




Circles™ of Hope

Working to end poverty one family at a time.

*inspiring
change*



“My Circle gave me
a sense of family
that I needed.

They were reliable
and held me
accountable to
my dreams.”

- Circle Leader

*We invite
you ...*

**Share
the
vision.**



Did you know ...

- 39.1 million Americans, or 13.2 percent of the U.S. population, live in poverty.
- Over one in five U.S. children under the age of 5 is being raised in poverty.
- Poverty costs society \$500 billion per year¹ in health care, crime, and reduced productivity.
- Children growing up in poverty are more likely to be in poor health, have learning and behavioral difficulties, underachieve at school, and be low paid and welfare dependent later in life.
- The cost of persistent childhood poverty is equal to 4 percent of the U.S. Gross Domestic Product annually.

¹ Center for American Progress

The Crisis

“It’s hard being a single mom and living below the poverty line. ... working as many hours as I could get wasn’t enough to make ends meet. Poverty is tiring and discouraging, and it feels like you’ll never be able to dig yourself out.” ~ Circle Leader

Nearly 308,000 people, or 11.3 percent, of the Kansas population live in poverty² with 40 percent of Kansas school children qualifying for free/reduced lunch. At least twice that number struggle to make ends meet, since most households need to earn 200 percent of the poverty guidelines to be economically stable.

In Central Kansas, the numbers are just as staggering:

- 67 percent of Wichita School District and 52 percent of Newton School District students qualify for free/reduced lunch.
- 16.6 percent of children under 18 in Reno County are being raised in poverty.
- 58,602 people, or 12.3 percent, of the population in Sedgwick County live in poverty.
- Harvey County spends approximately \$450,000 per month on food stamps and welfare subsidies.

It’s a grim picture, but one that is slowly changing through **Circles™**, an innovative, high-impact community strategy to end poverty one family at a time.

a different future

² U.S. Census Bureau (\$21,756 for a family of four)

"I wanted to make a difference for someone else, as others have contributed to the achievements of my life."

~ Circle Ally, Newton

The Solution

Circles™ of Hope partners volunteers and community leaders like you with families in need. With your help, together we can:

- Move 25 local, low-income families permanently out of poverty each year; resulting in a savings to society of \$2.6 million per year.
- Increase community awareness of poverty and its causes through training classes and volunteer opportunities.
- Create partnerships between low-income families and local leaders to remove the systemic barriers that lock local residents into poverty (transportation, education, etc.).
- Empower people in poverty to solve community problems while transitioning out of poverty themselves.
- Involve local community agencies, businesses, community leaders, and middle- and upper-class volunteers like you to help their neighbors and communities eradicate poverty.
- Provide low-income families with the training and tools necessary for them to move permanently out of poverty.
- Expand Circles™ to other Kansas communities.



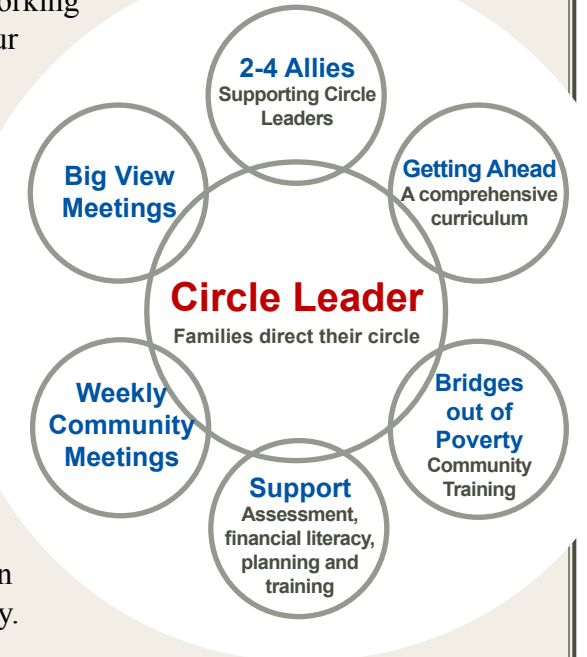
Early results from Iowa Circles demonstrate that for every \$1 spent on the program, welfare and food stamps subsidies were reduced by \$2, and \$4 was generated as new earned income for the community.

empower
families to make it!

Circles™

An Innovative Model to End Poverty

Each **Circle** consists of a family working to get out of poverty and two to four middle- or upper-class **Allies** who support the family throughout their progress. The family serves as the **Circle Leader**, setting goals that are unique to its own needs, and develops the resources necessary for self-sufficiency and stability. The family's Allies support them in achieving their goals.



Getting Ahead classes teach participants how to develop resources and a family-specific plan to move permanently out of poverty.

The Circle Leaders, Allies, and other interested community members come together at **Weekly Community Meetings** to provide support and networking for each other. Once per month, a **Big View Meeting** is held to discuss the systemic barriers encountered by Circle Leaders, and plans are made to address the necessary community, governmental and policy constraints.

"No significant learning happens without a significant relationship."

*- Dr. James P. Comer,
Yale University
School of Medicine*

Each Circles™ initiative is facilitated by a **Lead Agency** which is responsible for operational oversight. A **Guiding Coalition** manages each local initiative. Composed of community leaders, low-income families, local officials, and volunteers, it works to change the community mindset and policies regarding poverty.

Volunteers from the Guiding Coalition provide assistance with car donations, micro-loans, and other tangible needs. They also help connect people in poverty with educational and employment opportunities.

“I am inspired by my Circle Leader’s hard work and life changes... toward new possibilities for the future.”
 ~ Circle Ally, Newton

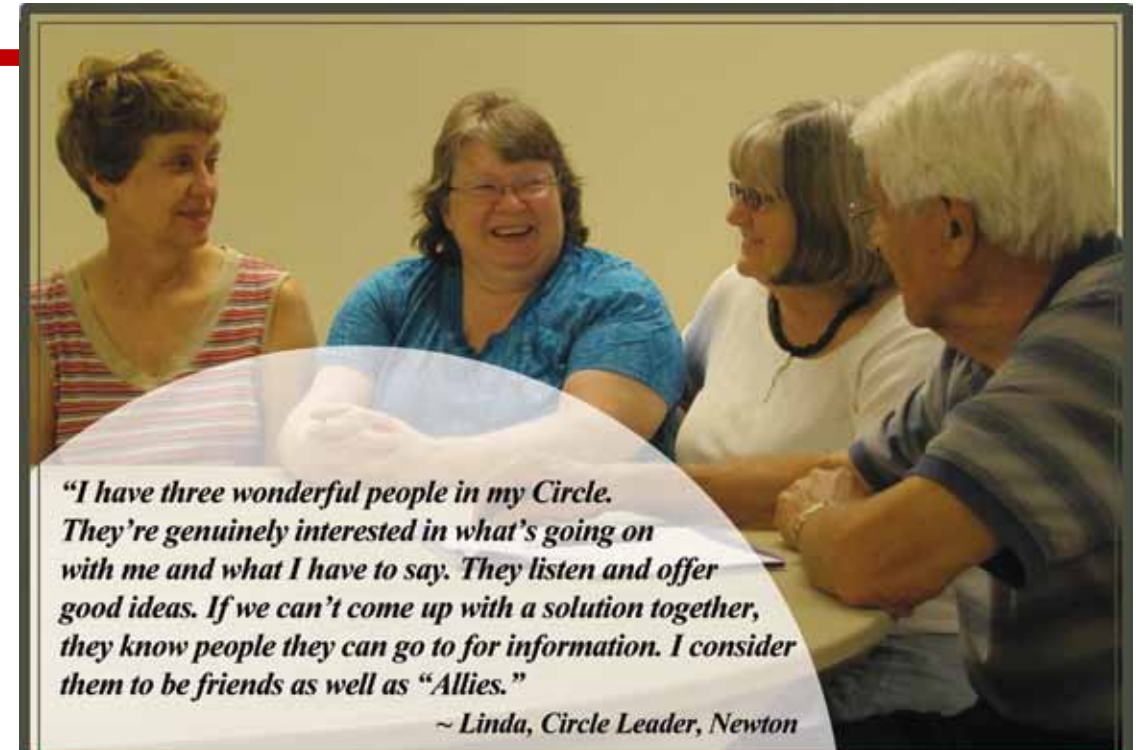
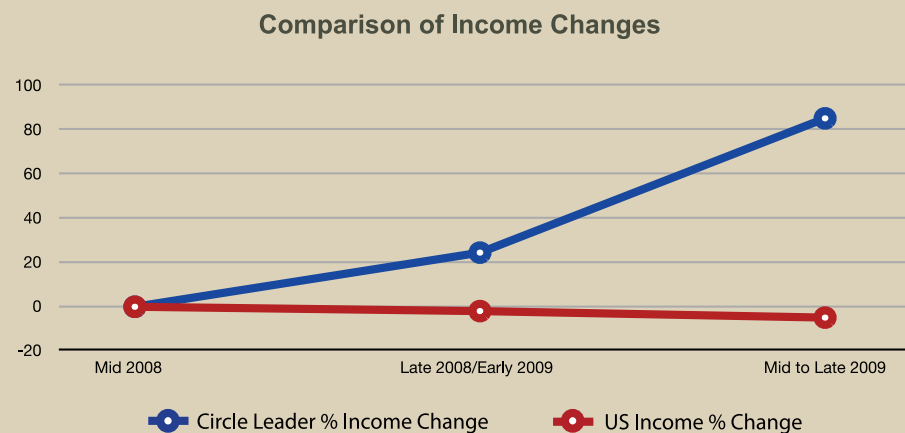
Proven Results

Due to the involvement of caring people like you, Circles™ has produced measurable, life-changing outcomes for individuals, families and communities across the nation.

Following are average results from a recent group of 33 families in Idaho, Connecticut and Indiana who completed *Getting Ahead* classes and six months of Circles™

- **88 percent increase in earned income, rising from \$637 to \$1200 per month**
- **30 percent decrease in welfare benefits, dropping from \$436 to \$306 per month**
- **56 percent increase in assets, rising from \$604 to \$941**
- **125 percent increase in “people I can count on” rising from four to nine**

This progress was made during a time when national household income decreased by 3 percent.





Meet Circle Leader Jerica Hinshaw

Jerica Hinshaw is a single mother of a three-year-old son. She was working in a fast food restaurant, living paycheck to paycheck, barely able to pay the bills. Tired of trying to make ends meet on minimum wage, she decided to try Circles™ to provide a better life for herself and her son.

The first step was to participate in the *Getting Ahead* class. Here Jerica completed a self-assessment of 11 important life resources, including financial, emotional, motivational, relational, social support systems, a knowledge of the "hidden rules" of different socio-economic classes and five other areas. During this process, she realized that she needed to build more social and spiritual resources to help her through the tough times. She also realized that she needed to complete her education in order to obtain a living wage job and support her family. She graduated from the *Getting Ahead* class and became a Circle Leader where she meets with Allies each month.

Jerica's group is currently addressing her long-term educational, social and financial goals. They help her manage a budget, and advise her on opening a bank account and saving a little bit every month. They are also assisting her in finding a church and other social groups where she feels comfortable. "All three Allies have been amazing in talking about my goals and helping me. They are three positive influences in my life that I can turn to for help without being judged. I just love my Circle," she says with a smile.

Jerica is still struggling, but it's not holding her down anymore or making her feel trapped. Rather, she is optimistic that things will change. She knows that one day she'll be able to pay the light bills without it being a problem.



"The Circles Initiative has given me a different group of people to be around. They're helping me with my goals. I've started back to school My goal is to get a job where I can make a living wage and get health insurance for my son and me."
~ Jerica, Circle Leader, Newton

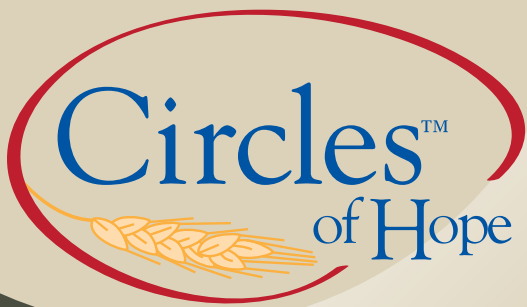
She has started back to school to get an associate degree from Hutchinson Community College. When she completes her degree, she plans to transfer to WSU to get a degree in education.

Having the help of individuals from her community enabled Jerica to forge a path that will lead her family out of poverty. Her Allies also greatly benefit from the process, gaining personal insight and understanding into the barriers that hold people in poverty. This new knowledge and their deep commitment to each other allow this Circle to work together to end poverty.

a step forward

"I started making decisions to change my future. When you're just living for today, you lose track of goals. I decided to quit holding myself back."

~ Jerica



How can you help families
move out of poverty . . . *permanently?*

\$100,000 moves 50 families out of poverty by providing critical program and training support for a year

\$50,000 provides crucial coaching support to 30 low-income families working toward self-sufficiency

\$25,000 provides the necessary resources for transportation, micro-loans and other tangible assets for families in need.

\$10,000 provides food for one year of Weekly Meetings

\$5,000 ensures the necessary support systems for one family in the Circles program for one year

\$3,500 enables trained facilitators to teach *Getting Ahead* classes for one year

\$1,500 provides child care for a year, enabling Circle Leaders to attend Weekly Meetings with their **Circles™** of support

\$500 supports one poverty simulation to educate the community about the issues faced by people living in poverty

\$400 provides food coupon incentives for one person participating in *Getting Ahead* classes

\$100 provides *Getting Ahead* training materials for five families

Circles™ of Hope invites volunteers from every walk of life to lend their time, talents and financial support.

Call today. 316.284.0000

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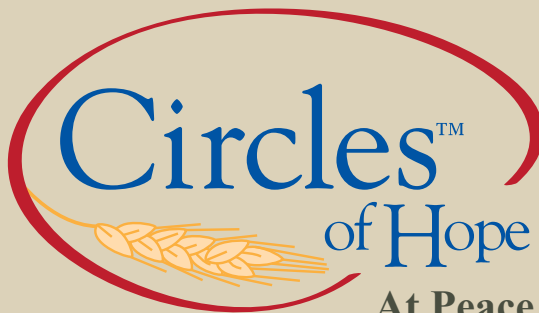
With Gratitude

Major Contributors to date:

United Methodist Health Ministry Fund
Kansas Health Foundation

Other Significant Contributors:

Sunflower Foundation First Mennonite Church Halstead
Schowalter Foundation Paul Ross Charitable Foundation
Cargill Corporation Hoffnungsau Mennonite Church
First United Methodist Church Newton



At Peace Connections

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Peace Connections is a non-profit organization with a 25-year history whose mission is to partner with others to build resources within families and communities, teach and practice non-violence, and nurture personal and spiritual well-being. Thriving communities sustained by social justice and compassion is our vision. Peace Connections is the recipient of the 2008 Award for Collaborative Excellence from the Kansas Association of Community Action Agencies (KACAP) and the recipient of the 2009 Friends of Education Award in the Partner Activity category from the South Central Kansas School Public Relations Association.

Move the Mountain (MTM) initiated the **Circles™** campaign. The goal of this nation-wide initiative is to end poverty in 1,000 communities in 10 years.

Aha! Process partners with MTM, sharing its **Bridges Out of Poverty** concepts through **Circles™ Getting Ahead** classes and Ally training.

