



POVERTY

Focus on Hope

Circles of Hope is an initiative of Peace Connections & a member of the Circles® National Campaign

What is Circles of Hope?

An innovative, relationship-based approach to helping local families move permanently out of poverty.

What problem is being addressed?

Generational and situational poverty at the individual and systemic levels. Over 50% of Harvey County school-age children are economically disadvantaged, and an estimated 20% or more of the population—at least 7,000—has inadequate resources.

What makes the approach unique?

Circles® is not a *hand-out*, but rather a *hand up* through education and a support network for working families in Harvey County who do not have adequate resources to meet their needs. At the same time, their middle-income allies and the community at large are being educated about the causes of poverty and challenged to be part of the solution.

Building stronger buckets

Poverty is typically defined as *a lack of money and possessions*. The web of contributing factors, however, is far more complex than that definition implies, especially when a sense of helplessness and hopelessness passes from one generation to the next.

Looking at resources holistically

In Circles of Hope, participants are introduced to a new term: *low resources*. This isn't a euphemism designed to gloss over the realities of poverty. Instead, it's a more holistic starting point for defining the challenge in order to craft a solution with greater integrity. So far the Circles® model, which is part of a national campaign, seems to be doing just that.

Soon after starting the Circle Leader training class, each family takes a realistic look at their resource needs. That assessment opens the door to a new kind of thinking, a more integrated basis for goal-setting. They learn that money alone does not resolve poverty.



Each Tuesday evening the Circles of Hope community gathers to share a meal, followed by a class or meeting.

How much can a leaky bucket hold?

The visual metaphor used to bring this concept alive in the training class is an old-fashioned bucket with wooden staves. Each staff represents one of the key resources: mental, emotional, spiritual, physical, financial, formal language skills, role models, support systems, understanding the hidden rules of class, motivation and persistence, integrity and trust. Realistically, a bucket can only hold as much as its most damaged staff permits.

Choosing priorities

In Circles of Hope, choosing priorities to create a better future starts with repairing the weakest staves first. To do otherwise is to pour resources into a bucket that is guaranteed to keep leaking.

The decision to join the Circles of Hope community is the first step in the bucket-building process. The opportunity to foster trust across class, race, economic, political and religious lines in Circles begins strengthening many resource staves immediately. Gradually, Circle Leaders stop feeling overwhelmed and begin to experience the empowerment that comes of taking charge of their lives.



Monthly Giving

Simple
Automatic
Sustaining



All the money & programs in the world cannot equal the power of one relationship built on equality & love.



612 N. Main Street
Newton, KS 67114
316-284-0000

info@peaceconnections.org

www.peaceconnections.org



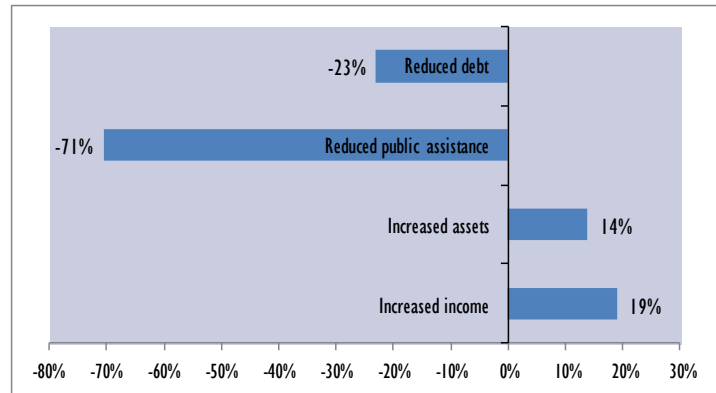
Ending poverty one family at a time

Making an impact

Since 2009, Circles of Hope has conducted six Circle Leader training classes with a total of 63 participants. There are currently 19 active Matched Circles (which consist of one Circle Leader and two to four volunteer Allies).

The economic impacts of the model are shown at right for the eight Circle Leaders who have completed their 18-month commitment.

Circle Leader economic impacts after 18 months



Keeping the blessings flowing

Paying it forward

Participants talk about what a radical difference it makes to come out of isolation and exponentially increase support networks and access to resources. Some of the most shy and reluctant participants have turned into unexpected leaders.

Notes of hope. When Sherie first came to Circles, no one probably imagined that two years later she'd be spearheading a benefit concert at her church. That event, in which she played piano and flute, raised over \$1,000 for Circles of Hope.

Reciprocity. The Circles® model specifies "middle and upper income Allies" to befriend Circle Leaders, but that template was spontaneously redesigned here when several Circle Leaders who had completed their 18-month commitment decided they wanted to become Allies. This unique twist on the model offers the

value of Allies who understand economic and social class issues from an inside viewpoint and can serve as credible and inspiring examples of success to their peers.

Coming full circle. Jerica entered the first Circle Leader training class in 2009 as a single mom working two minimum-wage fast-food jobs and barely eking by. Today she is on a different trajectory altogether as she nears completion of a degree in education. This year she began co-facilitating the introductory training class that guides Circles participants in assessing their resources and setting goals for a more hope-filled future.

Many buckets make an ocean

Every drop makes a difference in raising the **\$96,000** required to operate Circles of Hope each year. Individual donors and volunteers are the mainstay of this grassroots campaign built on **the power of caring relationships to raise hope and end poverty one family at a time.**

Many drops make a bucket, many buckets make a pond, many ponds make a lake, and many lakes make an ocean.

-Percy Ross



WEEKLY MEETINGS
First United Methodist Church
801 N. Main, Newton, KS
Meal: 5:30-6:20 PM
3rd Tuesday POTLUCK
Meeting: 6:30-8:00 PM



Visitors are welcome on the first and fourth Tuesdays.