

Task Force Announces Ambitious Poverty Reduction Action Plan for Oswego County

MEXICO – Development of a comprehensive economic development plan is one of the first steps that an anti-poverty task force will take in an ambitious plan to reduce poverty and unemployment in Oswego County.

The recommendation was one of many goals outlined in a consultant's report to the Oswego County Community Health and Poverty Reduction Task Force earlier this month at CITi, the Center for Instruction, Technology and Innovation in Mexico (formerly BOCES).

The report is posted on the Oswego County government website at [Community Health and Poverty Reduction Task Force releases "Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Action Plan"](#).

More than 200 citizens left the meeting energized and confident about the community's ability to improve the overall health and economic standing of county residents.

County Legislator Roy Reehil, District 5, Constantia, chairman of the task force, said there are numerous opportunities for citizens of all ages and interests to become involved in the process.

The task force, which is a collaboration of the County Legislature, school districts across the county, and the Richard S. Shineman Foundation, was established in February 2015. Czb LLC, a Virginia-based consulting firm that specializes in neighborhood revitalization, was hired to conduct research and analyze conditions in the county. The consultant's plan contains extensive data about the county's economic and educational conditions and recommends many steps for agencies to take in developing a new approach to reversing negative trends in Oswego County.

"More than 250 people were interviewed over the past several months in an effort to dissect and understand the economic and related poverty challenges facing Oswego County," said Reehil. "We analyzed conditions in the county and have developed a plan of steps to alleviate some of these conditions. The trouble we're in didn't occur overnight, and it will take an extraordinary amount of community effort to sustain lasting changes. "

Lingering Effects of Recession

Unlike other counties in New York State, Oswego County has not recovered from the recession of 2008 and 2009, resulting in long-term reliance on food stamps, extremely high cases of children in single-parent homes living in poverty, and the second highest unemployment rate in New York State.

'Phenomenal Capacity' to Overcome Poverty

However, said consultant Robert Krupicka, although Oswego County faces considerable challenges, "the capacity of the community to solve these challenges is phenomenal."

“Over the course of this project, czb interacted with such a wide range of committed and expert stakeholders that it is impossible not to envision positive change if everyone in the county comes together around this issue,” Krupicka said.

The task force divided itself into several multi-disciplinary teams who are collaborating to create a county-wide response. Teams are working on economic development, social services, youth and schools, community development, policy, and mental health, substance abuse. The team leaders spoke about the goals of their groups at the Dec. 8 informational session. Volunteers are urged to join one of the teams and share their time and expertise on any of the issues.

‘Together We can Make a Difference’

A “Self-Help Summit” will be held in March for members of the community to learn more about the work of the task force and how they can become involved.

“We’ve begun a powerful dialogue,” said Reehil. “If you have a special interest, or expertise, and the energy to help us succeed, please join a team or donate to a specific cause or initiative. The only way we’re going to have a long-term impact on poverty in Oswego County is to mobilize every ounce of effort and good-will available. Together we can make a difference.”

In addition to Reehil, members of the Oswego County Community Health and Poverty Reduction Task Force are County Legislators Marie C. Schadt, task force vice chair, District 19, Oswego; Daniel LeClair, District 8, Pennellville; Jacob A. Mulcahey, District 15, Oswego; Stewart Amell, Superintendent of Schools, Sandy Creek Central School District; Anita Murphy, Superintendent of Schools, APW Central School District; Lisa Roman, Counselor, Oswego City School District; and John Shelmidine, Board President, CiTi.

LeClair closed the meeting by challenging those in attendance to take personal accountability for helping to stop poverty in Oswego County.

“It stops here,” he said. “That is the message we have got to carry to the rest of the citizens and townships and villages across our county. No more are we going to be last! It stops here, but it also starts here.”

Those interested in becoming involved in the work of the task force are invited to contact Reehil at 315-675-9704, e-mail Legislator@Reehil.com.

Photo caption

County Legislator Roy Reehil, right, chairman of the Oswego County Community Health and Poverty Reduction Task Force, and consultant Robert Krupicka addressed a standing room only crowd of more than 200 citizens Dec. 8 in Mexico, when the task force released an ambitious plan to improve economic conditions in the county. Reehil noted that Oswego County is resilient and that by working together everyone can make a difference in improving poverty and the quality of life in the county. (Photo courtesy Cre8 Studios.)