

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

SITE: Hancock Community Development Corporation

DATE: July 10, 2006

CONVERSATION TEAM: Delene Porter

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS (Approximate): 16

IDEAS AND THOUGHTS:

Most important things that need to change:

- Better paying jobs

- More businesses

- Lower rents

- Help for people whose taxes are going up because of newer houses in their Neighborhood

- Education and Job training

- Training in regular job skills- how to fill out an application and resume

 - Help for males who have been incarcerated- need more education

- Have training in short courses- 8 weeks- like truck driving

Childcare at work would help

Present industries should set up job training for high-schoolers and older people to get a job

Need for affordable housing

Jobs need to pay at least \$10 per hour- you have to earn \$9.79 per hour to rent a 1 bedroom in Athens

Healthcare ins. costs too much even when you're paying for it through work

Need support for older adults to fix up their homes

Need more, affordable adult day care centers

Need healthcare for adults that can't get Medicaid

Maybe set up a 24 hour health clinic so that there is an alternative to the emergency room when it isn't an emergency, but you need help

Need to look at the High School graduation tests- they hold kids back

Not all kids are going to college-

current school works for kids who are average or better, but not for kids who are below average

- it's a major problem that 300 students can pass from 8th to 9th grade

Need to teach vocational and technical skills in schools

Spanish as a second language- having ESOL classes and being bi-lingual is a real advantage, its setting kids back to not teach them Spanish

- At Clarke Middle you have to be in Spectrum to take Spanish

Standardized tests- teachers don't really get to teach because they have to prepare kids for tests

Parents need something so they can help their kids with homework- like a website that explains math problems

There are Athens Tech day classes- but also want something they can use when the kid comes home with tough work

Need to give free bus fare to get parents to Athens Tech and schools for any programs

Need programs to teach kids about the consequences of the legal system

- If you have a misdemeanor on your record Dollar general won't hire you, bounced check

Target won't hire

- Need to talk with employers too

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

DARE in elementary school
Need programs for kids 13 and older

Need more activities that are economical

Need to bring in revenue or grants to get more kids into programs

When you assess a fee and demand that people prove their poor, the parents don't sign their kids up

Example: Basket Ball League- EADC used to have 600-700 kids and Bishop Park had 200-300 where they charged \$45. Then they combined the two and started to charge \$50, now there are only 225 kids involved

There is a whole problem where Leisure Services and other governmental branches are not reaching out to or a part of the communities they say they're serving

The staff needs to make an effort to go out and talk with people, not just to advertise on channel 7 (not everyone has or watches) or leave brochures at the AHA office (most people don't go in)

There are 1000s of kids who need summer and after school programs who aren't getting them. After school programs should be linked with leisure services- if kids are uncomfortable at school, they're not going to stay longer for a program and the programs don't really have an academic focus so why not have them at the parks

And if you don't get there on time to pick up your kid you get charged- this discourages parents from sending kids to after school at all

How could we deal with this disconnect between employees of government agencies/ how can we build community and trust?

They used to have block parties, community clean up days where AHA, community affairs (HED) and Leisure Services employees came out. They need to employ people who know the community not people who commute in. Kids need to see people who look like them running the program. Employees aren't friendly even when the community does come out.

Community advisory groups would help and need to network with churches and youth groups. All the agencies need to share resources rather than wanting to "own" programs.

Steering Committee isn't representative of the whole community

Local teens-having hard time getting jobs because of college students

Need a diverse economy

Entrepreneurs need capital

Financial Services- it's the same as 50 years ago- if you don't have anything you can't get anything

One person had someone co-sign on a loan for her and her husband. She had that support and the main reason she feels she's been so successful

Need a micro enterprise lending program

Have no bad experience and it goes on your credit report

Financial literacy- if you don't have internet you can't get info, need help getting credit reports cleared up- economy wants you to have bad credit because they bank more money off late fees and high interest

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

Public transportation needs to go more places and on Sunday
Need a regional approach, maybe toll 316 for people who are coming into the county to work but taking money back to where they live

SITE: Rocksprings Community Center

DATE: July 12, 2006, 1:30-2:30

CONVERSATION TEAM: Tommie Farmer, group leader; Linda Gilbert, note-taker; Caryl Sundland, observer; Jim Geiser, observer

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS (Approximate): 20

Youth, ranging in age from 13-17; a few adults. All minority. They are participating in a summer program that supports the development of work skills.

Questions and responses

1. *What are some reasons students drop out of school?*

Want money, jobs for family
No time for school
Sick of being in school
Pregnant, and don't want anyone to know
Feel school isn't for them
Feel teachers don't support them, and they give up
Behind in class, and can't catch up, so drop out
Gets too hard, and they have low self-esteem
Boring
Too many rules
Parents need to talk to kids about finishing at least 12th grade
Give up
Don't have support from adults
Kids are more on their own in high school, with less adult support. Need help when they're struggling, before they drop out

2. *What do you think needs to be done to help these students stay in school?*

Put more fun in school
Need people inspiring them to stay in school (giving reasons why it matters)
More teachers that care about students, and talk to them instead of just sending them to the office
Stop holding kids back b/c of tests – give help so they can go on
Encourage kids when they say they can't do it
Counselors need to be at school more
Kids *should* be held back, if they don't know stuff
Lesson plans should *involve* kids – have interaction
Stop sending kids to alternative school. It doesn't help with CRCTs. They just sit on a computer all day, and don't get explanations.

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

3. *Do you think students are treated differently because of their race or where they live? If so, please give examples.*

Yes. Black kids from the ghetto get in trouble just for being loud.

No. We act badder than white kids.

Yes, but not all. It depends on the teachers. Sometimes black kids' questions get overlooked, because they expect you to know like the white kids do.

4. *What do you like most about your school?*

P.E.

Talking with friends

Certain teachers you can talk to understand you and have fun with you.

One special teacher that cares about you

A day out of the week where we can talk to friends and not do work

After School Program

5. *What do you like least about your school?*

HS classes are too long

Nosy teachers

Homework

Teachers' attitudes. They misunderstand, take things the wrong way.

Not enough time to get to class. (Note: Extended discussion of consequences. Three tardies are counted as an absence. Eight absences means you don't get credit for the class, even if you have a passing grade.)

They write you up and send you to the office for one thing wrong. They should talk to you first.

6. *(skipped for time)*

7. *What are some things that can be done to make the schools better?*

Stop sending kids to alternative school, lighten up on writing them up

Have people come in to help teachers look at kids' different point of view.

More tutors

Shorter classes

Activity classes, such as cosmetology, cooking, auto mechanics, crime classes (note: Not clear what that is). Also auto mechanics, construction, industrial arts – for girls too!

Start school later (in the day)

(At this point, the kids were prompted with the question "what would make school more fun/interesting)

SPECTRUM has more opportunities and special activities, but not all kids can get into it (Note: SPECTRUM is the gifted program)

Some smart kids don't get in because of other requirements, and the other kids make them feel dumb

Kids with behavior issues put in special education classes. Shouldn't do that.

Interesting activities

Group activities

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

8. *What are your dreams and plans for the future? What will help you achieve these dreams and plans? What will keep you from achieving these goals?*

Radiological technologist (X-ray technician)

- Helps: Older people encouraging me, role models
- Keep from: Bad influences – kids not trying to do anything with their lives

Real estate broker

- Helps: Encouragement, teachers helping me, people around the neighborhood, my mother, classmates
- Keep from: If I get locked up, get in trouble

Medical assistant

- Helps: Encouragement from family, finishing school

Pediatrician

- Helps: Finishing high school, going to college, money
- Keep from: My talking, hanging around bad folks

Interior decorator

- Helps: Pay attention in school, go to college, get A's for scholarship
- Keep from: Bad group of people

Massage therapist

- Helps: Encouragement from parents, do good in school
- Keep from: Hanging out late with friends

Millions of dollars when I get old!

9. *Is there something you would like to say that we did not ask or discuss?*

Kids in Athens should have more opportunities to have jobs after school

Jobs should pay more than minimum wage

Programs like this (Note: referring to work experience program currently at Rocksprings) helps us stay out of trouble

Parents need help with school clothes, bags, and that kind of thing. (Note: think this means help providing). When kids get to be 13, 14...

Thirteen year olds need something to do to keep off streets. 13-17 year olds need work

Need more activities for teenagers, like Summers (?? – not sure of name – a night club which allows teens once a week)

Comments from facilitators:

Linda: Good group dynamics – kids ready to talk. Tommie did a great job facilitating. It was helpful having so many people to facilitate when trying to get exact wording of statements. Tommie left large sheets of paper with the questions on them, which the kids could write on during the week. That was a great idea – I think we'll get more good data from that, in the kids' own words. Maybe use this strategy with other groups?

Tommie

Caroline

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

SITE: Fatherhood meeting at Job Quest Center near Athens Tech

DATE: July 12, 2006,

CONVERSATION TEAM: Facilitators included Delene Porter, Jim Geiser, and Glenda Poole. Margaret Weirich was our agency contact.

The first question asked if you could change one thing in Athens that would help you and your family what would it be? The answers included:

1. People could be hired without having to worry about past criminal history. People's criminal record is preventing them from getting jobs.
2. It is very difficult to get a job without a high school diploma-even temporary labor jobs.
3. Affordable housing is needed. Apparently there is no public housing available for those with drug charges. There needs to be lower rent housing beyond public housing.
4. When a person is charged with a crime and it is put in the paper, it damages the person's reputation and makes it difficult to get a job. This is the case even if the charges are later dismissed. The paper apparently does not print that the charges were dismissed. False accusations can ruin someone's reputation.
5. The University of Georgia is so focused on students in regard to housing and jobs that the citizens of Athens do not always have adequate housing and jobs.
6. Laws need to support local residents. Immigrants get special tax breaks whereas locals do not. This is seen as unfair.
7. Rental properties require a deposit. There is a need for start-up move-in funds.
8. There is a need for more recreational options including different musical acts, more youth activities, after school programs, summer enrichment activities for kids. These activities need to be located throughout town—perhaps expand upon some of the existing programs like Boys and Girls Club.
9. Transportation is an issue. It was suggested that buses run later and need to expand their routes and run more often. It was mentioned that the fares are getting higher. It was also mentioned that buses need to run between counties. Many workers living in Athens apparently work in Oconee County.

The next question was “How do we develop and maintain a sense of community and respect among schools, families, neighbors, employers, and government in our community?” The answers included:

1. It was mentioned that the schools are communicating better.
2. Employees needed to make more money.
3. There is still some racism in Athens.
4. It was mentioned that if you respect yourself, others will respect you. This was learned at home.
5. It was mentioned that our schools are not preparing teens to be adults. There is a need to teach more life skills such as balancing a check book and paying rent. It was mentioned that career options are not adequately addressed. Foreign language classes need to be taught earlier.
6. Need vo-tech classes earlier in schools.

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

The next question involved, “What are the challenges you face in getting a better paying job?” Answers included:

1. Poor work history, felonies, no GED gets in the way of getting a job. Employers apparently dismiss employees if they find a felony on their background check. Arrests show up on background checks even if there are not convictions.
2. Employers need to give people with criminal backgrounds a chance. If not, it makes them want to go back to crime.
3. If you don't pay child support they take your license which can cause you not to be able to get to work which causes you not to be able to pay child support because you lose your job.
4. Child support is a huge issue. One person commented that his boss was taking out child support, but never got it to the child. The Dad got arrested for not paying and nothing happened to the employer. The child never got the money.
5. When your child is with DFCS you are still required to pay child support even though the child is in state custody. Putting people in jail for not paying child support does not really help. You are unable to pay the support while in jail and the child support bill continues to accumulate even when you are in jail. Child support can add up to big debt.
6. Child support needs to be based on what you are making, not a pre-set amount. When someone's income changes child support payments should also change. Apparently you have to have been paying child support for a year before it can be changed.
7. Rent is so high. A one bedroom apartment costs about \$500 a month. Non-refundable application fees are \$25-\$30.
8. There needs to be affordable rental units. Public housing goes by income and there is a long waiting list. It's hard to get into Section 8 housing. There is a long wait. There is a two year wait to get into GRAFA.
9. Perhaps employers could help with housing.
10. It was mentioned that you cannot claim your child on your taxes even though you are paying child support.
11. There are many legal issues that tend to get blown off because legal help is difficult to get.
12. The IRS seems to treat men differently from women.
13. Perhaps the government could give incentives to employers to help with housing and other employee needs.

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

SITE: Clarke Middle School – Grand Slam Program

DATE: July 13, 2006

CONVERSATION TEAM: Jim Geiser (facilitator), Toni Reed (note taker), and Heidi and Al Davison

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS (Approximate): 10 middle school children in Grand Slam Program, three Grand Slam adults

Why do kids drop out of school?

- Pregnancy (adult)
- Tired of school – homework and work
- Sell drugs
- School is a waste of time
- Poor grades (adult)
- Mad at teacher
- Teachers say things kids don't like
- Kids don't feel like getting up in the morning to go to school
- Think teachers are failing them; not worth coming to school if they're failing
- Teachers are lying on them
- Peer pressure
- Lack of parental guidance (adult)

What can we do to prevent kids from dropping out?

- Make school funner; less paperwork, more hands on work, more games
- Help people learn with tutoring
- Don't give kids as much homework
- Have recess all day long; more sports
- Talk with kids more about pregnancy, drugs, etc.

What do you like best about school?

- Playing games
- Science – fun activities, experiments, hands-on
- Math – multiplication, division
- Equations
- Reading

What are your goals for the future—5 years from now? What can prevent you from achieving this goal?

- Playing basketball in college (8th grader); have to be good, good grades;
- Be a cartoonist; must finish school, go to college; getting bad grades
- Be a dentist; lack of school; must stay in school

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

Athens, Clarke Co. – what would you do to make it different or better?

- Pick up trash; keep Athens clean
- Parties – Expand teen centers (eg., Insomnia, Wed. nights for 15+)
- Organized sports (Lay Park)
- Grand Slam (summer only; expand to rest of the year)

Race problem in Athens-Clarke Co.?

- It's an everyday thing – jobs; less pay

Do teachers treat you different? (Part of race conversation.)

- Happens with some teachers; some treat kids differently because of attitude

One thing you would change to make your life better?

- Pass all my grades. [Jim asked how.] Be respectful; tutors; people to help you along the way
- Give every student extra credit if they're not doing well; opportunities; other ways to show what you know
- I want to help people; opportunities; find ways in the community to help people
- Stay in school; don't drop out
- Get an education—no drugs; learn in school; respectful
- Need more encouragement; [more role models, Jim said] people not putting you down
- Teachers should help kids more with homework and explaining things
- Listen to the teacher
- Play sports
- Other ways to show you're smart

What is attitude?

- How you act
- Bad attitude – smart remarks; get mad; cursing; get frustrated and quit; get in trouble in school; get written up
- Good attitude; talk nice; opposite of bad attitude; no cursing; good grades; get along with people

What is the relationship between attitude and altitude? (“Relationship” was defined when kids didn't know what the word means. Kids were asked to write down their answers.)

What is altitude? (Defined - How high something is.)

- Low altitude—down and out; bad life; jail, drugs
- High altitude—good self-esteem; good leadership; successful in life

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

Senior Provider Meeting
July 13, 2006

Several issues were mentioned in networking conversation including:

1. Many seniors on fixed income are poor.
2. Transportation is an issue for some seniors.
3. Erich Matel with Mass Mutual Financial Group mentioned a free life insurance opportunity they have for poor people. His email is emattei@finvcs.com.
4. Al Booms with Lanier Gardens expressed interest in helping. His email is al_booms@wesleywoodsathens.org
5. Lauren Munkel from Winterville Assisted Living suggested that we contact Lisa Parrish with Source Care Management.
6. From Dale Watts--Contact Andy Walker at Denny Towers Senior housing. They may hold resident meetings which would be ideal. Andy's pager number is 706-355-1094. Also try Sarah McKinney at the Council on Aging. Low income seniors come there daily for meals in the Community Care program. Her number is 706- 549-4850. Good luck and call me if you need me on 7-24-06

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

SITE: Early Head Start Parents meeting

DATE: July 13, 2006, 10AM-12PM

CONVERSATION TEAM: Delene Porter

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS (Approximate): 15

IDEAS AND THOUGHTS:

What would you change to address poverty:

Better pay (at least \$10 per hour)

Better housing (public housing has 1 yr or longer wait list)

More low income housing

Later city bus schedules and run on Sundays

Go to Winterville, state patrol office, Wal-Mart in Oconee and jobs on 29N

Education- put so much pressure with graduation test, need more tutoring that actually helps, GED classes in community centers

Let women use their community volunteer hours for education

Put family planning/sex ed back in school starting at age 11- offer birth control, but also talk about disease prevention

Put more money in programs that exist- Teen Matters

After-school programs and transportation to after-school programs need to be more affordable/available

Put drivers ed in schools/in community

Health care for adults

Have Medicaid workers call people to make sure they can keep on Medicaid

AHA doesn't want you to go outside after dark= kids/parents stuck inside

Need places to play in AHA

Want Spanish as a second language courses for kids and adults

Access to healthcare for immigrant community

More ESOL classes

We want to see draft of the recommendations that goes to the PPA conveners before they are approved.

SITE: Early Head Start Parents meeting

DATE: July 13, 2006, 5:30PM-7:30PMPM

CONVERSATION TEAM: Delene Porter

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS (Approximate): 5

IDEAS AND THOUGHTS:

Better pay (at least 8\$ per hour)

Drivers ed in school or in community

Sex ed.

Healthcare for adults

Teen programs (chaperoned dances, cantinas on weekends)

Better housing

More affordable

ESOL and GED classes on weekends and in afternoons

Emergency assistance

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

Diapers/baby food
Housing
Utility bills
Transportation
Food
More accessible hours for the services
Summer activities for 8-10 year olds with transportation from home and from school-
Affordable activities and transport
More homeless shelter beds
Integrating services
Advertise services better
Life skills help/financial literacy/parenting training
Transportation with more frequent stops and to the outskirts
Quality childcare with curriculums- not just baby sitting
Jobs with health benefits especially for part-time

SITE: Youth Group at Catholic Church

DATE: 07/14/2006

CONVERSATION TEAM: Delene Porter, Rachel Norwood, Stephanie Paladino, Adriana Robinson

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS (Approximate): 7

IDEAS AND THOUGHTS:

Youth in this group said that they would like to have:

- *More funding (i.e., scholarships, grants, etc.) opportunities to continue their education.
- * Many of them would like to continue with education but it is really difficult because their parents do not make enough money to help them. So for that reason they have to begin working.
- * We need an opportunity said (girl name) because even when my parents paid taxes I can not attend college or Athens Tech because it is expensive for my family and I can not qualify for a scholarship.
- *We do not want to continue with our education because it is impossible. I had a lot of dreams when I was at school I was one of the best students in high school but what happened when I finish this? Nothing I just begin to work to help my family and now I am working at the Poultry factory. I think that we need an opportunity to continue with our dream.
- *Many Hispanic parents do not encourage their kids to further their education because they can see that there is no way after High School. That is why when a teenager decides to work parents do not say anything and they admit that it is time for them to work.
- * I think the best help from that group is to gave us an authorization for education for the Hispanic student who were not born here, many of us came this country because we just

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

followed our parent when we were little kids and it is not our fault to be here. We just need to be successful for our future life and our future children.

* Some times when we go to ask for referrals we felt discrimination because we do not speak English or just because I do not have a Georgia ID.

*For me the best medicine for poor life it is to have a permanent job position. Not for all my life but at least for a good period of time.

I do not why Hispanics have to work more than a person who was born here (USA) and make less money.

*If I do not speak English I have to do the hardest work. I get tired every afternoon and do not have more time for my children after work, I would like more programs to teach us English maybe if I learn more English I can get a better job and have more time for my children.

*We need more information in Spanish to know what is happening in the community. Sometimes we do not know what happened like this community conversation, we feel like we belong to this place because we live here and if there is something that we can do for our community we would like to help.

*

NOTES:

The young man talked about the difficulty of getting into schools to further one's education here because of not being able to meet the requirements and because of financial reasons. He is from Mexico, and he finished the equivalent of 10th grade there. When he came here, he enrolled at Athens Tech, in an ESL class, but couldn't continue on with studies because he couldn't afford to pay tuition and had to work. He also felt that it's difficult for people like himself to apply for scholarships or financial aid to attend school because of not being able to meet the requirements, for instance, of having a Social Security number. This is a particular problem for the children of undocumented workers here.

He also talked about the difficulties of getting work if you don't have a Social Security number. He has a friend who went to Atlanta to look for work, and was told that if he didn't have a Social Security number, he couldn't work.

Both people singled out the problem of not having Social Security numbers and legal residence/permission to work. They mentioned that getting a driver's license is now predicated on providing a birth certificate or other proof of status.

Yet, they mentioned, many people don't know how to use the bus system very well. One of them said he didn't think there were any bus signs or other information, like flyers, on routes, schedules, and transfers in Spanish available in the Athens area. He asked us if that was, in fact, the case.

Housing was another issue mentioned. Rentals always want to check your credit history as a requirement for renting, and if you don't have a credit history, you're out of luck. Some places don't ask for credit history, but they are often the places that are in poor condition. If you want a place in decent condition, you have to have a credit history. Many Latinos just don't have credit

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

histories. For others it's because of the lack of Social Security numbers and legal status. For others, it has to do with working with false documents. Overall, this tends to confine them to poorer housing choices.

The young man didn't think there was that much difference in price between housing in reasonable and poorer conditions. That, in itself, is not so much the problem in obtaining good housing as is the issue of credit history.

Getting health care is a problem, because if you don't have insurance, medical care is really expensive. Again, if you don't have a Social Security number, getting insurance is difficult. Both people commented about the problem of Medicaid becoming unavailable.

In addition to the spiritual purpose of the youth group, i.e., to help them "walk with Christ" as they go through life, as the young woman said, another important one is to help them in their personal development as individuals in society, developing different skills for understanding and coping with life challenges, building self-esteem, providing opportunities to learn about different topics, and supporting them in building alternatives to the attractions that gang life and other such negative activities offer.

Adriana, who is a member of the church and knows many of the young people in the youth group, added afterward something she had learned from being around them. Many of them may have had some higher education in their own countries, finishing what we call secondary education or even having some time at the university level. But then their parents send for them, and since they can't meet the requirements to go to school here, or because they have to work to help the family, they can't continue their studies. Their educations are effectively ended while they take up work here in the manual and service industries that don't use the education/capabilities they may have or were developing.

SITE: Oasis Pinewood

DATE: 07/15/2006

CONVERSATION TEAM: Delene Porter, Adriana Robinson, Stephanie Paladino

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS (Approximate): 16

IDEAS AND THOUGHTS:

- We would like more transportation around here. We live in Pinewood and we do not have public transportation here, many of us (woman) do not know how to drive and if we have an emergency with our children we have to walk from our house to the main entrance because the bus stop is there even if it is raining. We would like that the bus came into Pinewood.
- Also we suggest that will be helpful for us to have interpreter when we go to the public places like hospital, school, work places, library, etc.
- Sometimes people said that we do not care about our children education but that it is not true because I am a mother of 5 kids and I know to spent time studying with my kids it is very important But my original language is Spanish I can not help my children with their education. I will be thankful if you can creative more children's programs like Catholic

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

Social Services who help parents to learn English, Casa de la Amistad who have been working with children this summer. I suggest that probably you can creative more programs like reading , I believe reading is very important when they are in the first level at school like Pre- k or Kindergarten and also creative more programs for Youth so in that way they do not have to choice for to be belong of the gangs.

- We think that to take our kids to the hospital is too expensive that is why I prefer to go to some stores and get that medicine by my own without a prescription.
- We do not want free attention when we use the services at the hospital I believe we can paid that, maybe \$20 or \$25 dollar a month but sometimes they do not want to gave us that opportunity.
- We would like better treat at the school for us. We feel discriminate when we request some information and the person who is in the waiting room does not have the patient for us to understand when we trying to tell something in English.
- We understanding that to gave a driver license to everybody could be dangerous but what happen with the people who want that document for to take our kids to the hospital in an emergency case or to take our kids to school if we missed the bus school.

Mr. Perdue it is not doing well when he denied this document to the Hispanic community because even when he does not want to gave this document many people drive without this. I think if he give like a temporary driver license he is encourage to the people to study the rules and regulation for to drive here in Athens. I believe in that way people can Know more about rules and also as this is a temporary card he can keep the record of people who live here and if somebody do not want to follow the rules will be easy for him to find that person and apply a penalty and take back the temporary card.

*Many Public services request much documentation.

*Health fairs for children, woman, man.

- Medicaid it is a big problem for the community because they request much information for this, our big concern is when they request legal status here. We can not probe that because we are illegal in this country but our children were born here. We can not probe that.

When they send the information they sent this in English and we do not understanding what the paper is about it.

- I have 4 children my husband and I work but the money that we make it is not enough for us because we have to paid the bills (apartment, power, cable, car insurance, clothes, etc) When we fill out the application for the Medicaid we did not qualification for this because they said that we pass the amount for to qualification. We do not think that we pass the amount because we still have economic problems; my oldest daughter could not attend this summer any program because we do not have the money to paid this. We feel confused because if we go back to Mexico will be terrible for my kids because they speak English more than Spanish and they know more about this place than Mexico. I hear from people who have children that they can not continue with their education when they finished High school. I am so confused

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

- We need more public transportation.
- Interpreter in public services.
- Equal work opportunities.
- More education opportunities for people who were not born here.
- Driver license.
- Financial assistance with child care center.
- More communication with the Hispanic community.
- Legal Documentation. This is very important for us because if we know that our kids are going to have an opportunity in the future we can encourage them to continue with their education but without a hope we can do nothing.
- I have 3 kids; I have been living here for almost 4 years. I had a driver license before but last month was my birthday and my driver license expired, I went to many places to renew it but was impossible because my I-94 expired. I did not have another chance. In 4 years I just got 1 ticket because I did not make a stop very well but that was in 4 year. I do not like to drink or smoke I am not a bad person. I would like another opportunity to get my driver license because I need to work for my family.

Notes:

One woman and her late teens/early twenties daughter were already talking with Delene and Adriana when I came up. Catching the tail end, the mother talked about the problem of her daughter not being able to continue with her education because she needed to have her working instead.

Three women mentioned problems associated with the high cost of medical care, lack of medical insurance, and Medicaid. One said that she had applied for Medicaid 3 times for her child and was denied each time. She said that now the parents who apply for Medicaid were being asked for documentation on the parents, such as birth certificates and Social Security numbers, even though her child was born in the U.S. She said she wasn't sure what the reason for Medicaid denial was. Another woman talked about her daughter needing dental attention badly, and how, since they didn't have insurance, the dentist required \$1,000.00 deposit up front in order to see her, and this was impossible for them. Another woman talked about a medical condition she had and the high cost of medications for the condition. She couldn't afford the cost of a visit to the doctor, and she ultimately was able to get the medicine she needed prescribed over the phone by a doctor to avoid the visit. Concerns about not being able to get Medicaid to help with healthcare costs for the children was mentioned by a few.

Not having Social Security numbers and legal residence/permission to work was cited as a big obstacle to getting ahead.

Transportation came up as a concern. Now many people can't get drivers licenses because they are asked for documentation they don't have. Yet driving is pretty much obligatory, one woman said, in order to be able to get to work. The bus schedule isn't one that allows them to use it to get to work, because of where they live, the schedule timing, and because their jobs are spread out all over the area. The buses don't go where and when they need to go.

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

Transportation was mentioned not only in reference to work, but also in reference to getting to things like medical appointments. In fact, one woman, upon reading on the flyer for the upcoming PPA meeting that transportation would be provided, sought us out to ask which number she should call to arrange transportation to her child's medical appointment in the next week or two. She said that paying a taxi was way too expensive, and she would have a hard time getting there. She thought that the flyer was talking about a general transportation service being provided to those who need it in general, not just for the PPA meeting. I believe we had a similar question from someone else about the child care mentioned on the flyer: thinking it was a service being offered not just for the PPA meeting, but for those in need on no-cost care.

A couple of women talked about how hard it is to get by here on the wages they make. There are so many bills to pay, and they can't make it just on one income earner's salary. Both parents in the family have to work to make it, they said. Yet there are problems with children and childcare that result if both are working. One woman said that the salaries they make are so low that it isn't worth paying someone to do childcare. In her family's case, she decided that it wasn't worth her going to work just to hand her wages over to someone else to care for the kids, so she stays home. Another way people deal with this is by working different shifts, one person at night, one during the day. Another way, one woman said, is if you have nieces or nephews who are old enough to leave the children with, you might do that.

Another consequence of both parents out working, one woman said, is that no one is looking after the children's welfare and future. There are children in such situations where no one is guiding and staying after the children in relation to school and studies, or making sure they keep out of trouble in general. In her case, she being a mom who stays home, she's after her children all the time about their studies, and they've done well in school and stayed out of trouble outside of school. But, she said, there are others who are just sort of abandoned, left to their own devices, and not getting enough parental guidance and direction.

This same woman said the schools have been accessible to the parents, however. Language has not been a barrier, because there are interpreters in the schools, and the parents have been told that whenever they need to talk to a teacher or someone, an interpreter will be got. She felt that if kids weren't doing well in the schools, it wasn't because of language barriers, it was because the parents weren't being attentive to their needs, for instance because of having to work.

Some people in the park find ways to make a little extra income. If they know how to sew or to make something, people may sell their services amongst each other to make a little extra cash.

Sister Margarita, one of the nuns of the Oasis, said that there were cases of residents getting in touch with her because they feared that their children were going to be removed from school and deported. This was the case in May when fears and rumors were going around, particularly because of legislation that was in the headlines then. She noted that there are many children who live with the fear that one day they will come home from school and one or more of their parents will have been deported.

She also raised the issue of the prohibition of Medicaid eligibility at the state level through recently passed state legislation. This is going to have an huge impact on members of this

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

community, and if anything, is going to backfire because it will result in more people going to emergency rooms for things that could have been treated and prevented from getting worse at a doctor's or clinic. She and others have been suggesting an alternative they would like to see Athens Regional Medical Center take up: the creation of a mobile clinic that would have a set schedule throughout the neighborhoods, so that residents would know when it was coming, and if they missed that date, they would also know where the clinic was going to be on any other given date. Patients could be treated for low fees, and provide basic care that otherwise, particularly in the absence of Medicaid insurance, would result in more serious health situations that would overload the emergency room and add to its costs. She noted that among the local clinics that serve people without insurance and with low incomes, Mercy Clinic only treats one day a week; the Nurses' Clinic two days a week; and Athens Neighborhood Health Center is way overloaded. Timely appointments can't be given to people who need medical attention. Then there is also the high cost of medicines. People are often not getting the medical treatment they need, and she gave an example of one case where a person couldn't get in anywhere to be seen, with an infection that could have had permanent consequences.

SITE: ICC (Inter Community Council) Housing Authority Meeting

DATE: 07/17/2006

CONVERSATION TEAM:

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS (Approximate): This meeting was comprised primarily of residents from a variety of public housing developments in town.

IDEAS AND THOUGHTS:

Some of the discussion included:

- 1. The importance of getting more people from the poor communities at the table.**
- 2. There needs to be more jobs and technical support for people with disabilities.**
- 3. Kids need the support of their parents. They also need more spirituality. Bible studies are important.**
- 4. Schools need to better serve the kids.**
- 5. Parents need to come to community functions and get involved. It is difficult to get parents to get involved. Parents need to be more motivated and encourage their kids more.**
- 6. UGA needs to treat its employees fairly.**
- 7. Leisure services need to be open later hours-3:30 in the summer is too early.**

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

SITE: Columbus Ave Community Center

DATE: 07-18-06

CONVERSATION TEAM: Delene Porter and Bert Prestegard (and one other woman who arrived later)

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS (Approximate): 25, 7-12 year olds

IDEAS AND THOUGHTS:

GOALS – What do I want to be when I grow up?

Doctor – 3

Nurse – 1

Basketball player – 2

Football player – 3

Soccer player – 2

Beautician – 1

Lawyer – 1

Builder – 1

Teacher – 2

FAVORITE SCHOOL SUBJECTS

Math – 6

Reading – 1

Art – 1

Science – 1

Writing – 1

Social Studies – 1

Basketball – 1

HOW DO THESE SUBJECTS HELP ME?

I learn new things

Art helps me write better

Reading tells me about things

Reading gives me a new vocabulary

Science helps me know how to do projects and things

Art helps me color better

SCHOOL NEEDS:

People getting along better

Longer hours

People need to be nicer/more respectful

Stop attitudes

Stop talking back to the teachers

AFTER SCHOOL NEEDS/WANTS:

Outside play

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

Go swimming
Read more
Fun
Go to the library
Games
Go to the park
More computers
More homework

- Someone to help
- Tutors
- After school teacher help with writing
- Studying helps

Time to think about things (concentrating time)

KIDS DROP OUT OF SCHOOL BECAUSE:

Too hard
Tired of school
Bored
Tired

WHAT WOULD KEEP KIDS FROM DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL?

More tutors
More fun things to do and more hands on things to do
More computer work
More people being respectful
More math and learning
More activities

WHAT CHANGES WOULD YOU MAKE TO MAKE ATHENS A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE?

Have school from 7:45 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Safer community
Find out what people need
Have more people stay in school and stay longer
Less littering
Make it a better place (referred to homes)
Time flexibility in the school day
Fewer dropouts
Fewer mean people – fewer people picking on people
Better jobs and homes
Everybody can and should help make Athens a better community
No smoking
Healthy foods
No wild animals in the community
No drinking (beer)

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

No drinking and driving
Clean water
No talking on the phone while driving
Safe streets for walking across
No fighting
Asking parents permission to go some place
No shooting

SITE: East Athens Police Substation (Human Services Advisory Board, they gave us some time at a regular meeting of theirs)

DATE: July 20, 2006

CONVERSATION TEAM: Delene Porter

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS (Approximate): 9

IDEAS AND THOUGHTS:

Before Delene did her explanation of why we were there and began asking questions, the Chair of the meeting began talking about some of the regular business before the Board. He talked about the Showmobile and about events that the neighborhood organizes, evidently including services offered at the Community Center and an upcoming festival planned for this September. He assumed those present knew what the Showmobile and events/activities in question were, so didn't detail them. I believe he expressed that they weren't sure if they were going to be able to use the Showmobile in the upcoming festival for lack of funds, yet it is an event that the community looks forward to. He expressed concerns that two years ago, they had a lot of equipment available to them to use at these events/activities and it didn't cost them anything. Since then, there's been a change. They've been funding all these local events on their own. They've raised funds from the local business sector to help support them, but many of the businesses aren't coming through now. The kids in the neighborhood really look forward to these activities. They need help from Leisure Services to keep making these events and activities available. These events aren't just for the immediate community, they're for everyone, therefore they're deserving of wider community support. This is one of the poorest areas in Athens, a lot of unemployed, a lot of unemployable people. There's a new sense of friction with Leisure Services.

Regarding the Septembr 30 festival, they would like to have as many agencies and other organizations participate as want to.

The Chair referred to one activity planned: a group of kids are going to be taken on a trip to see how the judicial system works. They might be able to take the same kids later on to see how the jail system works.

Delene: asked a question about what people thought were the most pressing issues facing the community.

Respondent: Jobs, period, for this community. Good-paying jobs. But, you have to be able to get a job before you can get a good-paying job. A lot of people in this community are unemployable, so they also need training to help them get even those first, stepping-stone jobs.

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

Delene: asked for clarification re how much of this has to do with lack of job availability versus other issues.

Respondent: There aren't many jobs available. Temporary services don't work very well, either as a bridge, because it's in their interests to churn the personnel they place instead of helping them to get permanent jobs. Temporary services are only out to make money for themselves, so it's in their interest to keep the placements short-term. This is not good for business, either. It's especially bad for the people trying to find a way into permanent jobs.

Delene: asked question regarding whether there are opportunities within available jobs to move up.

Respondent: Hard to say; depends on the person, too. If a person's qualified, they should get that position. Sometimes businesses get people from outside the community for the more advanced jobs, and end up leaving the local guy stuck in the lower jobs. A lot of people come through asking him where they can get a job. For example, he tells them about the Labor Department. But if a person finds himself receiving \$175.00 a week from the Labor Department, he's not going to take another low-paying job to give that up; the person doesn't see that it's worthwhile.

Delene: asked a question about what kind of income is needed to be able to make it.

Respondent: \$20-25,000 /year at least is needed just to exist. Especially if you have family. People often find themselves in a bind: if you have public housing, if you make above the limit, you could lose subsidized housing. (He mentioned the figure of \$250/week, but I didn't note down if this was the person's contribution to public housing rent or if this was the maximum income you could have to qualify, or what). You just have no way to put any money aside for yourself, your family.

Respondent: A lot of the housing is housing people can't afford. Even if they just are trying to rent, who can afford \$800, \$900/month for rent? It's difficult for people to even consider buying, since they don't have money to put as a down payment. Most of the housing being built in this area, they don't let people who live here have a chance to get into it, they can only get in if it's subsidized. People find themselves being excluded from housing being built in their own communities.

Respondent: College students can get 3 or 4 of themselves together and afford to rent local houses. Their parents can afford that. But in a situation where only one or even two parents in the family work, they can't afford the prevailing rents.

Respondent: (Made a comment regarding the likelihood of there being more slums in the future, as a result of college students moving out, but notes not clear if this a reference to college students moving into the newer, more expensive housing...)

Delene: asked a question about whether the presence of so many college students has an effect on wages in the area.

Respondent: The minimum wage is the problem. It's only \$5.15/hour, and then taxes are taken out of that. This is not enough to get by on. In a single parent family, the parent can't afford to work and can't afford to stay home.

Delene: A question about the costs of child care.

Respondent: You can't find anyplace to leave your kids that costs less than \$25-30 /day. How can you afford that on minimum wage jobs?

Respondent: There are some churches that provide day care services and don't charge too much.

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

Respondent: Transportation also makes this hard to pull off. It's hard for a parent to get children to child care and get to job if they don't have own transportation. This is especially hard if it's a single parent.

Delene: What else is there about transportation that's of concern?

Respondent: Transportation needs to be more accessible to the people that can afford it. It costs like \$15/week, \$60/month just to ride the bus. How are people supposed to survive? It's hard for two members of the family to work and still get by. If two people are working and only making \$25,000, \$30,000/year, it's hard to even get by. Maybe later when you don't have child care expenses it seems like it ought to get better, but then as the children get older there are other costs, like school books and clothes and other things. But there's not enough help for everyone who needs it. The people in government sometimes only look at things from the top, and not from the bottom.

Respondent: (Talked about summer school as a related issues). Why not put all the kids in one or two schools that are kept open for summer school? Because they're not keeping all the schools open in the summer to cut costs. Instead, one or two schools could be kept open where kids from anywhere could go to summer school. Kids can go to summer school outside their own neighborhood. He blames the parents, also, why don't they complain, since they're paying taxes and not getting the services for it.

Delene: Question about how to improve communication in town between residents and government and service organizations, so that people don't feel like they have to jump up and down to get attention.

Respondent: On very hot days, there's only one pool (I presume that is open in the neighborhood?), all the kids can't go in it. He remembers that as a kid in a northern city, they city used to open fire hydrants and put a sprinkler on them so that the kids could cool off.

Respondent: Attendance at the pool hasn't been exceeding 10 people per day, and the fees have been kept very low at \$1.00/day.

Delene: Question about whether there is a lack of trust between the community and Leisure Services.

Respondent: That definitely exists. But a couple of years ago, there was a good working relationship between them. Things changed- they started putting dollar signs on everything. They should've figured out the costs ahead of time, e.g., what the fees for the pool would be, are there ways to waive them. When people come to the Human Services Advisory Board, they complain a lot, for instance about the festival. They would like to have a good working relationship with everyone.

Respondent: Why can't we block off the little street and put sprinklers out? We need innovative ideas we could use to get a good relationship with the community. It may mean going outside the Leisure Services box, but that's what's needed. If the mountain doesn't come to you, you go to the mountain. Start with small things to build back up the relationship. He hopes they can do that in time for the fall festival. A temporary volley ball court could be put up.

Respondent: We've got to work together like we used to work. Now the whole community is mad about something related to Leisure Services. They need to work WITH the community, not just FOR the community. That (the latter) isn't working.

Respondent: We see kids every day, even the \$1.00 fee is not something everyone can afford. You can't compare this community with Gaines School Road and other pools. A lot of what you see going on in the community is based on contributions from a few local businesses, not all the parents. Money should be gotten also from the North Avenue folks.

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

Respondent: They do charge for the pool, for day camp, for room rentals. He agrees that there are issues between the community and Leisure Services. But disagrees that services aren't being well used. (Note-taker's editorial comment: Don't take the following numbers as gospel, they were reeled off quickly, I might not have gotten what he said accurately). There have been around 120 kids partaking of the day camp program. Some 40-60 kids in the afternoon program in the summer. During none-summer months, there are up to 80 (?) kids in the after-school activities inside and outside. The kids that don't come, it's not because the staff are not inviting them. They try to do everything they can to make the services kid-friendly and accessible.

Respondent: But there are some 600 kids in this area. Sometimes you have to reach outside the Community Center.

Respondent: We do and will keep on doing so. Some parents, a very few, don't like me because of the color of my skin. A parent suggested a GED program be offered right here so people don't have to travel so far to participate. I worked hard to explore it with the school system. A community member came in who works with the University re GED programs. There's been a GED program offered for free since January at the Community Center. That was really needed. The biggest issue here is education and the young peoples' attitude towards it. What are these kids going to do with their lives? Kids need to understand the importance of education. We've done some things, like a job fair. We need to target teens, for instance: how do you present yourself, are you prepared for a job interview? Need to show teens that they need to offer what the employers want.

Delene: Mentions that some Community Conversations with youth have taken place.

Respondent: It's important to find out from the kids what kinds of activities would draw them in and participate, what they think they need.

Respondent: This sounds crude, but it sounds like some segment of the kids need to be written off. How are you going to get kids earning \$200-\$300/day dealing drugs to take a low wage job? You have to get them before they get into it, and for those that are already in it, it's too late. Changes have come from getting some kids in the area to stay in school, and even go for more education. Somewhere along the line we lost control over these kids, one whole age group that's just gone off and is going by the wayside. We can't get younger people to come aboard.

Delene: A goal of the PPA is to explore what is working, including to look elsewhere to see what's working.

Respondent: How would people know about new programs? A lot of people don't go to these meetings. I've been in this neighborhood for a good while and I don't know about them. One of the biggest needs is jobs. So many in Nellie B. are mostly single moms with kids. A lot of kids are home alone by themselves, there's no money to pay for a baby sitter. Childcare used to cost \$10 to \$20, now it's up to \$50. I'm working two jobs, I'm single, and I'm trying to raise my kids. I leave at 5:30 a.m. to go to the first job, leave that one and go straight to the other, and don't leave it till 7:00 pm. I have only enough time to see them, talk to them, put them to bed. These kids are on their own all day. I have a teenager. I took my kids out of school because I felt they were being pushed through school without really learning. They're in 6th through 12th grades. There was a kid in the workshop who couldn't read his own name that was written on the board, and he'd already graduated. My own kids are in classes now, I put them into a different high school.

Respondent: He couldn't read his own name?

Respondent: Had a high school diploma. Seems like once they get in 6th grade, seems like it doesn't matter, like they get pushed through whether they're learning or not. I was volunteering

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

in the schools a lot, I saw it. If you're in the wrong side school, you're just out of it and that's it, you don't get what you need.

Respondent: Recounts how many kids and grandkids of his have all gone through public school, with several of them finishing college, as well. It's not just the fault of the schools, it's also the responsibility of the parents. They have to make sure the kids do what they need to do. My kids were motherless and I was working, but I made sure they all went to school and did what they needed to do.

Delene: Question regarding access to healthcare.

Respondent: No, there's not enough access.

Respondent: A lot of these jobs don't have health insurance. Even working for the Post Office for 10 years in a "temporary" position, you can not be covered. If you're not working at all you get better care than someone who is working and in the middle. The middle class almost gets hurt more. Anything that helps give people better health coverage would be good.

SITE: Thomas Lay Community Center

Group: NAACP Youth Council (elementary - high school students)

DATE: July 22, 2006, 11am

CONVERSATION TEAM: Jim Geiser, Katie Orlemanski, Monira A. Silk

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS (Approximate): 17

IDEAS AND THOUGHTS:

What do you want to be when you grow up? How did you come up with the idea?

- I want to go to college (maybe UGA)
- I want to help people possibly in a health area, but I definitely want to go to college. (mother acts as a role model)
- Architect, art class helps at Cedar Shoals, football isn't going to be everything (so he recognized a talent).
- Bus driver
- Carpenter
- Artist
- Actor
- Comedian or mechanic

Why do you think students drop out of high school?

- It is hard to get high school credits, if you have a lot of absences.
- There is not much encouragement from family and teachers. Teachers feel like they are babying you in high school if they give you special attention.
- You can fall behind and get overwhelmed, so you don't do work.
- With pregnancy, you need a family member to take care of the baby, otherwise you have to drop out to raise the child. There is no day care at the school for teen parents who want to continue with their schooling.
- Drugs are a problem, "Oh yeah," nods around the table

What can help kids stay in school?

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

- Work-based learning projects. For example, at Cedar Shoals one teacher has the students work with elementary school kids, and even after the class was over, the students continued to volunteer with the after-school program. (Helps these students develop their leadership skills and confidence while providing their peers and younger kids with role models on track).
- People to help them find out about opportunities. We were looking on the internet to find internships/ childcare jobs, but couldn't find any.
- Offering opportunities in school that help kids live in the real world. One student recalled having a simulated "store," and "bank" in their elementary school to teach them life skills, but supposedly this program did not continue during the next school year.
- Helping kids realize a quality that they possess and enjoy, and encouraging them to see it as part of their future. Ex. I am good at drawing so I can see myself being an architect; I enjoy helping people, so that's the type of job I want to have in the future.

What is available for you to do in the community (after-school)?

- Talk on the phone
- Watch TV
- Play on the computer/ video games (Xbox)
- Do homework

Is race an issue? Do you have white friends and how did you meet them?

- Not an issue
- It depends on the individual person. You have to back it up by knowing yourself and being educated.
- At school (mainly)
- Live across the street
- One kid suggested having a class (maybe after school) about racism where issues could be discussed. (he was in 4th or 5th grade)

What is one thing that could make Athens a better place to live?

- Build more recreation centers for after-school
- More playgrounds
- Teen center with laptops to work on school projects
- A class to learn the insides and outsides of computers
- Better environments to live in, places that we can communicate with one another
- Career Fair to learn about what types of jobs are available, because some kids just don't know
- Football classes (during school)
- Drama classes (in middle school)
- Spanish classes (in elementary school)
- Things for kids to do outside, so they're not sitting around at home
- More educational programs on TV
- Good places to study
- A place where you can get extra help with the CRCT
- After-school Spanish classes and cinema

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

- Programs to teach kids not to be racist
- Peer-advisory board to provide role models to peers, sometimes kids don't want to talk to adult counselors

What are some problems that you face?

- Transportation could be a problem if you want to stay after-school
- There is nothing for us to do on the weekends, especially things that are free (even bowling or going to movies is expensive), police always come around to house parties
- Who should run these programs? A lot of people suggested that the kids run the programs with the support of teachers or other people for resources and general help.

SITE: East Friendship Baptist Church

DATE: July 22, 2006,

CONVERSATION TEAM

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS (Approximate):

IDEAS AND THOUGHTS:

We attended lunch at East Friendship Baptist Church. This was a free meal offered by the church to the community. We sat at the tables and visited with the community. Some of the issues discussed included:

Jim:

1. **Many young people today do not responsibility.**
2. **UGA emphasizes housing for its students at the expense of the community.**
3. **There is a need to expand the homeless shelter so that people in need can be at a place where they can be helped out of their homeless situation.**
4. **Homeless people face legal issues that may prevent them from moving forward.**
5. **One person had warrants out in Florida that were from years back and did not know if they could be taken care of from here.**
6. **Broken homes and lack of fathers seem to be a common theme among men in prison.**
7. **The NCLB legislation is making it difficult for schools to serve special needs children. There seems to be incentives to get them out of their schools and label them.**
8. **Potter's House may be a good place to go visit.**

Beth:

Jobs

- There's false advertising about job openings. You get training and apply, but they don't call you back.
- Problems for people with past felony convictions. A friend who had a 5 year old felony charge on his record interviewed for a job. He was qualified, but they didn't hire him because of that old charge. If God forgives you, why can't people? Even people with a felony record have to live.
- People in jail need to get job training so when they get out they can do something.

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

- Need more jobs.
- Discrimination – people don't want to hire a woman for certain work

School system

- The high dropout rate is a problem. The policy on absentees contributes –p you can only miss six days even with a doctor's note, and they don't always take your appeal.

General

- Food stamps – if you have more than 3 kids you should be able to get food stamps even if you own land. Land does not equal money.
- People scam the poor

Day care

- Need more day care

Health Care

- Medical benefits for veterans. If you weren't in for 6 months before an honorable discharge you don't get medical coverage.
- Most doctors will charge you \$50 or \$60 just to walk in the door if you don't have insurance
- At the hospital the people without insurance are at the gback of the line
- It costs \$200 for a checkup

Transportation

- Transportation to Classic City HS needs to be provided. Mother wanted to send her kid there but had no way to get him there.
- Need better transportation
- Lower gas prices
- Need transportation to work and schools
- Transit hours aren't long enough – people who work shifts can't use Transit
- Bus should run all night every 15 minutes
- You can't take a job if you have no way to get there
- Need more lights on the sidewalks for safety
- Need bike lanes so you can ride in the road safely – people drive too fast on busy roads to watch for bikes or pedestrians

Housing

- Rents are high, income is low.
- Need help on upkeep
- Taxes are high – now the storm drainage fee – why not take that out of your taxes?
- City is pulling all the money from people – high taxes

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

- Need more housing people can afford - \$800/month for rent is too high
- Homelessness issues
 - Need more homeless shelters
 - Homeless people shouldn't have to stay on the street – they pay taxes too every time they go in the store
 - Need homes for homeless and more room in the shelters
 - Section 8 is too slow here
 - People living on the street shouldn't be locked up just for trying to get by
 - Police look down on the homeless people downtown
 - “my van was stolen and the police wouldn't even make a report, they just said ‘you shouldn't have been there and it wouldn't have gotten stolen.’”
 - There's not much in the way of activities like outdoor concerts
 - Everybody looks down on the homes or wants to lock them up

Margaret:

Good things that are working:

“It's hard to go hungry in Athens.

New bus schedule will help those with jobs.

Facilities available for the homeless:

Showers

Thomas Lay Park on Jackson St. 9 am to 9 pm except in the summer when kids are out of school. Then the hours are 5 – 9 pm.

Advantage on Peter Street three days a week .

Laundry

Advantage, 2 days a week

Good people: the Andersons who work with the overflow night shelter, formerly out of St. Mark's Church.

Problem areas included transportation needs, low wage jobs, unavailability of housing, and other specific comments:

Lack of transportation: new bus schedule will help. If busses could start one hour earlier, it would help those needing to get to work early. Someone suggests 24 hr. bus schedule as a good goal to help shift workers. Some homeless don't ride the bus because they can't afford it. Bus to Oglethorpe county or Oconee where jobs are available.

Low wage jobs combined with higher rents. Rents were raised in 1996 and the job situation has gotten worse in the past 5 years. Job discrimination and unfair / illegal practices by some employers, (ex. Holiday Inn was very bad several years ago, but management has changed and is OK now.) One man's unanswered question was very important to him, “why was he not rehired back then by Holiday Inn?”. He felt he had the basis for a law suit and was still angry about this.

Salvation Army “is corrupt” with rigid and unreasonable requirements. Rules are not enforced fairly, but with a mean attitude. Ex: time the store is open for residents to buy clothing and things they need for work conflicts with the time they need to be out looking for work.

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

School system in all Clarke County schools are too strict about absenteeism: even with a doctor's note, absences about a certain number (3 I think ?) are not excused.

Transportation is not provided to the Classis City High School. This can be a problem if the family lives on the other side of town, even for summer school.

Help needed with legal system and records. Need someone to listen and help correct errors. Police are harassing the homeless and "trying to run them out of town" Police report by a homeless person is ignored, instead the law will arrest them both. "Homeless need to be somewhere"; maybe there could be a designated area for them to "crash". (It would be best if this could be near a place where they could get food.) Many homeless people receive a monthly check, but need someone "like DFACS" to manage their money. Often the person designated to manage the money for them is not trustworthy, i.e. may also be on drugs or booze, so together they use up the money as soon as the check arrives and the money doesn't take care of the person's needs.

Homeless need restrooms that are available to the public, especially in town.

Concern about children living on the street and coming with their parents to the soup kitchen. This can be a bad influence on them and make them think this is ok for them in their future.

The homeless need to have someone work with them as a group and try to help them improve their situation, improve their education, etc. Need someone to sponsor them so they can go on to school and get training for a better job.

Need more low income housing. Public housing project is just that, a project that is not working. Need more control over the behavior of the residents. A homeless person visiting his friends said that the friend and his children both beat him up. Also drugs are used, in spite of the rules against them.

SITE: Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church

DATE: July 25, 2006,

CONVERSATION TEAM

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS (Approximate):

IDEAS AND THOUGHTS:

The meeting opened with a prayer.

The first question involved what one thing they would want to change. Some responses included:

- 1. Bring industries that provide livable wages.**
- 2. More livable wage jobs.**
- 3. Parents need to get involved more with their kids.**
- 4. Many people are not trained for the jobs.**
- 5. We need better training.**
- 6. It's hard to get started with a job.**

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

7. There are not a lot of good jobs in Athens.
8. It was mentioned that Hispanics get job skills in middle and high school in Mexico.
9. There needs to be more workforce training at the middle and high school levels.
10. We need to teach kids differently.
11. Public transportation is inadequate for workers who need public transportation.
12. There need to be more industries/high school partnerships.
13. We need more large companies—there was a question whether people in Athens really want to grow.
14. There is a need for a workforce track in public education.
15. Stop spending on bicycle paths and sidewalks in certain areas of town.
16. There are racial issues that need to be addressed. Racism is a problem.
17. City government needs to stop wasting money.
18. There is a need for Home Ownership Reheab Program and Rental Assistance Program.
19. Affordable Housing is needed.
20. The city needs to revisit the work on Hawthorne Avenue.
21. There needs to be a connector off Atlanta Highway.
22. Put advertisements on city buses to raise money.
23. It was mentioned that for African Americans job opportunities are not here.
24. There is not really a lot of social activities for African Americans.
25. UGA needs to bring their wages up.
26. There need to be regional economic development strategies.
27. Athens Clarke has lost a substantial number of good paying jobs with benefits in the last ten years or so. These include, but are not limited to Dupont, Westinghouse, Westclock, Dairypac, UGA's replacement of jobs with benefits with contract work (ie. grounds keepers). For the most part these jobs have been replaced with low paying service sector jobs. I would like an accounting of the number of jobs lost in the last ten years and the number gained with the hourly wage for each, and whether or not the jobs include benefits.
28. Athens Clarke industries and businesses that offer good paying jobs with benefits should offer poor kids part time jobs and summer employment to overcome the lack of hope for employment and the perception that there are simply no good jobs available to African Americans and the poor.
29. Athens Clarke need to become involved more in the improvement of its housing stock. This should include funding (loans or grants) for the rehab of owner occupied and rental housing units.
30. There is a perception that Athens Clarke spends too much on things and not enough on people. Sidewalks that are not used, new trucks and equipment etc...
- 28.

The next question involved what factors separated the people who were successful from those who were not.

The answer was jobs.

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

SITE: EADC Home Buyers Club

DATE: 7-27-06

CONVERSATION TEAM: Delene Porter, Cathi Watkins

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS (Approximate): 7

IDEAS AND THOUGHTS:

What would you change about ACC to make your family's life better?

-With Maternity Leave you are supposed to come back at the same hours even if it is a different position- I've not gotten the same hours, I've worked for the Athens Regional Library for 4 years and I have great evaluations and I've not received an entire \$1 in raises the whole time.

-I'm looking to buy a home, but I'm not look in ACC because I need to be close to jobs where I can by home by 6pm (first shift) and still afford a house- it's too expensive and the property taxes are going up all the time

-There are not enough after school activities and they don't transport the kids to them

-Need a teen after school program

-Have to sacrifice family quality of life for a good job

-When you're working you can't afford to go to school

-Have to move closer to Atlanta to get a decent wage and more childcare options like homecare providers

-Need more affordable housing-

 Apartments are targeted to college students

 Can't afford \$600-700 for a 2 bedroom apt.

 Need apts. For working class people

-If I lived in Atlanta I would have more opportunities to purchase a home- there are more programs- in Athens there's only EADC, ALT, and Habitat and they can only build a few homes at a time, and there are more loan options in Atlanta

-Education needed for kids and adults

 For Kids education needs to change- it's still the old way

Need to make history relevant- include black history and recent history

They don't cover the 1946 Moore's Ford lynching

It would help increase racial tolerance if kids learned about this part of their history- not just for Black history month

Find out what kids are interested and teach that, give them topics they can relate to

Academies seem like a good idea- if you want to be a Dr. you will learn the history of the medical profession

 For Adults want job skills training and financial education in schools and through employers (not just when you're going to buy a house)

-Health Benefits- they just aren't available or they're so expensive- have job at Holiday Inn- gets health insurance for herself, but can't afford to add kids

-PeachCare is a god-send

-Job pay should be based on cost of living- at the minimum jobs need to pay \$8 in Athens

-Pay rates do not compare to the rest of the country

-Have other University communities addressed the living wage – employee issues- same problem in Virginia

-Older adults having trouble with rising property taxes. Needs to be a way to freeze their taxes or make them as a loan/lean on house payable when they sell

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

- One man was a pillar of the community, lived here for 50 years and his taxes went up from 600-1500. He worried so much about it that I think it contributed to his early death.
- Transportation needs to go more places- out to Winterville- hard to make it to appointments because there is not transportation.
- Housing needs to be made available to formerly incarcerated people. One woman couldn't get into public housing and there were no programs to help her until she was homeless!
- Homeless shelter has no room and the closings are not good
- Childcare workers need to be paid better!
- Churches need to help more with the homeless and lack of child care issues

SITE: St. Joseph's Catholic Church

DATE: July 29

CONVERSATION TEAM: Rachel Norwood, Adriana Robinson

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS (Approximate): 10

IDEAS AND THOUGHTS:

Notes on St. Joseph's visit (Spanish-speaking parishioners) July 29, 2006

Young father with family:

—Things are going well overall but the lack of a social security card makes transportation difficult since they don't have the right to drive without one. They are faced with risking arrest by driving without a license.

Young man:

—He stated that lack of a social security card makes studying further impossible.

He would like for workplaces to offer onsite classes so that workers can work and study at the same time. He would like to study English but would like for more classes to be offered in the community. Sometimes he would rather put up with being sick rather than seeking out medical care.

Mother of one-year-old child:

—Would like more transportation options in the community and more available jobs. She works at night and husband takes care of child then. She doesn't want to send her daughter to daycare now.

Young couple:

—They arrived here one year ago and had spent some time in New York City. What they really feel is lacking here is a low-cost healthcare clinic that offers services on a sliding scale fee. They would also like to see more English classes and more frequent bus service.

Mother with daughter (8-10 years old) in wheelchair:

—She would like buses to run much later so that people have more work options. Also she thinks there should be more health care for non-citizens and more after-school programs for kids. School buses should be air-conditioned.

High school age young man:

—He feels that the national immigration issue is a big problem in general. Specifically here in Athens, he has trouble with not being able to drive since that impedes getting to work and school. He currently works and attends summer school at Cedar Shoals and relies on friends for rides. Health care is also an

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

issue without a social security number. He is very concerned with racism in the Athens Police Department and has been a victim of racial profiling, feeling that he was stopped simply for being Hispanic. There is a need for more English programs with flexible schedules.

Married man:

—His main concern was driving without a license to work in Atlanta. He does not have the required social security card.

1. Community said: We believe that the big problem is the communication (language) and we would like from you to help us with more programs like Even Start. They teach us English and while we are learning our kids are safe and learning too, this program offers child care for us so in that way we do not have to be worried about our kids.

2. We would like more transportation because I felt afraid when I drive now. Before I had a driver license and now it is impossible for me to renew because I do not have a social security card.

3. I am a young woman. I finished High School last year but now I am looking for a place to continue my education. I went to Athens Tech School but it is really expensive for my parents to pay that. I went to many other places finally a friend told me about Gainesville College I went there and request information and they gave me hope because it is not necessary to have a social security card for to study in this place and probably I can qualify for a scholarship. but it's still being a problem because I live here in Athens if I want to study there I have to drive every day and it is really far and I think in the gasoline too that I am going spend. We need opportunities here in Athens for youth whose want to study and be different in the future.

4. Many of us need Medicaid for our kids. I went to the DFCS office last week and they request me for my legal situation here. I just told them that I will be back with the documentation for the next day. But what can I do if I do not have these documents? I am just requesting Medicaid for my child he was born here and the medical is for him not for me. Please do not think about parents documentation think about children who need this help (Medicaid).

5. First was Medicaid and now it is Medicaid plus medical attention for adult who do not have a legal documentation here. Please consider people from other countries who do not have a legal situation here. We are human just like you and we need medical attention.

Well, these are all the information that I have. I hope these can help you and the community too.

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

This is the phone number from the Catholic Church. We spoke with the preacher and he said that if you have any other question or if you would like to set up a meeting with the community you can call him at 706-548-6332 ext. 13 His name is Refugio Oñate.

SITE: Columbus Avenue

DATE: July 31

CONVERSATION TEAM: Gwen O'Looney and Tommy Farmer

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS (Approximate): Six youth and three parents participated -- one parent only attended for first section. Schools attended by the youth were Timothy Road Elementary (4), Oglethorpe Elementary (1), and Burney Harris Lyons Middle School (1). Below are the responses of the participants in their own words wherever possible.

IDEAS AND THOUGHTS:

On July 31, 2006, Gwen O'Looney and Tommy Farmer volunteered for Partners for a Prosperous Athens to conduct a session for youth at the Athens-Clarke County Community Center on Columbus Avenue near Rocksprings Public Housing Community. Six youth and three parents participated -- one parent only attended for first section. Schools attended by the youth were Timothy Road Elementary (4), Oglethorpe Elementary (1), and Burney Harris Lyons Middle School (1). Below are the responses of the participants in their own words wherever possible.

What do you like best about your school?

1. Having fun
2. Going to work and outside learning.
3. Lockers
4. Playground
5. Gym
6. Opportunities
7. Parent: Daughter had 2 years of experience working in the school office and learned a lot of skills, responsibility and got to know administrators and teachers.
8. Beautiful books in the library
9. Extracurricular activities like drama at Clarke Central
10. Library and all of its stuff
11. Counselors (especially Mr. Hicks)
12. Parent: The way they outlined the curriculum needed for each child. Personalized info on what your child needs for each year.
13. Parent: Parent-Teacher conferences and being a part of PTO. School was open to my visits and it was easy to talk to principal, administrators and teachers.
14. Parent: The way food services gave children a choice and the way the cafeteria was well run. Honor nights and award ceremonies.

What changes would make schools better?

1. Parent: Teachers need to care more.
2. Parent: Raise test scores. Our schools should be better. Students need to be learning more.
3. Parent: More tutoring programs

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

4. More field trips
5. More desks to stop having to borrow from other classrooms
6. Everybody should have to take a test – every grade should be treated the same. Not fair for the third grade to have to have one and others not.
7. Too many tests and have to spend all our time practicing for them.
8. Elementary schools should have lockers for each child.
9. Parent: Students who do not pass high school tests need tutoring. Students should be pre-tested to know what they need.
10. Parent: People from other countries need tutoring and accommodation. They have a hard time.
11. Parent: When schools know what students need to pass test, they should have mandatory after school tutoring for high school students who are not ready to pass tests.
12. Kids should be able to do more than one extra curricular activity.

What job do you want to do when you grow up?

1. Carry on the family business of barbering
2. Nurse
3. Lawyer or doctor
4. Pediatrician, singer, hairdresser and dancer
5. Work at McDonald's or Wendy's
6. Doctor
7. Painter of houses

Why do you think students drop out of school?

1. Bullies and people think they are stupid.
 2. They think they can't accomplish anything.
 3. Act like they are sick.
 4. Going to have a baby.
 5. Someone in the family is dying.
 6. Because they can't pass the tests.
 7. Rules and teachers are too strict on some people and not for others.
 8. Teachers are too quick to punish.
- Teachers are not fair to everyone

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION RESULTS

SITE: Campus View Church of Christ

DATE: August 6, 2006

CONVERSATION TEAM:

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS (Approximate): We met with a group of about 7 parents who were involved with a parenting program. The group was very open and provided some good ideas.

IDEAS AND THOUGHTS:

Some ideas they had to improve things in Athens and to help them be better parents included:

1. Have better communication and understanding among people.
2. Provide more services for families in such things as housing, child care, job training, and child-training.
3. Provide more jobs—particularly for those with a GED or high school diploma.
4. Have a better public transportation system and buses do not go everywhere they are needed. The cost of bus fare has gone up to \$1.25. Perhaps use vans to go different places.
5. Have more fun activities for young children like miniature golf.
6. Have greater access to public recreation. The three major service providers are Lay Park, East Athens Community Center and Boys and Girls Club. They serve a very small percentage of those in need.
7. There are few playgrounds easily accessible to young kids.
8. There may be a need for different kinds of schools—perhaps extended year, perhaps schools that can serve multiple family needs (i.e. child care centers, job training, health services).
9. There is a need for more field trips at the schools.
10. There is a need for more Early Head Start programs to serve more kids and families.
11. Provide child care at Athens Tech.
12. Teach students more marketable job skills.
13. Provide more family and children's services.
14. Have students wear uniforms to school.

Some other issues that were discussed include:

1. There needs to be more people talking to young boys about their behaviors.
2. Raise minimum wage.
3. 17 year olds should have the same rights as 18 year olds.
4. Provide more jobs for young teenagers to help them get work experience and money.
5. Residents of Athens should get the same opportunities as UGA students.
6. Housing is difficult because UGA students take a lot of housing.