



THE NORTHWEST PROJECT

2018 ANNUAL REPORT

Presented by the Community Foundation of the Ozarks,
the Stanley & Elaine Ball Foundation, and the Musgrave Foundation.

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Summary

The Northwest Project (NWP) is a collaboration between Missouri State University, Drury University, and the Drew Lewis Foundation (DLF) working to address poverty in Northwest Springfield. The goal is to pilot strategies over a five-year period to help families overcome the challenges that have contributed to living in poverty and sustain their long-term success in emerging from those circumstances. NWP base operating costs are funded by a local grant from the Community Foundation of the Ozarks, the Musgrave Foundation and the Stanley & Elaine Ball Foundation, managed by Central Trust. The privately funded NWP is complemented by the City of Springfield's focus on improving public safety, infrastructure, and chronic nuisance properties and other local collective-impact model efforts (such as Prosper Springfield) designed to reduce poverty. The DLF was selected for grant funding for its vision of using a model that couples family support with neighborhood development and sustainability. This type of community-driven development focuses on bridging the gap between community members and community resources. Community-driven development perceives people as assets and develops partnerships and social capital in the process.¹ The NWP focuses on creating community access to information while developing an empowering environment within the neighborhoods served.

The NWP structure focuses on meeting individual household needs and enhancing neighborhood resource infrastructure, improving opportunities for families and communities to sustain changes over the long term. Over 5 years, the NWP's plan is to impact the lives of 500 individuals. Originally, the goal of the project was to recruit approximately 40 new families into programming each year. At the end of the Year 2 (April 2017-March 2018), the program has served 50 NWP participants,



Dr. Shannon McMurtrey, an ally with The Northwest Project.

representing 187 unduplicated individual members of 45 households in 7 cohorts within four different Springfield City Council Zone 1 neighborhoods (Grant Beach, Robberson, Heart of the Westside, and Woodland Heights). An 8th cohort was added in March, 2018, that serves an additional 5 participants, representing 4 new households, and 17 new individuals. The total served through March 19, 2018, is 55 participants within 49 households, impacting the lives of an estimated 204 individuals.

Each participant included in the Northwest Project is served by a case manager. The case manager screens individuals for readiness, assesses capacity for change, and assists participants and their families with connections to community resources and progression with their goals. Individuals interested in the NWP complete a one-page initial screening form and undergo a brief intake process. Intake information (and follow-up information) is entered into a customized data entry and management system tool developed by Dr. Shannon McMurtrey of Drury University.

¹ More information on "Community Driven Development" available at: <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/8022/08796f5d302545921f821c0cb2640553d551.pdf>



Dr. Amy Blansit leading a discussion.

The screening process includes an initial assessment of a family’s eligibility. Minimal family eligibility requirements to join the program include: (1) a caregiver who is employable (but likely in a job with no long-term career opportunities); (2) a caregiver who possesses a high school diploma/ HiSET certificate (or is HiSET eligible); (3) stable housing; (4) at or below 200% federal poverty level (FPL); and (5) demonstrated behavior indicative of contemplation to action and the ability to create change in the 10 program assets noted in NWP programming. These 10 assets are identified in the “Year 2 Participant Outcomes” section on page 5.

Once an individual has completed the screening process and has been accepted into the program, the case manager completes an initial intake with the participating individual. The assessment used is based on the family’s current strengths and unique needs. The intake process

includes: an assessment of financial needs; demographic data collection; evaluation of family readiness for change; creating a plan for meeting immediate needs; and looking at long-term goals.

Participants begin their engagement with the NWP programming by joining one of the Circles® neighborhood cohort groups. Circles® is offered in different neighborhoods in northwest Springfield multiple times per year to support the NWP programming. Circles® is a 16-week proven model of intensive programming led by the Drew Lewis Foundation and its staff. NWP cohort participation allows for intense interactions and begins building a support network for participants as they start the program. All participants complete the Circles® program and participate in case management for up to two years. As participants progress through the program, DLF staff continues to evaluate the progress of individuals and neighborhood cohorts as they work toward achieving their goals. For example, staff will evaluate family progress through the stages of change and review completion of their action plans. As a support to the Circles® material and model for change, the DLF case management team also works with participants to refer them and their families to additional resources needed for their progression of goals and long-term stability. Resources include opportunities like Jobs for Life, CPO’s CASH programming and neighborhood centers, OACAC child care, Great Circle, and/or other agencies as needed. Individuals with criminal or legal issues are paired with the Springfield Metropolitan Bar Association for support. Families with youth are connected with quality child-care services, such as Life360 Preschool, Lighthouse, Boys & Girls Clubs, and the Ozarks Regional YMCA.

Our Process



Caseworkers slowly decrease their services as families make progress. Social work students from Missouri State University assist families with completing their action steps. In addition, students assist families determined ineligible for the program to achieve the competencies to either be eligible or to exit poverty on their own. Therefore, families may receive in-depth case management services for 4 to 8 months and less intense services for as long as needed to achieve goals as provided by partners, students, and volunteers. The families, their team members, and their caseworkers, meet as often as necessary to review, reassess, and modify the action plan. The case management team also develops emergency procedures and resources to help families avoid the “Cliff Effect”² by increasing income enough to offset lost social-service benefits or budget/financial coaching to avoid potential regression (such as obtaining a payday loan). Individuals may be in the case-management program for 18 to 36 months depending on need. On a monthly basis, case-management staff as well as referral partners (where appropriate) meet to review case notes for individuals in the program. This group collectively works to address any unmet needs. In addition, each month key NWP stakeholders gather to discuss NWP neighborhood projects and community-based resources for both families and neighborhoods.

Data intake includes NWP participant screening, intake, and progress forms; case management notes, progress of the community resource, investments, and development activities initiated by the NWP; debt reduction and credit score changes; and standardized scores through Adverse Childhood Events (ACE), Family Hardiness Index (FHI), and Self-Sufficiency Scores. Based upon the data available at the completion of Year 2 of programming the NWP research team can conclude:



Coach David Miller, left, facilitating a discussion.

The NWP is continuing to change and enhance the resource structure of Zone 1 neighborhoods. Homes are being repaired and neighbors are gathering over community dinners weekly. Community members, service organizations, and universities are collaborating to provide additional programmatic and systemic value to the NWP. Over 75 community service groups (including businesses, universities, churches, and individuals) have invested and partnered in NWP activities. Since tracking volunteers with GivePulse began 18 months ago, statistics show:

- 610 individuals have participated;
- 2,171 hours of service;
- \$46,000 of estimated economic equivalent impact.

Matched federal and foundation grant funding continues to be pursued as the project grows and expands. These monetary and in-kind investments have provided the infrastructure needed for the wraparound support and community development.

² More information about the “Cliff Effect” can be found at: <http://www.circlesusa.org/cliff-effect/>

Year 1 and Year 2 participants continue to make significant progress toward economic sustainability and self-sufficiency. Currently, 4 Grant Beach cohort groups have completed Circles® programming and remain involved in NWP activities. Four more cohorts have been added in City Council Zone 1, in the neighborhoods of Robberson, Woodland Heights, and Heart of the Westside. Of active participants within the 7 cohorts at the end of Year 2, the employment rate has doubled, credit scores are being improved, and average monthly income has risen an average of \$420/mo per household. As described in the report, participants in Cohorts 1-7 also have made significant achievements in health and wellness, housing security, and social assets during the first and second year of programming, improving their lives and the lives of their families. Perhaps even as important is that the program has given NWP participants hope for the future.

Additional supports are being added to meet household barriers to self-sufficiency. As noted in the first-year report, many NWP participants have a history of childhood trauma (namely childhood physical,

sexual, or emotional assault). Trauma can have a significant impact on the life course and potentially hinder long-term efforts towards self-sufficiency if not addressed. As also noted in the Year 1 report, many participants also have a learning, mental, or physical disability, or are caring for individuals with one or more disabilities. Additional resources and community-based supports continue to be sought out for these families.

The economic value of the services provided by funders, community members, universities, and service organizations has resulted in significant cost benefits during Year 1 and Year 2. During Year 3, researchers plan to quantify the economic investments of goods, services, grant funding, and in-kind resources and the overall benefit and impact per dollar of investment.

New Initiatives and Areas of Research Interest: As discussed further in the report, new initiatives have been introduced to assist with health, housing, and children's education. Additional applied research is also occurring related to social capital as well as financial literacy and economic empowerment.

“The Northwest Project is helping families and individuals learn how to budget, save and get out of debt, help people and encourage them to live healthier lives, set goals, build strong and happy relationships, offer resources and education on things, as well as getting more involved with community so that one day maybe we can live in a cleaner, safer, and flourishing community.”

- Mother and NWP participant

Year Two Participant Outcomes

Participant outcomes are centered on 10 stability asset attainments. These areas include the following: securing affordable housing (where applicable); obtaining quality and affordable childcare; addressing transportation needs (where applicable); establishing financial goals and participation in one-on-one financial budgeting and coaching assistance; resolving any legal issues; family relationship development (where healthy and safe for participants); job training and employment; community engagement; and health and well being. All of the 10 stability assets are considered to be fundamental in a person's ability to achieve and maintain self-sufficiency long-term. Within these broad categories, the NWP provides intensive case management and neighborhood/community resource coordination for participants. Participant outcomes for Year 2 are as follows:



Dr. Amy Blansit, The Northwest Project Director, Kristina Wilmoth, The Northwest Project Programming Manager, Madeline Hill, Springfield Dream Center, Jody Glazner, Director of Springfield Dream Center, at Grant Beach Cohort 2 Graduation.

Demographics

There are currently 55 individuals (49 unduplicated households) who have completed the Circles® portion of the NWP over the past 2 years. Given the size of these households, 204 individuals are estimated to have been impacted or directly served by project activities in Cohorts 1-8. Of those in Cohorts 1-7 (or at the completion of Year 2; N=50), 44 identified as Caucasian, 3 identified as African American, 1 identified as Hispanic, 1 identified as Native American, and 1 identified as multiracial. The average age of Cohort 1-7 participants is 41. Sixteen individuals from Cohorts 1-7 reported that they were born in Springfield (many noted that they were not born in or otherwise always resided in Zone 1). Of those that were not born in Springfield (N=29), 5 noted that they were from an urban area (250,000+ population size), 2 noted that they were from a suburban area (50,000-249,000 population size), and 22 noted from a rural area (less than 49,000 population size). Six individuals did not identify if they were originally from Springfield or from another location.

Income and Employment Milestones

NWP participants fill out progress data every 6 months during their participation in the program. Of the progress data available from Cohorts 1-7, NWP participants have mean increased credit scores of 20 points or more (including one individual that had over a 100-point increase) with participation in the program (N=33 households). Follow-up data also demonstrates an average of \$420 monthly increase in income (\$5,040 annually), with twice as many participants employed currently as compared to when they started the program. Many have been able to reduce their debt load with the assistance of financial coaching provided by volunteers and volunteer banking institutions. Some participants also have reduced their debt and improved their household income sufficiently enough to purchase their own homes. (See chart on page 6).

Self-Sufficiency Goals & Progress

Education, employment, transportation and health-related needs remain the biggest reported and statistical needs for Cohort 1-7 participants. Housing, childcare, and several other of the 10 assets (while significant to long-term sustainability and are areas being addressed with each participant) do not often appear to be presenting concerns at intake and screening assessments. Rather, employment, education and transportation remain significant barriers to self sufficiency. Health circumstances, such as access to care, also present additional challenges. For those eligible, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

benefits, housing subsidies, and child-care subsidies are being utilized, which provides for these needs for many participants. For these participating families, the sudden loss of assistance programs such as SNAP, childcare, or public housing can create what is known as the “Cliff Effect,” when a family’s income threshold falls slightly outside of the eligibility guidelines for assistance. Oftentimes an increase of less than \$50 a month can lead to the loss of several hundred dollars’ worth of programs. When a gain in income doesn’t cover the needs of a family because of loss in assistance, it can cause someone to turn down a raise or even promotions. Employment that provides for basic needs and education that provides opportunities to higher paying employment in such an event, remains imperative for NWP participants.

Income & Employment Milestones

N= 33 “Active Households
(38 Participants) Dollar Amount

Total Debt Reduction - \$313,954.00

Newly Acquired Debt

Auto (2 Vehicles) \$29,000.00

Medical (under review for write off) \$89,400.00

Total Reduced Debt - \$195,553.95

Combined Cohorts Total Change in Income (Monthly) \$15,073.00

Average Household Expense % of Budget (Goal is <30%)

Average Pre 49.49%

Average Post 37.52%

Change -11.97%

Average Household Benefit Reductions (Monthly) -\$207.00

Federal Poverty Level 2017 (%) for Households

Average Pre 82%

Average Post 104%

Change 22%

Number of households 200% Federal Poverty Level: 1 (3%)
 Number of households 150% Federal Poverty Level: 6 (18.2%)
 Number of households above 100% Federal Poverty Level: 15 (45.5%)
 Number of households improvements in Federal Poverty Level: 26 (78.8%)



HOUSING COST % BUDGET
(GOAL 30%)

PRE NWP: 49.49%
POST NWP: 37.52%

TOTAL DEBT REDUCTION
(15 HOUSEHOLDS)
-\$313,000



CHANGE IN INCOME
(33 HOUSEHOLDS)
MONTHLY: +\$15,073
ANNUAL: +\$180,876



CHANGE IN BENEFITS
ANNUAL: -\$2,500



Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Scores

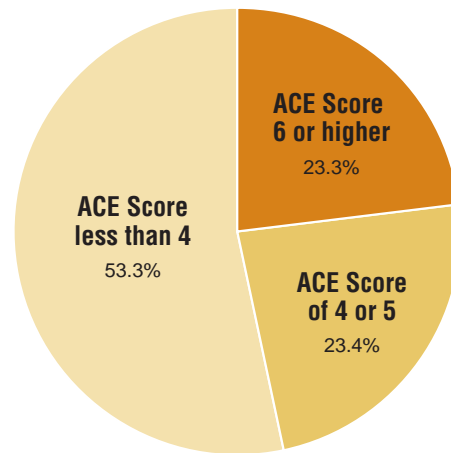
In the first NWP report, preliminary information was provided on the potential importance of exploring childhood experiences and its possible correlations to adult economic stability. Research has shown that the impact of childhood experiences, whether positive or negative, has a direct impact on adult well-being and health. A seminal study conducted from 1995 to 1997, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE), proved a strong relationship exists between stressful childhood experiences and adult health. The trauma of physical abuse, chronic neglect, sexual abuse and other types of maltreatment often lead to poor mental and physical health well into adulthood.³ High ACE scores contribute to major public health problems such as diabetes, cancer, stroke, and other fatal diseases. Other significant short- and long-term consequences include lower academic performance, depression, substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, lower self-esteem, and delinquency. In addition, lack of care during childhood sharply increases the likelihood of adult poverty and homelessness. Researchers continue to work to understand long-term life outcomes from ACEs. According to Metzler, Merrick, Klevens, Ports, and Ford (2017), “understanding the potential impact of early adversity across the life course is critical to breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty.”⁴

The average ACE score among 30 NWP participants is 3.86. The more ACEs one has, the greater the risk for chronic disease, mental health concerns (such as depression and anxiety) and violent behavior. It is also noted that elevated scores increase the potential for being a victim of violence. ACE scores occur on a 1-10 scale. Each type of trauma counts as 1, no matter how many times it occurs. According to the

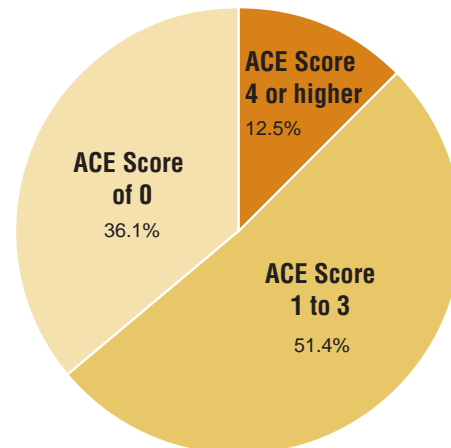
American Journal of Medicine (2009), those with an ACE score of 4 are twice as likely to be smokers and 7 times more likely to be an alcoholic. Having an ACE score of 4 increases the risk of emphysema or chronic bronchitis by nearly 400 percent, and suicide by 1,200 percent. Nearly half (46.7%) of NWP participants had a score of 4 or greater. People with high ACE scores are also more

ACE SCORES:

NWP PARTICIPANT SCORES



NATIONAL SCORES



³ Center for Disease Control and Prevention. “Adverse Childhood Experiences.”

⁴ Full content available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/index.html>
Metzler, Merrick, Klevens, Ports, and Ford (2017). Adverse childhood experiences and life opportunities: Shifting the narrative. Children and Youth Services Review. April, 2017. Pgs 141-149. Article available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0190740916303449>.

⁵ Ibid.

likely to be violent, to have more marriages, more broken bones, more drug prescriptions, more depression, and more autoimmune diseases. People with an ACE score of 6 or higher are at risk of their lifespan being shortened by 20 years. Nearly a quarter (23.3%) of NWP participants surveyed had a score of 6 or greater.

Among communities that have introduced trauma-informed practices (designed to address ACEs) on a community-based level, all have seen substantial reductions in substance abuse-related crimes and deaths, significant reduction in suicide and bullying, improved overall public health outcomes, less school behavioral disruptions, and greater academic achievement among youth. According to the research conducted by

Metzler, Merrick, Klevens, Ports, and Ford (2017), it is critical for communities that want their children to achieve their full potential to assure the healthy development of all children.⁵

Ally Survey 2017

Through The Northwest Project Circles® program, project participants, called Circles® Leaders, are paired with at least one community partner, called a Circles® Ally. This Ally serves as a support and intentional friend for the leader as they make changes and work toward their goals. The ally process is a great support to participants in the program and can be life changing for allies, as well. Different than mentors, allies are described in Circles® as “volunteers

“Reminder that there are people working hard to get to a better place out of poverty. Not all are abusing the system.”

“I did not realize how much attitude and intention affected the actions of those hoping to improve their situation.”

Allies were asked: ***How has being an ally influenced your views and understanding of poverty and its impact on society?***

“As I take the time to get to know the Circle participants I am a bit surprised at how much I like each one. I look forward each week to hear their stories and to check their progress. It is heartwarming to see how they are all working to improve their lives voluntarily.”

“Being an Ally has helped me understand that poverty happens to people like me; it is not a problem that ‘other people’ have. This is a problem that I have, that I have contributed to, and that I can help fix by being and ally (among other things).”

“I realize that my experiences [are] only my own and even though I relate to others, I can’t stamp my experience onto others as their own.”

Here is what one family had to say about their experience with financial coaching:

“Todd and I met in 2016 through my involvement with the Circles® program and The Northwest Project at The Fairbanks. He helped my wife and I establish checking and savings accounts and a Fresh Start Loan through City Utilities Community Credit Union as a part of the Circles® program. Mr. Parnell used his vast knowledge of banking to obtain a debt consolidation loan that we used to pay off the many payday loans that I had at that time. The debt consolidation loan payment was less than my smallest payday loan. This immediately raised my credit score and put my family on a better path through sensible budgeting and better money management. Todd Parnell is one of the kindest, and dedicated people I have ever met. He has a huge heart and enjoys helping others.”

working to move families and communities into economic stability, through support, collaboration, and advocacy.” Circles® Leaders are the leaders of their own lives and encouraged in that role so that they can achieve their goals. To date, the NWP has had over 60 community allies participate in the program.

NWP Circles® Allies come from all walks of life and age groups. Nearly half (42% of respondents) of current NWP Circles® allies are between the ages of 45-54. The study, conducted in 2017 by Amy Fouse, Executive Director of the Drew Lewis Foundation, found that 85.7 percent (N=12) of responding allies are involved in community advocacy at least 3-4 times a month and 100% said that being an ally has had at least some influence on their life. It was also noted that a desire to volunteer and address poverty had a strong influence on an ally’s desire to serve in this role, closely followed by faith-based motivation, NWP connection, and a desire to get involved with the neighborhood.

Financial Coaching

When the NWP began, it was anticipated that budgeting and payday loan consolidation and repayment would be an important part of the program. It was quickly noted, however, that this alone would not allow families to overcome many of the long-term financial challenges that they were facing. Former bank president, Todd Parnell, committed to personalized one-on-one financial coaching for families in the program. This coaching typically includes a personalized financial plan, loan consolidation, credit score building, and re-entry in the banking systems (for those who were not using a bank). Many families had previously been unbanked or had left the banking system because of bad experiences. The coaching that families receive from Todd and the financial team helps them to gain understanding and confidence interacting inside the financial setting.

Hope and Resiliency Studies

In the first-year NWP progress report, it also was noted that the NWP researchers were

⁶ More information about the FHI measure and its use can be found at: <https://www.mccubbinresilience.org/measures.html>

Table 1

Family Hardiness Index (FHI) Score					
Cohort	Participants	Initial Mean	Post Mean	Score Change	Percent Change
Grant Beach 3	6	45	49	+ 4	+ 8.89%
Grant Beach 4	5	39.5	44	+ 4.5	+ 11.39%
Robberson 1	6	47.5	42.8	- 4.7	- 9.89%
Woodland Heights 1	8	50.38	48.625	- 1.755	+ 3.48%
Woodland Heights 2*	7	46.86	*	*	*
Heart of the Westside 1*	8	45.14	*	*	*
TOTAL	40	44.76	46.67	+ 1.91	+ 4.27%

**These cohorts have not completed the Circles© program and have not completed a post assessment.*

interested in exploring how the NWP has assisted in increasing hope for participants and in building resiliency. NWP researchers at Drury University (Dan Prater and Aaron Schekorra) explored these concepts in 2017 and early 2018 through two assessments: (1) The Family Hardiness Index; and (2) The Hope Scale (an established measure that evaluates levels of hope and hopelessness).

“Family Hardiness Index” Assessments

The Family Hardiness Index (FHI) was developed by Marilyn McCubbin, Hamilton McCubbin, and Anne Thompson in 1986.⁶ The FHI focuses on the internal strengths and durability of a family, characterized as an overall sense of control over the outcomes of their lives, a view of change as positive growth, and whether they take an active or passive orientation in adjusting to and managing hardships and stress. The FHI measures this hardiness on a scale with a low end score of 0 and a high end score of 60. An increase over time means that as clients’ lives improve, they are better equipped, internally, to handle hardships and stressors as they arise. Higher levels of family hardiness are associated with better family coping and adaptation.

NWP participants (beginning with the third cohort) completed the FHI assessment twice – first when they entered the program, and again once they graduated from Circles®.

Grant Beach participants reported significant FHI improvement, while Woodland Heights and Robberson showed slight declines (see Table 1). FHI score differences may relate to: 1) participants’ personal circumstances during assessment; and 2) timing of initial assessment. Grant Beach participants completed the initial assessment prior to beginning the Circles® program, while Woodland Heights and Robberson participants completed it one month after starting the program. Higher scores near the beginning of the program reflect participants’ excitement and high expectation, which levels as they proceed through the program. Other possible factors for Woodland Heights and Robberson results include individuals’ negative interactions with previous neighborhood programs that failed to produce expected outcomes.

Overall the average FHI score across the program rose to 46.6, yet remains slightly lower than that of a local comparison group that completed the same assessment. The comparison group’s score was 50.35.

Participants from the first two NWP cohorts received an FHI assessment after completing Circles® and a year after beginning maintenance (the period after Circles® programming and graduation). The average increase in these participants’ scores is higher (see Table 2). The nature of this index means that while NWP participants are better equipped to handle stress and hardship upon

Table 2

Cohort	Participants	FHI Score Post-Score			
		Initial Mean	Post Mean	Score Change	Percent Change
Grant Beach 1	4	38	45.4	+ 7.4	+ 19.47%
Grant Beach 2	8	40	49	+ 9	+ 22.50%

graduating from Circles®, the realization of this capability and increase in hardiness is occurring during the maintenance stage of the program.

The FHI scores of women in the program increase more than twice as much as the men who completed Circles®. The average final score for women, however, was lower than the average starting score for men. So while women’s hardiness increases at a greater rate, men in the program have higher overall family hardiness scores.

Motivation for Change

During each initial interview, clients are asked to identify the two areas of their lives they desired to change that were motivations for joining the program. During the follow-up interview, each client explains the impact the program has had so far and which of the stated goals he or she has reached (or made progress on). The top three of each are: (1) Financial Assistance/Budgeting; (2) Support system/Friends; and (3) Housing. During each initial FHI interview, NWP participants are asked to identify the three biggest goals they have for the program and how that goal will impact their life. During

the follow-up interview, each client then explained the impact the program has had so far and which of the stated goals they have reached (or made progress on). The top three reported goals and impacts reported were: (1) Financial Assistance/Budgeting; (2) Overall decrease in stress, better at coping, more control over their lives; and (3) Support system/Friends.

“Hope Scale” Assessment Scores

NWP researchers utilized the “Adult Hope Scale” assessment to evaluate participants’ hope. Research has documented a strong correlation between hope and a variety of life goals and outcomes. Hope is defined as an individuals’ perceptions regarding their ability to clearly conceptualize their goals, develop strategies to reach those goals, and sustain activities in support of those strategies.⁷ High-hope individuals are resilient and experience lower levels of depression, allowing them to function better in the workplace and at home.⁸

There are currently 28 completed pre- and post-Hope assessments, with 40 pre-test total completed. Two cohorts have not received follow-up interviews. Individuals in the NWP are given an 11-point scale to measure their level of hopefulness. They self-report scores between 0-10 (0 is a complete lack of any hope, and 10 is the most positive and hopeful). Participants are asked to give two scores — one at the beginning of their time in NWP and another at the completion of the program.

More than 90% reported increased hope; the average change was 4.2 points (nearly 50% increase). Six participants (about 20%) increased on the 11-point scale by 7 or more

“This has helped in so many ways; it’s really changed my life.”
- NWP participant

“Now I know how to put my ideas into action. I’m much more confident about the future.”
- NWP participant

⁷ Snyder, C. R. (2002). Hope theory: Rainbows in the mind. *Psychological Inquiry*, 13, 249–275.

⁸ Snyder, C. R., & Lopez, S. J. (2002). *Handbook of positive psychology*. New York: Oxford University Press.

points. Two participants had no change, and one decreased by 1.5 points.

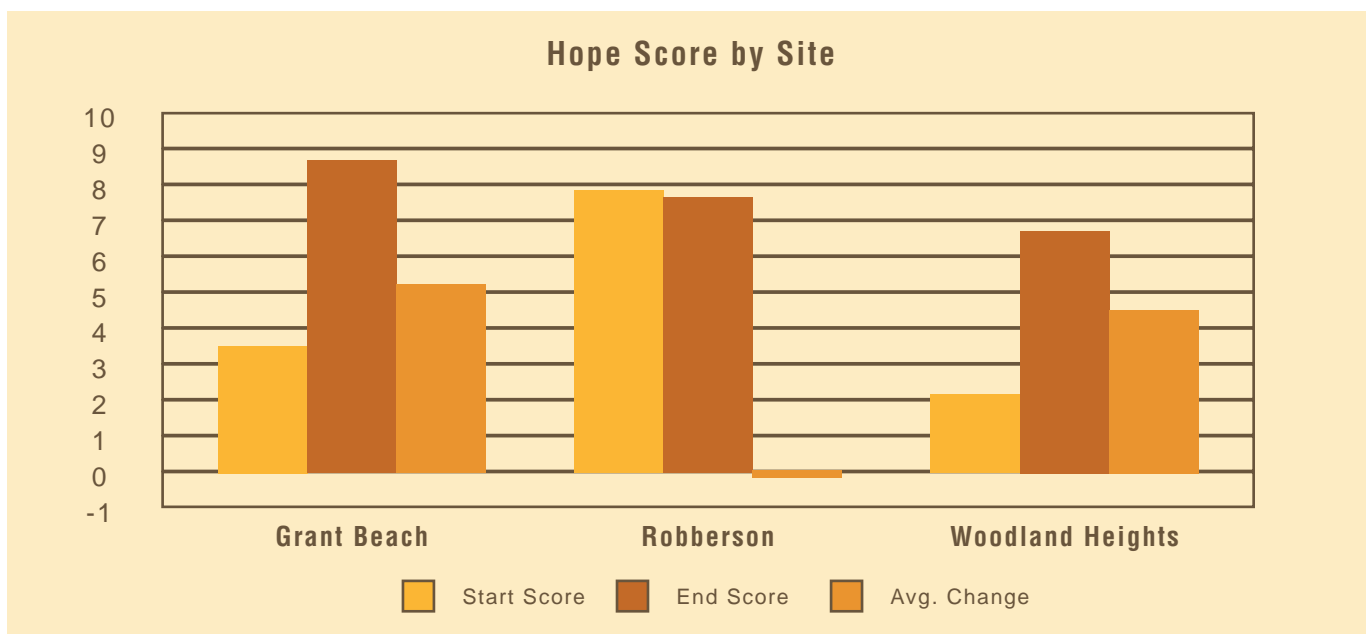
Researchers examined the relationship between low and high levels of hopelessness. Hope levels fluctuated, depending on current personal circumstances. Higher beginning scores frequently related to excitement about starting NWP. This positive outlook helped participants succeed in setting and reaching

“This program really opened my eyes to all the areas in my life I need help with.”
- NWP participant

Hope Score			
	Initial Score	Post Score	Score Change
Mean	3.79	7.38	+ 3.58 points
Median	3.0	8.0	36%

goals. Participants with no change or with lower ending scores reported a sense of anxiety about addressing multiple life issues. Although there was not a strong correlation between longevity in NWP and higher hope levels, participation in the program and work with NWP case management team resulted in consistently higher hope levels for participants within a few weeks of starting. While scores increased slightly with continued involvement, the biggest change occurred early.

Hope Score by Site			
Cohort	Initial Mean	Post Mean	Score Change
Grant Beach CH1-4	3.41	8.66	+ 5.25
Robberson CH1	7.80	7.7	- 0.10
Woodland Heights CH1	2.12	6.75	+ 4.53



Business and Faith-Based Contributions

The NWP has received substantial and unprecedented community support. Currently, approximately 75 community-based agencies and organizations (including churches) have committed their services, time, or resources to support the efforts of the NWP. These groups include a variety of organizations. Several community churches are committed to a program called “One Church One Family,” that aims to meet physical needs and wants of families participating in the NWP. For this program, a church is paired with a specific family and their needs and wants 4 times a year. The NWP has seen several churches get involved with this program, especially around the holiday season. Gifts from churches in the program include requested need gifts like a microwave, bed, clothing, toys, a car seat, school supplies, and extra-curricular fee payments. The NWP has seen an increase in businesses wanting to get involved this way, as well. The NWP recently created a program called “Springfield Connect” as a business model for engaging with families in this way.

The NWP includes a number of community agencies that provide resources related to the 10 pivotal assets. These partners include organizations like Ozarks Technical Community College, the City of Springfield, Springfield Community Gardens, Springfield

Public Schools, Life360 Family Services, Habitat for Humanity, Boys & Girls Club, Great Circle-Parenting Life Skills Center, Care to Learn, Springfield Metropolitan Bar Association, Ozarks Regional YMCA, and Schweitzer United Methodist Church Jobs for Life Program, along with many others. Community partnering organizations work to bring stability and success to the community at large. They partner with the NWP to provide resources such as affordable housing, quality childcare, job training and food security. The Rotary groups in Springfield also have been deeply committed to and connected to the project, giving hundreds of hours in volunteer assistance and over \$31,000 toward the NWP goals and its collaboratives.

Grant requests over the past two years have been made to local and regional foundations to assist the NWP with additional participant resources and program and community-based initiatives, including home-health concerns, housing, mental health resources, building fundraising capacity, community dinner resources, and transportation. It is also significant to note that a grant strategy for Year 3 has been established that attempts to garner additional federal and foundation funds for project efforts.

“The Southeast Rotary Club has had the pleasure to work on grant projects to provide a computer lab and playground equipment for the Drew Lewis Foundation. In addition, our members enjoy the opportunity for some hands-on involvement to help support the innovative programs that are truly working on sustainable change in the lives of people in poverty.”

- Lori Barnes, President of SE Rotary Club

Individual Volunteer Investments

Over Years 1 and 2, over 606 individuals have volunteered a total of more than 2,171 hours to NWP project activities, including home repairs, community dinners, Circles® programming, and other efforts. In addition, universities such as Missouri State University, have involved their faculty, students, and courses in NWP programming. For example, the NWP has had 8 Missouri State University graduate assistants that have completed their assistantships with the

NWP: Two have graduated and/or moved into full-time positions connected with the NWP; 20 undergraduate students have completed internships at the NWP; and over 60 Missouri State service-learning students have been involved in 2017-2018 alone thus far. Missouri State faculty continue to be involved in direct service activities, NWP program evaluation, and other areas of research noted in the next report section.

Quotes from Volunteers

“While serving at the Life360 community dinner, I learned the qualities of a growing and giving community. Being an active member of the community not only means giving and supporting, but also engaging. This community specifically works to engage members of their community with one another through programming during dinners and youth groups for the teens.”

- Community Dinner Volunteer

“I am very glad that I chose this place to spend my three hours. I was able to see how much such a small group of people can accomplish and the impact that they can have on people in the community. There are many people in need in the area, which made the experience that much better. I assisted in preparing food for the dinner being provided, recycled, and also watched children in the daycare center while parents were busy. It was a great experience and I am looking forward to coming back again in the future.”

- NWP participant

Other Achievements in Year Two

Community Dinners

NWP community dinners are part of a collaborative U.S. Food and Drug Administration grant program (administered by Life360 Church, the YMCA, and the Drew Lewis Foundation,) and are hosted 6 nights a week at the Fairbanks (Sunday - Friday). This grant also provides community dinners for each of the four NWP neighborhood programming sites (Grant Beach, Robberson, Heart of the Westside, and Woodland Heights). In the months of January and February alone the community dinner grant served:

- **2,296 total meals;**
- **1,046 meals to adults; and**
- **1,250 meals to children**

Everyone in Springfield is welcome to attend, regardless of their participation in NWP programming.

Social Capital Study

NWP research staff met with the Missouri State Social Work department in early August 2017 to replicate a social capital study conducted by Harvard University. The study looks specifically at neighborhood levels of trust, relationships, and capital. The Social

Work Department agreed to pilot the study with faculty and students at NWP community dinners and then expand the study into other neighborhoods as NWP continues to grow. This information provides a baseline for measuring social capital over time, as well as measuring the value of NWP community dinners in building community. Of those surveyed thus far (N=25), many are quite engaged in neighborhood-related events and *all reported that community dinners have assisted in building a sense of community, assisted in strengthening the community, and have helped in building new relationships with members of their neighborhoods.* Additional social capital data will be collected throughout the 2018 spring semester by Missouri State social work students.

The Blue House Project

The “Blue House Project” is a unique home ownership initiative program for qualified participants of the NWP. Through the program, a family will work toward budgeting and banking goals, with the larger goal of purchasing their home within 24 months. To retain eligibility in the Blue House Project, a participant must be actively involved with

the NWP. Active involvement is defined to include: initial Circles® attendance weekly, graduating from the Circles® program, attending Circles® maintenance gatherings, and regular meetings with the social work team. In addition to active involvement with the NWP, Blue House Project participants also will participate in monthly home visits in the 24 months leading up to their home ownership transition. These monthly visits will serve as a tool for assistance, maintenance, and education. Safe and Healthy Home guidelines are a part of this education (see page 16). Currently, 3 families are being served by the project with additional homes to be added in 2018.

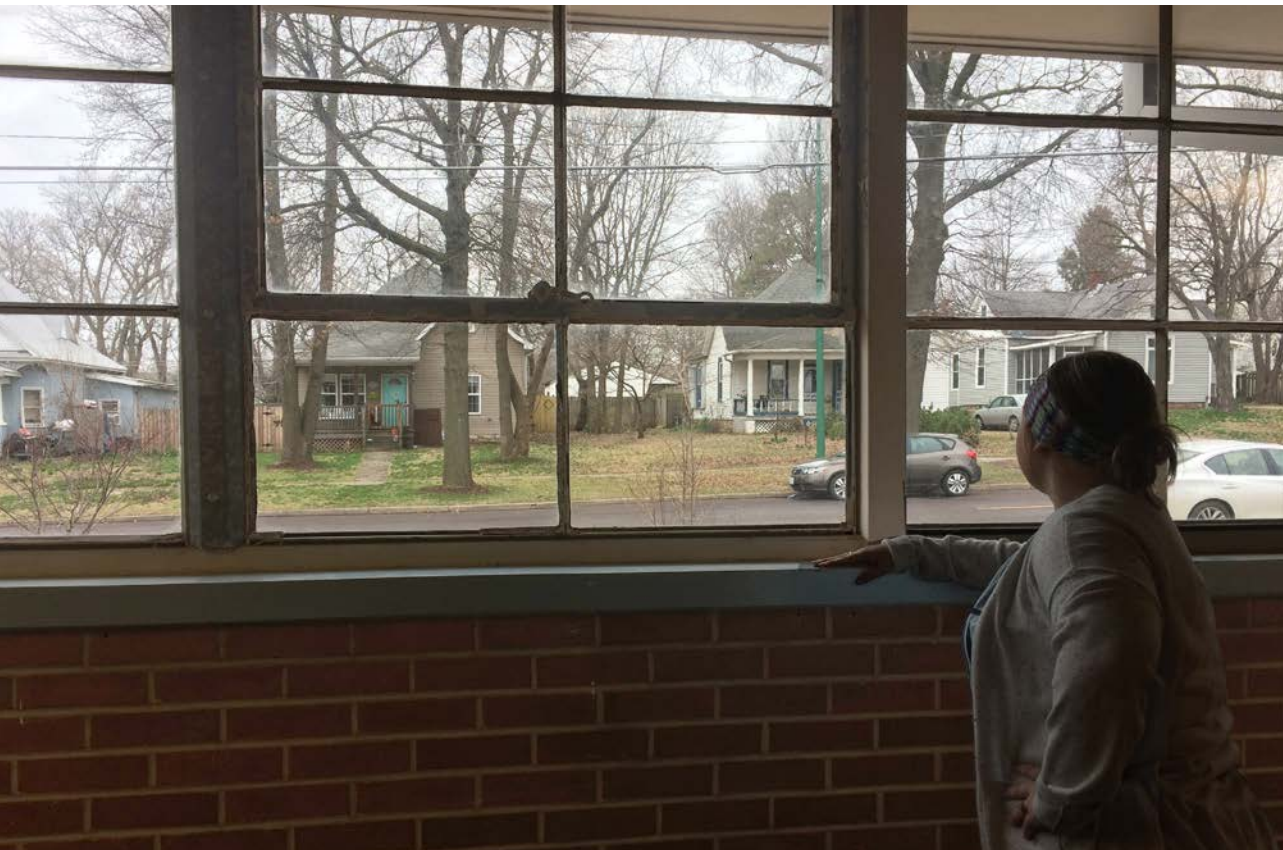


MSU students serving at a community dinner.

Healthy Homes Initiative

It has been discovered in working with the NWP program that some NWP families are experiencing chronic health issues like asthma, skin infections, and lice that are related to unhealthy living conditions such as hoarding tendencies, pests, long-lasting clutter, and home structure issues that may compound health and safety issues. For under-resourced families on tight budgets, access to affordable quality housing and items needed to maintain a clean and healthy home are cost prohibitive. The expense of necessary repairs (such as leaks that cause mold, etc.) exceed the savings of most NWP families. Healthy Homes is an effort to work with families to access and maintain safe, affordable, healthy homes and work with families in their homes to help reduce health risk factors. This pilot project includes a Healthy Homes coordinator who works with families to address potential health and safety issues in the home. It focuses on seven specific home conditions

that impact health. They include: asthma triggers; pest control; tobacco use; responsible pet ownership; tidiness and general cleanliness; safety hazards and injury prevention; and indoor air quality. The coordinator provides families with access to items necessary to create and maintain a healthy, livable environment for their families. Resources may include items like: vacuums; smoke alarms; pest treatments; air filters; weatherization resources; hardware needed for basic door and window repair; hardware needed for plumbing repairs (for maintenance such as fixing leaky faucets, broken pipes, and clogged drains); and other items for basic organization and clutter-free living (such as bins, hampers, and cable and wire management systems). The Missouri Foundation for Health has provided over \$200,000 to support the Healthy Homes initiative over the next three years. This project is focused specifically on serving NWP families, with the goal to serve at least 50 families over the 36-month grant period.



A look from the Fairbanks Community Center out into Grant Beach neighborhood.

Areas of Research & Programming Interest Year Three

Circles® USA Youth

An area of potential growth and immediate funding need is youth development that complements adult poverty programming. Research shows that investing in an impoverished child's future is an effective strategy to break the unrelenting cycle of generational poverty. Providing specific, strategic teaching and skill development not only fights poverty at a personal level, but is also preventative at a community level.

Circles® USA is the result of more than 20 years of research and the development of leadership tools for communities by Move the Mountain Leadership Center. The Circles® model predicates that responsibility for both poverty and prosperity rests not only in the hands of individuals, but also with societies, institutions, and communities. Therefore, the Circles® approach combines best practices in several disciplines including community organizing, case management, grassroots leadership, S.M.A.R.T. goal setting, financial literacy, mentoring, peer-to-peer counseling and learning, and child/youth development.

Currently, 70-plus communities in 19 states and parts of Canada have joined the Circles® network. The Circles® curriculum has drawn national attention and has been implemented by several large social service groups such as the United Way and Goodwill services. The Circles® curriculum promotes a grassroots approach of equipping families living in poverty with the necessary skills to thrive and achieve success in terms of financial stability and meaningful family and community relationships.

Funding is currently being sought to provide Circles® USA programming for children and youth in Grant Beach and for the children of NWP adult participants in Year 3. Circles® USA children's curriculum includes activities and lessons around building relationships, respect and service, and financial literacy.



Neighborhood youth play at local library.

Financial Coaching Impacts & Benefits Study

NWP staff and stakeholders have developed relationships with financial institutions that can assist NWP families in repairing credit, developing financial literacy, and establishing a relationship with a financial home. To date, these institutions include Commerce Bank, City Utilities Community Credit Union, Central Bank, Regions Bank and Great Southern Bank. These groups have provided one-on-one financial coaching, small loans to build credit, simplified banking tools for low-income families entering the banking system, and personal support and praise for families reaching financial goals. These personalized touch points are the difference our families need to understand a financial system many have previously avoided. The value of this individualized coaching (vs. traditional approaches related to budget management) has proven to be significant and valuable to NWP families. In Year 3, Dr. Erin Kenny, of Missouri State University, will be looking at the benefits of such an approach and the long-term impacts of such guidance for NWP participating families.

The Economic Impact of Investing in Poverty Prevention and Reduction

As noted above, 75 businesses and 606 individual volunteers have made contributions to programming, directly impacting the lives of 204 NWP participants and their households through March, 2018. These efforts equate to an investment of approximately \$350,000 in addition to the general operating costs supported financially by the Community Foundation of the Ozarks, Musgrave, and Ball Foundations (\$420,000 spent of \$530,000 allocated over 2 years). One notable area of research interest for the project moving forward is evaluating this investment and the return provided on such investments. For example, with 204 members of households served, approximately \$4,300 has been provided in financial and in-kind support per person impacted by project activities, with benefits such as an average increased income of \$5,040 per active household in one year for Cohorts 1-7. Of course, these benefits can be analyzed in terms of overall lifetime earnings, improved quality of life, as well as in contributions made to state tax revenue.

Census data, for example, continually demonstrates providing food for families struggling with food insecurity is one of the most effective means to keep families above the poverty line.⁹ Other research demonstrates that the benefits of quality and affordable childcare (as well as addressing childhood trauma) can triple the original financial investment over the life course of earnings and productivity for children from all walks of life.¹⁰ Similarly, investments in transportation infrastructure also have had significant economic benefits and returns for communities.¹¹ The health and economic burdens from preventable hazards associated with the home are also considerable, but studies have reported that addressing at-risk home health hazards could lead to medical cost savings and the potential for a strong return for every dollar invested.¹²

As the project moves forward and as more short- and long-term outcomes are calculated, the research team seeks to quantify the economic value of community-wide NWP financial and in-kind contributions related to participant short- and long-term outcomes. This goal is intended to determine the merit of individual and community-wide investments in each of the 10 assets considered imperative to financial stability and success.

In one year, participant income increased by an average of \$5,040 per active household.

Drawing upon nationwide research, even relatively small investments in such efforts over time have had enormous social and community wide returns for communities.

⁹ United States Census (2016). "Supplemental Poverty Figures" Report and more information available online at: <https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/supplemental-poverty-measure.html>

¹⁰ Heckman, J (2011). The Economics of Inequality. American Educator. Report available online at: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ920516.pdf>

¹¹ Center for Neighborhood Technology (2017). More information available at: <https://www.cnt.org/transportation-and-community-development>

¹² Gomez, Reddy, Dixon, Wilson & Jacobs (2017). A Cost-Benefit Analysis of a State-Funded Healthy Homes Program for Residents With Asthma: Findings From the New York State Healthy Neighborhoods Program. Journal of Public Health Management Practice. 2017 Mar/Apr;23(2):229-238. Abstract available online at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28121775>

Additional Recommendations for Year Three

Overall, the NWP is continuing to make a difference for under-resourced families in Zone 1. The initial 5-year project impact goal of 500 persons will likely be met given 204 persons impacted as of March, 2018. Among the 45 unduplicated households being served, all have achieved notable personal goals within the 10 assets, built relationships with neighbors and resource partners, improved in financial capacity, income, and stability, and reported that the NWP has increased their sense of hope and resiliency for the future. While the NWP team has made efforts to conduct outreach to diverse racial and ethnic groups, NWP researchers would encourage additional outreach efforts, given that diverse groups often suffer disproportionately from economic or larger community challenge trends. The NWP also has undertaken various community development projects such as improving opportunities for housing, reducing health hazards in homes, and seeking additional programming for Zone 1 youth.

As evidenced by NWP participant progress data, the challenges for many under-resourced families, remain challenges that impact wide segments of our community. For example, access to quality physical and mental health resources, remains both a national and local public health concern. Adverse childhood experiences (such as abuse and neglect) also have been noted as a significant public health issue in Greene County. Further, transportation concerns, “Cliff Effect” realities for families receiving aid, access to educational opportunity, and employment that provides wages to meet basic needs have been subjects of debate and local public policy efforts for a significant period of time. As the NWP meets the needs of families in Zone 1, the NWP and research team will continue to be a part of such conversations and hope that outcome data encourages additional responses on community-wide solutions to reducing poverty rates over time.

UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVOLVEMENT

Northwest Project Ally

5-6 hours a month - Serving as an intentional friend for a Northwest Project participant. Commitment includes reaching out to assigned participant weekly (through text, email, coffee, etc). An ideal candidate would attend a 1-hour Northwest Project programming evening class two times per month.

Northwest Project Mentor

5-6 hours a month - This involves working with children in our evening programming (ex. reading, art projects, character training, etc.). This could be tailored toward your passions and expertise.

UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVOLVEMENT

Springfield Connection/One Church One Family

2-3 hours a month - This is a program that connects a specific family in our program and their specific needs with you (or your group) to help assist with unmet needs. List of family members, clothing sizes, and needs will be provided 4 times per year. By signing up for the program you are partnering to meet the needs and wants of a family in whatever ways you are willing and able.

Specialized Skills

Hours Vary - If you have specialized skills you are interested in sharing (accounting, home repair, tutoring, lawn care, education/training, etc.) please let us know. These kinds of skills can often be a great fit into our programming if we know there is a desire to volunteer in a specialized way.

Weekly Volunteer Opportunities

3 hours each - These volunteer opportunities happen weekly (4 nights a week) and involve no ongoing commitment. Volunteers assist with programming set up, serving dinner, serving our programming children, and helping clean up. Volunteer opportunities can be found at [givepulse.com](https://www.givepulse.com) under the Northwest Project.

Opportunities for Financial Contributions

The NWP is always open to additional funding contributions to help expand the programming and its reach. If you have interest in getting financially contributing to this program and the work it is committed to, you are welcome to contact Community Foundation of the Ozarks or the Drew Lewis Foundation to explore more details about contributing.

Get Involved Now

Check out GivePulse for volunteer opportunities (link <https://www.givepulse.com/group/115867-The-Northwest-Project>) or email info@drewlewis.com for more information.

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The Northwest Project graduates from Robberson.



This report is dedicated in loving memory of Tammy Haynes. Tammy was unwavering in her dedication to Northwest Springfield and the work of the NWP. She served as the Heart of the Westside Neighborhood President and was instrumental in bringing the NWP to that neighborhood. Not only was she a graduate of the program, but she also served as a Circles® facilitator of the NWP. Her presence is greatly missed.