



December 2015  
Priority Spokane  
Quarterly  
Newsletter

www.PrioritySpokane.org

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ENGAGING COMMUNITY. CREATING CHANGE.

## Community Forum Success



On Tuesday, November 3, Priority Spokane held its "Addressing Student Homelessness" annual community forum. The event sold out with approximately 250 in attendance. Dr. Tim Hilton, professor from Eastern Washington University, presented the results of their student homelessness model practice study (see last page of this newsletter), Priority Spokane debuted its Erase Homelessness video, Spokane Regional Health District released their Missing the Foundation county-wide homelessness assessment, and the community provided feedback on what was working when it comes to student homelessness and what's still missing. Community members were invited to partner with Priority Spokane as we work to stabilize the almost 3,000 homeless students in Spokane County. Participants were challenged to take two "Erase Student Homelessness" awareness magnets with them- one for themselves and one to share with a friend or colleague. The documents



from the forum, including the video, are available on our website at [www.PrioritySpokane.org](http://www.PrioritySpokane.org)

## Missing the Foundation

Addressing homelessness is a top priority for many organizations in Spokane County. To bring awareness to the size of the problem and the nature of the issues related to homelessness, the Spokane Regional Health District's Data Center has completed an assessment of



homelessness in Spokane County. The report, titled Missing the Foundation, brings together multiple data sources to shed light on the number of homeless individuals and families, presents root causes and health implications of homelessness, and describes the agencies that are addressing homelessness in the county. Recommendations from local agencies and new state legislation passed in 2015 are described in the report. Missing the Foundation is available [here](#).

## NACo Comes to Spokane

In November, Priority Spokane partnered with the



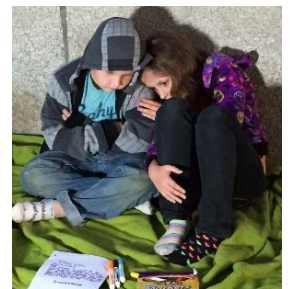
National Association of Counties and the

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to bring leaders from counties across the US to Spokane for a 3 day Learning Lab. While here, Spokane leaders presented on their work to increase the high school graduation rate resulting in the 2014 Culture of Health Prize and showcased what Spokane is doing to improve community health.

## Erasing Student Homelessness PSA

In September, Priority Spokane partnered with Community Minded Television to produce a public service announcement to raise awareness about student

homelessness in Spokane County. The five minute film features conversations with EWU researchers, community



leaders, and former students and individuals who have experienced homelessness. Over a dozen volunteers assisted in the filming process. The film debuted at the community forum, is currently being aired on Community Minded TV and is available online at our website at [www.PrioritySpokane.org](http://www.PrioritySpokane.org) Please watch the film and then share it with your friends.

## In the News!

In our ongoing effort to raise awareness about the almost 3,000 homelessness

students in Spokane County, Priority Spokane has been featured in several articles in the last few months. You can find the articles through the below news links.



[The Inlander](#)

[The Spokesman Review](#)

[Krem.com](#)

## Have you visited our website?



Priority Spokane launched its new website earlier

this year at [www.PrioritySpokane.org](http://www.PrioritySpokane.org). The website provides information on the

organization, our leadership team, and most importantly it shows where we are in our current process. You can also "like" our Facebook page "Priority Spokane" to keep up-to-date on our news and activities.



## Subcommittee Work

**Education Subcommittee:** Chair Dr. Patrick Jones. This group hopes to replicate past successes in Spokane Public Schools at other school districts and begin new initiatives, such as preventing the summer melt phenomenon.

**Finance Subcommittee:** Chair Angelique Rusk. This group monitors the funds for Priority Spokane and seeks resources to support priority areas of work.

**Mental Health & Homelessness Subcommittee:** Chair Lyndia Wilson. This group is developing a pilot project based

on the EWU research. A comprehensive inventory of organizations providing services to the homeless has been compiled.

## Our Current Focus:

Our current priority is to help stabilize the lives of homeless and at-risk of becoming homeless children in grades K-8 and their families in Spokane County. By stabilizing these students now, we can prevent significant trauma to the student and to their communities in the future.

To learn more about our work visit [www.PrioritySpokane.org](http://www.PrioritySpokane.org) or e-mail [PrioritySpokane@outlook.co](mailto:PrioritySpokane@outlook.co)

## Thank you to our 2015 Steering Committee Members!

Our Steering Committee is made up of leaders from government, education, universities, business, health, and nonprofit sectors. These outstanding individuals and organizations work together using an evidence-based, data-driven approach to identify and address the largest issues affecting Spokane County. We appreciate their work and support.

### Avista Utilities

Britt Bachtel-Browning, Senior Counsel

### City of Spokane

Mayor David Condon

Councilwoman Amber Waldref

### Community Building Foundation

Katy Sheehan, Executive Director

### Eastern Washington University

Dr. Mary Cullinan, President

Dr. D. Patrick Jones, Executive Director

### Empire Health Foundation

Antony Chiang, President

### ESD 101

Dr. Michael Dunn, Superintendent

### Gonzaga University

Dr. Vincent Alfonso, Dean, School of Education

Mary Joan Hahn, Director of Community and Public Relations

### Greater Spokane Inc.

Alisha Benson, Interim President

### Inland Northwest Community Foundation

Mark Hurtubise, President and CEO

### Numerica Credit Union

Manuel Hochheimer, AVP of Business

Development

### Providence Health Care

Ann Hurst, Chief Mission Integration Officer

Sara Clements-Sampson, Community

Benefits Manager

### Spokane County

Christine Barada, Director of Housing &

Community Development Division

Shelly O'Quinn, Commissioner

### Spokane Falls Community College

Dr. Janet Gullickson, President

### Spokane Housing Authority

Pam Tietz, Executive Director

### Spokane Regional Health District

Torney Smith, Administrator

Lyndia Wilson, Division Director

### United Way of Spokane County

Tim Henkel, President and CEO

### US Bank Spokane Region

Steve Wilcox, Sr. VP, Managing Director

### Washington State University

Dr. Lisa Brown, Chancellor

### Whitworth University

Dr. Barbara Sanders, Dean of Education



**Is your organization interested in partnering with us?** Our Steering Committee members are caring and community-driven individuals who meet on the third Wednesday of every month. Member organizations pay an annual membership fee of \$2,500 per member which funds the administrative costs of the organization. Contact us for more information.

## The EWU Report: Stabilizing Homelessness to Address Education Outcomes

By Dr. Timothy P. Hilton & Dr. Deanna L. Trella, Eastern Washington University



### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (Find the complete report online at [www.PrioritySpokane.org](http://www.PrioritySpokane.org))

Data on homeless students from the Department of Education suggest Spokane County's rate of homelessness is very high- 33% higher than the state average and as much as 46% higher in some communities. Of the nearly 3,000 homeless children in Spokane County schools, 76% are doubling-up with family and friends due to eviction or other financial issues- a situation that is the most common precursor to entering a homeless shelter, and a household structure associated with stress and anxiety; social, emotional and behavioral difficulties; and poor academic performance.

Based on these findings, we are tasked with identifying strategies for reducing homelessness among families with children in Spokane County public schools (grades K-8) and services to improve homeless students' academic performance and overall mental health. Our research involved:

- A. Extensive reviews on homelessness prevention services and programs for homeless students across the U.S. to identify promising practice models;
- B. Analyzing state and local Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and Healthy Youth Survey data to assess the extent, nature and impacts of homelessness among children in public schools;
- C. Interviews and meetings with local policymakers and service providers to evaluate current services and service gaps; and
- D. In-depth interviews with homeless families (parents) with children in Spokane schools to identify potential clients' perspectives on existing services and unmet needs.

While there are somewhat extensive and diverse services for homeless families in the Spokane-area, access to homelessness prevention services are limited as are services for children living in doubled-up households. We make two main recommendations for the creation of programs to serve homeless families with children in Spokane-area schools. These include:

1. **A homelessness prevention and diversion program** targeting families at-risk of foreclosure or eviction and families who are doubling-up with family and friends.

The goals of this program are to **prevent homelessness for at-risk families, and to help families who are currently doubling-up with family or friends (after losing a home) secure more stable housing.** This may occur through helping these families secure new housing or providing supports to create a more stable doubled-up housing situation.

2. **School based services to address homeless students' unmet academic and mental health care needs.**

The goals of this program are: to **improve students' academic performance (reading and math scores); reduce students' absences, increase students' grade completion rates; reduce rates of social, emotional and behavioral issues among homeless students; reduce students' perceived stress and anxiety, and improve students' overall sense of well-being.**

As with the first recommendation, we expect a **return of more than \$2 for every \$1 in program investment** based on reductions in number of students who must repeat a grade.

We identify several potential funding sources for these programs. **Current public funding options for these programs could increase substantially if two things occurred--the Spokane Regional Continuum of Care achieved a "High Performance Community" designation and the Spokane Housing Authority received a federal designation as a "Moving to Work" area.** Both of these designations would allow substantial additional housing- and homelessness-related services funding to be devoted to prevention. Achieving these designations would require substantial time and effort, however, the potential benefits are great.

**This research was funded by Inland Northwest Community Foundation, Priority Spokane, Providence Health Services, and Spokane Regional Health District.**

Find the complete  
report online at  
[www.PrioritySpokane.org](http://www.PrioritySpokane.org)