

Castor said the Seymour NEST program was out-growing the donated space at the medical center a year ago, so she and her husband bought and renovated an old building to house NEST and a much needed Family Resource Center.

Seymour Mayor Sheryl Dotts sees more signs that the Horizons program is helping her community break free of poverty's grip. "The study groups and leadership training are strengthening Seymour," she said. "Horizons has pulled people together in new ways, given them a cause. They are working towards the best interests of the town. Everyone knows they are valuable to the community - even if they don't have money to contribute, they have community worth."



Dotts looks around Seymour and points to individual and community changes. During "Share What You Wear" day, clothing contributions were plentiful; those that couldn't contribute clothing gave their time. Recipients came forward, and clothing that remained at the end of the day was given to area shelters. Elementary school children participated in a food collection challenge associated with the day, bringing in items for a food pantry. Plans are for two "Share What you Wear" days to be held each year.

Anthony Boggs had just returned to town with a teaching degree when he ran for mayor against Dotts three years ago, and lost. Being mayor was something he'd dreamed of as a child. He recognized that he might not be ready for that role – but he was willing to be trained to facilitate the Horizons leadership training. As a result of that community leadership, he ran for City Council and was elected.

"One of the biggest benefits of Horizons to our community has been the amount of community participation," Boggs said. "Hearing the view of so many people about poverty in our community makes me more mindful as I deal with council issues and ordinances."

One of those issues is lack of quality housing and the number of less than desirable homes in the community. Horizons sub-committees from Seymour, Humeston, Allerton and Corydon are forming a Wayne County Housing Trust Fund. It will help improve older and rental homes, construction of affordable housing, provide funds for down payments and the clean-up and removal of deteriorated homes. "Individually, we can't do much with the dollars we have available," said Vickie Decker, co-editor of the Seymour Herald. "But by banding together, our communities are eligible for state and federal funds that can really help us make a difference. This is the first time I can remember all the communities working together for a common cause."

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