

Community of Practice: Elevating Voices of Change

Phase 3:
Building Communities
of Stories



Agenda for Dec. 12

Noon-12:15 Welcome and time of quiet to settle in our space/get food

12:15-12:30 Ice-breaker and introductions

12:30-1: Organization share-outs & post-its (approx. 5 minutes each)

1-1:15: Post-it Feedback Gallery Walk

1:15-1:20: Group Discussion of Feedback/Q & A

1:20-1:30 pm Co-Creating Next Steps

1:30-1:45 pm Policy Priority Brainstorm

1:45-2 pm Ice-Breaker Revisited



Welcome & Grounding Moment



Widening the Lens at Withrow High School
--Families Forward





Head Start Proud

—Northern Kentucky Community Action

Commission

Ice-breaker

Please share:

- Your name
- The organization you are here to support
- One thing you are excited to share OR learn today



Organization Share Outs













Each org shares:

- Context
- Deliverables
- Lessons learned
- Hopes for the future

We all:

- Write key words/notes on Post-its
- Also write 'how I can share/adapt this'





a learning grove organization

FamiliesForward/Learning Grove

DOMINANT NARRATIVE:

 The children, youth and families we serve need to be saved. Our services are the only way they will be able to succeed.

COUNTER NARRATIVE:

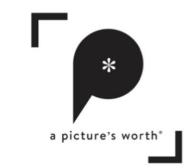
 The children, youth, and families we serve are doing amazing things, and we're just partnering with them for a piece of their success story.

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS:

 Grit, innovation, deep loyalty to family, high standards/deliberative, thoughtful

PROJECT:

 'Widening the Lens' series of conversations at Withrow High School curated by community participant (Pi'Son Brown)



FamiliesForward/Learning Grove









HER Cincinnati

DOMINANT NARRATIVE:

 People who are reentering their lives after incarceration are still criminals/bad folks with no successful future (they need to be 'saved')

COUNTER NARRATIVE:

 Women survivors of abuse, addiction, incarceration and other life experiences are resilient, can make positive choices, and achieve success with collaboration, using their strengths.

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS:

- Resilience, grit, determination, bravery, supportiveness PROJECT:
- Good Neighbor profiles about residents of Anna Louise Inn drafted by community participant (Stephanie Miku)

Voices of Change

Cincinnati Scholar House





Anna Louise Inn





Good Neighbor Project

Transforming Perceptions, Elevating Strengths



Our goal for this project: Change the narrative about people living in low-income housing

What is the current narrative for low-income housing?

Women impacted by abuse, trafficking, addiction, and poverty are often misunderstood and defined by their pasts.

How can we change this narrative?

Shift the focus to their strengths, resilience, and potential to create a community where they are seen and valued as equals.

How do we amplify this message?

Use storytelling to highlight our residents living at ALI, inspire empathy, and drive support for our programs.

Introducing

The Good Neighbor Project

Purpose:

To reshape public perceptions of the women we serve by sharing their stories of courage, hope, and transformation.

Approach:

Strengths-based storytelling that highlights recovery, resilience, and aspirations rather than trauma.

Impact:

Create a foundation for stronger community support, deeper donor engagement, and broader awareness of our mission.



"The Good Neighbor" Project

From One Voice to Many

Original Plan:

One client would conduct all interviews and write the stories.

Pivot to Collaboration:

We involved 10 women who trained with Elyissa to make the project more collaborative.

- Benefits:
 - Empowered more clients to contribute.
 - Brought in diverse perspectives.
- Challenges:
 - Ensuring it didn't create too much extra work for the team.
- Outcome: Glad to have both options for future projects—either one storyteller or a collaborative group.

"Good Neighbor Project"

Pivot to Collaboration

Focus Collab Group:

- Led by: Elissa, Stephanie, Jenny
- 15 ALI clients asked to participate
- \$25 gift cards given to attend the meeting
- Overview of narrative change work from Voices of Change Cohort
- Residents were excited to talk about their neighbors in the meeting
- Discussed VIA Character Strengths HER Cincinnati Staff has adopted
- Got confirmation from those interested in doing this project with us

"Good Neighbor" Story Tools

Character Strengths Survey:

VIA Character Strengths















































Agreed Upon Interview Questions:

- 1.Tell us your full name, your hometown and how long you have lived at the Anna Louise Inn.
- 2. What is your personal superpower?
- 3. Talk about what being a good neighbor means to you
- 4.Talk about a time you were a good neighbor to someone here—what happened and how did it make you feel?
- 5. What should people know about you that might surprise them?
- 6. What is your favorite home décor item and why?

Barb's Story Written by Stephanie M.

Barb Vollat was born and raised in Cincinnati. Since 2017, she has been a proud resident of the Anna Louise Inn (ALI). For Barb, the cornerstone of being a good neighbor is politeness. "Just treat people how you, yourself, would like to be treated," Barb explains. "That's all it takes to be neighborly."

Known as a social butterfly within the ALI community, Barb is always active, involved, and on the move. Her kindness and willingness to help others set her apart—she's the neighbor everyone hopes to have. "I check on my neighbors regularly," Barb says. "I get such a good feeling out of being helpful."

Despite her social nature, Barb values balance and knows when to focus inward. "I am very social, but I also know when to withdraw myself," she says. "Balance is important."

Surprisingly, many might not know that Barb is also an artist at heart. "I love to paint and color," she reveals. "It's peaceful to me."

Barb's story reflects the transformative power of community, support, and personal growth, showcasing the resilience, creativity, and kindness that define our programs.

Client Impact of Strengths-Based Storytelling

Reaffirmed Self-Worth and Confidence in our Residents

Impact:

Helped clients see their strengths in a new, positive way.

Showcase bravery in recovery and pursuing new opportunities.

Highlighted their growth, overcoming obstacles, and achieving success.

Next Steps:

Continue using strengths-based work to foster positivity and growth.

How Can We Amplify Our Community Work?

Collaborate with Partners:

Highlight the roles of partner agencies in client support.

Create and Share Content:

Website updates, social media campaigns, brochures, and client stories.

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Inspire Stakeholders:

Showcase client journeys at community events and fundraising campaigns.

Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges:

- Managing emotions of clients not selected for interviews.
- Balancing consistency and time for storytelling work.

Opportunities:

- Strengthen understanding and support from the community.
- Deepen donor and volunteer engagement.
- Empower clients by amplifying their voices.
- Create a Template:
- Develop a narrative change framework that can be used by all staff and partners to ensure consistency and impact in future storytelling efforts.



Moving Forward

Next Steps:

Expand storytelling to include more clients and platforms (e.g., videos, print and online platforms)

Use feedback to improve engagement and impact.

Continue building our HER marketing library of strength-based client stories.

Final Message:

The "Good Neighbor" Project highlights resilience, courage, and hope.

Together, we can transform perceptions and create a supportive community.





DOMINANT NARRATIVE:

 Early education is not important to child and family development. Head Start is free so it must be bad.

COUNTER NARRATIVE:

- Early education plays a critical role in setting children and families up to thrive.
- Head Start is high-quality.

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS:

 Resilience, determined to make a positive change PROJECT:

 Develop a series of "I was a Head Start baby" profiles and stories



Northern Kentucky Community Action Commission









Lighthouse Youth & Family Services

DOMINANT NARRATIVE:

- Young people did something wrong and that's why they need our services.
- Children and youth don't have mental health challenges.

COUNTER NARRATIVE:

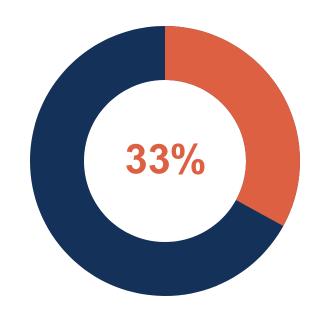
 A young person can heal and grow when supported with the services and resources they need to thrive. Current circumstances do not determine future success.

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS:

 Resilience in the face of adversity, bold, assertive, adaptive, courageous

PROJECT:

 Engaging Youth Leadership Group with planning/sharing at annual fundraiser



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OF
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EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS ARE UNDER THE AGE OF 25.



YOUTH ARE HOMELESS BECAUSE THEY'RE "BAD" KIDS OR HAVE CHOSEN TO BE HOMELESS.



YOUTH ARE HOMELESS
BECAUSE THEY'RE "BAD" KIDS
OR HAVE CHOSEN TO BE HOMELESS.



YOU'RE ONLY HOMELESS IF YOU SLEEP ON THE STREETS.



YOU'RE ONLY HOMELESS
IF YOU SLEEP ON THE STREETS.



YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS ARE LAZY.



YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS ARE LAZY.



LIGHTHOUSE SHEAKLEY CENTER FOR YOUTH

Fiscal Year 2023

Young people served 289

Young people left shelter 253

The only local shelter with an expert team focused on meeting the unique needs of young adults 18-24 who are experiencing homelessness



LIGHTHOUSE SHEAKLEY CENTER FOR YOUTH

Of the young people who moved into stable housing,



did not return to homelessness within two years after leaving the center.







Lighthouse Youth & Family Services

WHAT DOES YOUTH HOPE MONTH MEAN TO ME?



TalidLighthouse
Youth Action Board Member

"Homelessness in youth is such a huge problem. Youth need to know that there is hope and support.

They need to know there is somewhere they are accepted, and they are worth having a safe and secure home.

You are recognized, and there are brighter days.

It can happen to anyone, but it's definitely not the end of a good life."





Mercy Neighborhood Ministries

DOMINANT NARRATIVE:

• People who receive public benefits do not want to work. We (agency) know what's best for them.

COUNTER NARRATIVE:

 Individuals who receive work supports are motivated and resilient problem solvers moving towards creating a stable and hopeful future for themselves and their family.

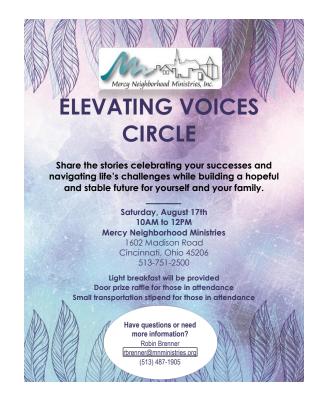
COMMUNITY STRENGTHS:

- Resiliency, courageousness, flexibility, hopefulness, problem-solvers, networkers PROJECT:
- As an extension of our Workforce Supportive Services programming, we have implemented 'Elevating Circle,' conversations held on a quarterly basis. These circles provide a safe space for our participants to share their stories and build community. Over time, stories will be collected in a variety of media formats told from the participant's perspective about how common systems issues, like financial and benefits cliffs, impact their ability to build stable futures for themselves and their families. This story bank will be shared with prospective funders, current donors and supporters, community partners, and government officials to educate about how systems change can positively impact the lives of those we serve.





Mercy Neighborhood Ministries











IKRON

DOMINANT NARRATIVE:

- People on government assistance just want a handout.
 COUNTER NARRATIVE:
- The cliff effect makes it difficult for people to get ahead / face many barriers to get ahead; people on government assistance get punished for working too much (what do we value?)

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS:

- Collaborators, Helpers, Influencers, Go-getter PROJECT:
- Radio Public Service Announcement(s) (PSA) by Mrs.
 Jackson (community participant) about her experience
 with the benefits' cliff and IKRON's offerings



IKRON

Go Getter Public Service Announcement





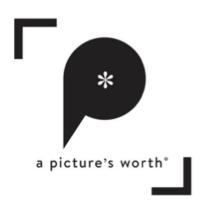




Post-It Feedback Gallery Walk

- Add your Post-its to appropriate sheets.
- Add +1s where you feel energized/connected.







Co-Creating Next Steps

PROPOSAL BASED ON FEEDBACK SO FAR:

- Year 1 (Pilot, the year we are ending now):
 Organizations' deliverables become part of United Way
 resource library and examples of projects for future
 cohort members.
- Year 2 (2025): NEW: UW funding supports quarterly inperson new cohort (6) and alumni (6) gatherings (in person and/or online), monthly check-ins with APW to keep momentum and focus, monthly newsletter with cross-cohort updates/news/educational opportunities. (Added structure and support.) Begin coordinated data collection work using project deliverables as guides for ongoing engagement as well as recommendations for policy leaders/United Way/government/etc. Continue to share all learnings and deliverables across organizations!





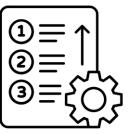
Co-Creating Next Steps

PROPOSAL BASED ON FEEDBACK SO FAR:

 Year 3 (2026): Continue to build cohorts based on best practices and idea-sharing. As more orgs work with community members, shared policy priorities can increase community-led op-eds, PSAs and an increase in narrative change projects. and their impact to build solid case for policy advocacy work with United Way and beyond



Policy Priority Brainstorm



What systemic and/or policy priorities might we focus on in our narrative change projects and related data collection work?



Leaving Excited About...