

A Community Driven by Knowledge

Kosciusko Leadership Academy

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In our society knowledge is power. Knowledge allows a company to grow, a project to expand, and a community to feel whole. There are various ways to gain knowledge: education, training, and life experience. Without knowledge every effort is static, because there is no starting point from which to move forward. The goal of our project is to bring knowledge and to bring understanding to a vital part of our community, the heart of our community, the working people. With current economic issues there is a larger need for social services, and this need is impacting people in our community who have never had to reach out for assistance before. Faced with needing services for the first time, the process of seeking out resources can be not only frustrating to the one in need, but also to others directly involved in their lives. Not knowing where to go, and what is available in our community only adds to an already stressful situation and affects productivity on the job. For example, when (female name or male name) is worried about finding a service or resource for a family member it distracts them from their work related tasks or increases absenteeism. Worried workers have a harder time staying on task.

When we were working to identify the best possible venues for disseminating the information about the resources available in our community, we considered who would most benefit from the knowledge of resources, who can reach the most people, and who encounters the current population that is needing assistance. We targeted supervisors, managers, educators, and HR personnel as potentially the key liaisons between workers and area agencies. We want to arm these groups in our community with the information about what Kosciusko County Agencies have to offer through a series of presentations that would be tailored to the

needs of a specific audience among the groups we targeted. We hope to create the potential for synergy among employers, workers, and agencies that will serve as the fuel for imparting transformational knowledge to those who are least likely to be able to find it on their own. We have to keep in mind that the middle class worker is the least likely to know about available services due to the multiple demands on his or her time. When an individual's personal life is suffering due to lack of food, domestic violence, medical needs not being met, and the stress of a teen pregnancy or various other day to day stressors, their performance at work or school also suffers. Our workshop will give supervisors and/or selected people from various companies the training and knowledge to assist their employees in time of need. They will gain the knowledge of knowing what our community has to offer, so the employer will be able to assist with appropriate referrals to agencies that can assist, or at least point in the right direction, with meeting the employees' needs. The hoped for outcome is that once basic human needs are met, productivity will increase and a positive work environment will be created.

We are proposing biannual meetings, and these meeting will focus on the resources in our community. Kosciusko County is a county rich in resources for those in need. At each meeting ten area agencies will be selected to participate. Each agency will be given five minutes to present to the group. The information that will be presented will be the basics of their program, not how they started, not their funding sources, or their current needs....but what they offer. The participating agencies should present the basics of their programs so the audience will know exactly what it is that they do to help people in need- be it for food

assistance, rent, utility, shelter, transportation, educational, developmental, health or social services.

The participants will be selected by their company, those who the company feels would best benefit with the knowledge that the agencies will disseminate. We would like to target 30 businesses, as well as the local schools to send one or two persons to the event with attendance being between thirty to forty individuals. The time slot for this event will be no longer than an hour and a half, fifty minutes of presentations and thirty minutes of networking and question time. Each participant will be given a contact list of resources in the community, as well as a binder of brochures and information about resources in the community. The event's location can be held at community library, because of it being a non-profit event, other venues are also available for this type of event depending on the response to attendance.

Here are some examples of agencies which will be selected and the type of information that will be presented during their presentation time. We've tried to develop a comprehensive list that will touch on many of the needs that workers face in their daily lives and which impact their ability to work, but the list is not exhaustive.

The Bowen Center - "Is a comprehensive community mental health center with a complete range of mental health services: including inpatient care on an intensive basis, outpatient care, consultation and education programs, emergency care 24 hours a day, residential care, follow-up and aftercare services, judicial aid and court screening services, programs for alcohol and drug abuse, psychiatric services for children and youth."

The Beaman Home – Provides 24 hours, 7 days a week protection and respite care to victims of domestic violence. Services include emergency shelter, a 24-hour crisis line, food, clothing, advocacy, transportation, community referrals, child enhancement program, one on one outreach services, court and hospital advocacy, professional training, support groups, and domestic violence education.

The Township Trustee – “The trustee can help with shelter costs, rent, mortgage, emergency hotel accommodations, food, clothing, and delinquent bills for water, gas, fuel oil and electric services. Trustees also provide assistance with some medical needs, dental care, burial expenses, and other special circumstance areas. Why did we include the township trustees? For the under-employed whose needs might be crossed with those who live in temporary poverty.

Combined Community Services – “*Emergency Assistance* – assists Kosciusko County residents with basic living needs to the extent of their resources. *Project Independence* – Assists low income households with family development through education, support and structure to achieve independence from all financial assistance. *Impact* – assists low income households striving for financial independence through job search, selection and retention. *IDA* – helps lower income households save money to put toward home ownership or education. *People Services* – assists residents who are looking for employment by offering job tips, resume assistance, job search assistance and interviewing skills. Combined Community services also offers seasonal programs, like Energy assistance, school supply needs and Christmas needs.”

Sus Amigos – Assist in bridging cultural gaps, and building healthy Hispanic relationship in Kosciusko County. Sus Amigo’s is a information center if someone is needing help with Spanish translation, immigration, housing, employment, education or advocacy.

Medication & Dental Assistance— “They serve as a liaison between the patient, the physician, and the pharmaceutical companies to provide prescription medication free or at a minimal charge to eligible participants. Residents of Kosciusko County needing long-term medications can apply to receive prescription for free if they are eligible. *Dental Assistance Program*- “Dental assistance may be available to residents of Kosciusko County upon determination of eligibility. If resident is having pain and/or swelling and have no insurance they may apply for dental assistance.

Health Connect’s Help Center – “Offers personalized service to Kosciusko County residents seeking assistance in connecting to local health and wellness providers. The Services Liaison helps individuals determine their service needs and provides them with contact information for the provider they are referred to. *Kosciusko County Cancer Fund* – “The funds exist to help ease the financial burdens often felt by patients and their families by assisting with a variety of needs including housing costs, utilities, prescription medication, food and wigs. *Kosciusko County Community Foundation’s Good Samaritan Fund* – The fund assists with a variety of needs including medical bills, durable medical equipment, and travel and accommodation expenses to obtain medical care, housing costs, utilities and funds for educational, social, lifestyle or travel expenses for terminally ill children. Good Samaritan can provide assistance to worthy and needy adults and children who have a financial need as a result of an injury, disease or medical condition.”

Kosciusko Community Senior Services – “*Senior Activities Center* – “The center is designed to provide a place for senior Citizens to socialize. *Van transportation* – Provides transportation for the entire county by vans all equipped with lifts for the handicapped. Rides for elderly are

scheduled through Council office and nutrition sites. *Mobile Meals* – Provides nutritious noon meal, five days a week to homebound persons who cannot prepare adequate meals for themselves. *In-Home Services* – This program provides general housekeeping for those who find it difficult to manage household chores. *Legal Services* – A toll free number is available for emergency personal legal problems. Elderly are provided with an attorney to assist them with legal situations.”

Well Child Clinic – Provides free routine Well Child physicals for children age 2 months to 13 years of age. Offers Physical examinations and routine care, immunizations, vision and hearing tests, safety and childcare education, referrals for clients with special problems or needs. “The goal of the Well Child Clinic is to provide families with routine, preventative health services that babies and children need to reach school age healthy, happy and prepared to succeed.”

Heartline Pregnancy Center – Heartline services include: 24-hour hotline, free pregnancy tests, information on pregnancy and options, referrals to other agencies, support groups, Maternity clothing, baby supplies, ongoing counseling and emotional support and the Teens and Tots program.

KABS – KABS is the county’s public transportation provider. Their mission is to “Meet the public transportation needs of Kosciusko County by providing transportation that is reliable, affordable, and accessible.” KABS has recently expanded their services to reach more people in need of transportation services.

Cardinal Services – Developmental services for children under the age of three and for adults. Cardinal Services’ mission is to “support people with challenges or disabilities in reaching their personal goals.

North Central Indiana Special Education Cooperative – Developmental services for children age 3 and up provided through the community school corporations.

Boys and Girls Club of Kosciusko County - The Boys & Girls Club of Kosciusko County is dedicated to partnering with families and communities to enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens.

This list is not exhaustive, and the mix of participants can be changed to meet the needs of the audience. To keep the time commitment by all participants to a manageable level, the number of agencies presenting at any one time should be limited to a maximum of ten, but again, that number could be adjusted to meet the needs of the specific audience and the needs they have seen or anticipate seeing in their workers or students. The projected costs associated with the presentation should be nominal- about \$300 per session for printing, advertising, and refreshments.