



Why is the

Monroe County Circles® Initiative

so important?

In Monroe County...

- National poverty rate in 2007 held steady at 12.5%
- 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
- **Bloomington Census Data: poverty rate increased by nearly 7% - from 34.7% to 41.6% from 2006 to 2007**

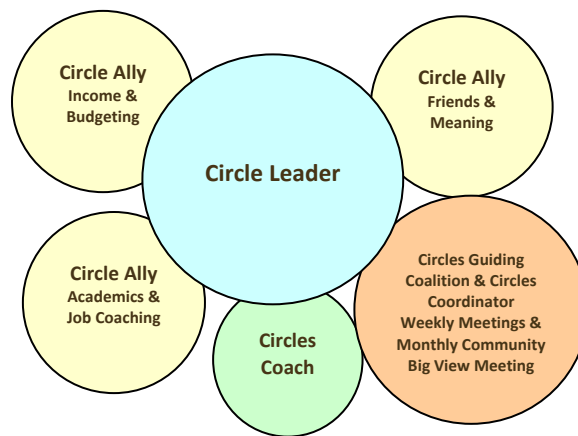
Circles® is an intentional way for people to build relationships across class and race lines to end poverty in their communities. Circles® is a *high impact strategy* that will:

- Change the mind-set of the community so it wants to end poverty
- Change goals, policies, and approaches to end poverty
- 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.

Circles® needs your help!

“How can I join the Circles® Community?”

Become an Ally!

As an Ally, you will provide friendship, acting as a sort of extended family member to a person or family living in poverty. You and your Circle will work together to accomplish specific goals set by the Circle Leader in order to increase his or her resources. As you walk alongside your Circle Leader, you will provide valuable knowledge and insight relating to a variety of life circumstances, whether it is financial or educational input, or social connections. We ask that you commit to your Circle for 18 months. You will also learn to see poverty in a different light, dispelling stereotypes about people who live in poverty.

After you are matched with a Circle, you will:

- Once a month, meet with your Circle
- Twice a month, attend the Thursday evening community dinner and meeting
- Contact your Circle Leader and their other allies as needed throughout the month

Every Thursday we gather for our Circles® community dinner and meeting – *volunteers make this possible!*

Be a Youth Volunteer!

Every Thursday evening, we meet for a community meal and meeting. Children are welcome to these meetings and after dinner they attend their own programming while their parents meet. Children of all ages participate in educational and character building activities. We are always looking for responsible, fun, and friendly volunteers to assist with the Youth Community.

Be a Food Volunteer!

Our food volunteers provide a delicious meal for the entire Circles® community each week. We are looking for fun and enthusiastic volunteers to help plan, shop, prepare, serve, and clean! Dinner is from 6:00 – 6:30 and food volunteers are generally needed between 4:30 and 8:00, although this may vary depending on preparation and clean-up time. Feel free to volunteer as often as you like, but there is no week-to-week obligation. This is a great opportunity for a group!

Be a Transportation Volunteer!

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 and from community meetings. We can provide and install car seats if needed.

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 free dinner.

**Interested? Contact our Volunteer Coordinator at (812) 339-3447, ext. 283 or circlevolunteer@insccap.org
For general inquiries contact Linda Patton (ext. 206) or Carrie Felton (ext.263)**