

In Monroe County...

- National poverty rate in 2007 held steady at 12.5%
- Bloomington Census Data: poverty rate increased by nearly 7% - from 34.7% to 41.6% from 2006 to 2007.
- 30.2% of people in poverty are children under the age of 18
- Of people over age 25 who are in poverty, 29.6% are employed
- 60.2% have worked part-time or for at least part of the year in the last 12 months
- 67.6% have less than a high school degree or GED

This is why the **Monroe County Circles Initiative** is so important.

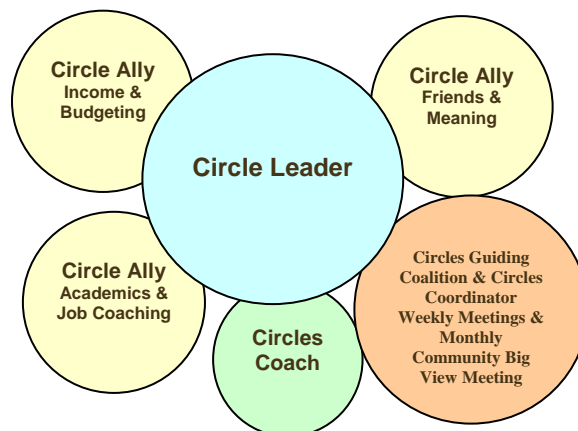
Circles™ is an intentional way for people to build relationships across class and race lines to end poverty in their communities. Circles™ is a **high impact strategy** that will:

- Change the mind-set of the community so it wants to end poverty
- Change goals, policies, and approaches to end poverty and,
- Empower people in poverty to help solve community problems while transitioning out of poverty themselves.

A Circle is a supportive, intentional, reciprocal, befriending relationship made up of one Circle Leader who is living in poverty and two to five Circles Allies who usually are from middle class. A Circle typically meets once or twice a month to build friendships and to work on the Circle Leader's dreams, plans, and goals.

A Circle Leader is an individual or family with a low-income who is interested in meeting her/his household needs on a consistent basis and becoming self-sufficient-. The Circle Leader is responsible for her or his Circle; convening, leading, and giving and receiving support. She or he will work with the Allies to complete her/his plan that was developed in the Getting Ahead group and with the Circles Coach. Getting Ahead prepares Circle Leaders to take a leadership role in the Circle and to use their knowledge and skills as problem solvers to work on poverty issues in the community as well.

Circle Allies are community members who want to be in a supportive, intentional, befriending relationship with an individual or family working to get out of poverty. Circle Allies work with the Circle Leader to figure out how to accomplish her or his plan. Within the guidelines set by the Community Guiding Coalition, Circle Allies do what makes sense and what brings joy to the relationship. Circle Allies are trained in Bridges out of Poverty as a way to work with Circle Leaders in supporting their plans to get out of poverty.



Circles™ provides support, making the sort of personal and community connections that are important to success.

For more information on the Circles™ Initiative, visit www.sccap.monroe.in.us – you can find us in the menu bar on the left hand side of your screen.

Please contact Circles™ Volunteer Coordinator Thomas Kenning at: 339-3447, ext. 263, or thomas@sccap.monroe.in.us to volunteer or for more information!

What can you do?

Join the Circles™ Community by...

- becoming an Ally

We ask that you commit to be a Circle ally for 18 months.

As an Ally, you will provide friendship, acting as a sort of extended family to a person or family living in poverty. You will provide this 'Circle Leader' with help in areas in which you are somewhat knowledgeable, whether it's financial, educational, or social/community connections. You will partner with your Circle Leader to figure out how the Leader can accomplish his or her plan to get out of poverty.

After you are matched with a Circle, you will have:

*one monthly meeting with the Circle scheduled at a mutually convenient time

*one monthly Big View meeting with other Circles, staff and interested community members to discuss systems barriers,

*a monthly ally support meeting during one of the weekly meetings;

*phone and in-person contact with your family as needed throughout the month

- volunteering to help with childcare/youth

Volunteers are needed every Thursday night to provide childcare between 6:00 - 8:30. Children currently range in age from 1 – 14-years old. Toys and curriculum are available. Your volunteer experience will contain lots of interaction with fun, friendly children and adults. You can volunteer as often as you like, and we encourage you to keep coming back, but there is not necessarily a week-to-week obligation.

- volunteering to help in the kitchen

Help is needed with meal planning, shopping, preparation, serving and kitchen cleanup. Dinner is served to approximately 75 people at 6:00 p.m., and cooks must be available at about 4:00 p.m. to begin preparation; cleanup starts around 6:30. Your volunteer experience will contain lots of interaction with fun, friendly people. You can volunteer as often as you like, and we encourage you to keep coming back, but there is not necessarily a week-to-week obligation.

- volunteering to help with transportation

Lack of transportation is often a barrier for people who live in poverty. If you have a good driving record, valid driver's license and insurance, you can help! You will use your own vehicle to transport Circles™ families to 6:00 p.m. Getting Ahead trainings and Circles™ Community meetings, and home again at 8:30 – we can provide and install car seats.

Weekly Circles™ Community meetings are held on Thursday evenings, 6:00 – 8:30 p.m. at St. Mark's United Methodist Church, at East 3rd St. and E. 46 Bypass, behind Starbucks. Volunteers are always invited to enjoy the dinner.

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