

**Indiana Commission for Women
Hoosier INsight
Evansville Listening Session Report
University of Evansville, Ridgway University Center
Tuesday, March 29, 2011
6:00p.m. – 8:00pm.**

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Overview

The Indiana Commission for Women (ICW) held a public listening session on Tuesday, March 29 in the evening on the campus of University of Evansville. The hope was that this session would not only draw in the general public, but would also attract some college students as well. The time of the session was 6:00pm – 8:00pm in order to better accommodate individuals work schedules. We started a few minutes late to allow for people who were coming from work and other prior commitments.

As a group, the participants identified (36) issues facing women in Indiana. By consensus, the group voted and determined that the top three issues facing women that should be addressed first were: access to reproductive healthcare, violence against women, and early childhood/family education. An in-depth discussion of these top three priorities was completed in small groups. Each group was asked to answer specific questions regarding their issue and to start developing a plan of action for addressing the issue in Indiana. The results of the discussions are detailed in later in this report.

Participants

The Evansville listening session was sponsored by the F.C. Tucker Emge Realtors and the Office of Diversity at the University of Evansville. In addition the League of Women Voters (LWV) of Southwestern Indiana provided support in helping to publicize the session and get information out into the community; Maura Robinson worked extensively on this. The session was promoted in a variety of ways. The LWV sent it out to their members and also contacted many groups and individuals in the community. A press release for the session was also sent out and resulted in being picked up by multiple local news outlets. It was sent out on the ICW listserv; previous Torchbearer's and ICW Advisory Board Members were also invited. ICW also sent emails out to a variety of individuals that were suggested contacts by other Evansville community members. A total of 20 women attended the listening session.

Issues Identified

The participants of the listening session identified the issues that they believed were barriers to women's full participation in society. These issues were then voted on to determine the top three issues facing women in Indiana. Each woman was given 3 votes that she could use to help prioritize the issues. The numbers next to the issue represent the number of votes that issue received from the participants.

- Affordable housing for all – 2
- Pay equity – 3
- Jobs, Jobs, Jobs - good paying jobs – 8
- Flexible work opportunities – 1
- Work/Life balance – 2
- Widow-friendly services – 2
- Affordable, quality childcare – 6
- Dental care
- Quality, affordable eldercare – 2
- Support for second-time around parents (grandparents, etc.) –
- Health insurance after retirement
- 24/7 public transportation - 6
- Support/education for fair/equitable repair services
- Glass ceiling
- Lack of mentoring – 1
- Medial portrayal of women/girls
- Support of all female roles (traditional & non-traditional)
- Support for self esteem/body image – 1
- Gender role discrimination – 1
- Sexual/domestic violence – 4
- Support for moms with special needs children
- Lack of women supporting women – 8
- Support for women returning from incarceration
- More support for new moms and babies (expand Healthy Families) – 1
- Stratification of economic/racial groups – 4
- More paid time off
- Mentoring for women interested in politics – 2
- Support/prevention of substance abuse
- Support for menopausal women – 1
- Comprehensive health education (eg. Nutrition, body image, anatomy, etc.)
- Obesity – 1
- Support/education women regarding options for adoption
- Healthy relationships
- Pregnancy prevention
- Mentoring opportunities for women who don't know options/possibilities for careers – 1
- Support for single moms – 3

Top Three Issues & Discussion

The top three issues that were identified by the participants were: 1) Lack of women supporting women, 2) Jobs, Jobs, Jobs - good paying jobs, and 3) 24/7 public transportation. The first two issues were tied with the number of votes; both received eight votes. The third priority issue tied with quality, affordable childcare. The group voted and 24/7 public transportation won as the final priority issue. Once these issues were identified, the participants broke up into small groups of 6-8 people to further discuss the components of each issue. Participants were asked to consider a series of questions regarding these issues in order to start developing a plan of action for how we should work to overcome these challenges in Indiana. The questions were divided into five categories and are listed below.

Frame It

1. What are the critical components of this issue?
2. What should be addressed first?

What's in Place Now?

3. Are there any existing programs in place to help solve this issue?
4. Are there any agencies or organizations who currently deal with this issue?

Who should be involved?

5. Who are the people/organizations that should be involved in this issue?
6. Who should be responsible for strategizing ideas and implementing solutions for this issue?

Community/State Actions

7. How can the community work on solving this issue?
8. Is this an issue that should be addressed statewide? How?

Next Steps

9. What resources are needed to work on this issue?
10. What are the next steps that should be taken to address this issue?

Lack of Women Supporting Women

Lack of women supporting women was one of the top priorities for the participants of this listening session. There were eight votes for this issue. The discussion of this topic is below.

Frame It

The participants identified the following main components of this issue:

- Many other problems can be solved by tackling this first
- Lack of acceptance
- Having “right” woman in authority – not just the token woman
- Double standard – women being firm
- Jealousy – especially in minority populations
- Need to focus on serious issues
 - Balancing serious issues with fun events

They also identified some important aspects of this issue

- Progress
- Encourage each other instead of competing
- Acceptance of various roles
- Pushed to hard to succeed (step on each other)
- Back biting

The group determined that the first step is to build trust and to promote self-confidence.

What’s In Place Now?

The participants identified the following programs/organizations that currently exist to help improve women supporting women.

- Girl Scouts
- Women in Leadership
- League of Women Voters (LWV)
- Democratic/Republican women’s caucus
- Athena Awards (Chamber of Commerce)
- ANEW (A Network of Evansville Women)
- Women’s Bar Association
- Spirit of Women
- Sororities
- American Association of University Women (AAUW)
- YWCA – Live Y’ers
- Albion Fellows Bacon Center
- YMCA – DIAMONDS (Determined, Intelligent, Active, Mature, Outstanding, New, Dedicated, Sisters)
- YMCA Community Action Program (Y-CAP)
- The Dream Center
- Boys and Girls Club

The group identified the following issues with some of these programs

- Access and acceptance into programs
- Does it begin with the individual woman or organization?
- Focus more on if the organization is working?
- Interconnection amongst organizations
 - Supporting each other

Who Should Be Involved?

The participants identified the following organizations/groups that should be involved to help improve women supporting women.

- Indiana Commission for Women (ICW)
- All women on list
- Bring women and organizations together on this topic
- YWCA (empowerment of women)
- College-aged women
 - Sororities
 - Women focused organizations
- Women in the media
- Young girls
- All-inclusive women
- Men – be aware
- Kristin Tucker – Evansville Living

Community/State Action

The participants determined that the following actions should be taken in order to help address the issues surrounding women supporting women.

- Starting/continuing dialogue
- Train women to speak publicly
- Men watch kids – women have event
- Get involved in existing organizations
- Focus on young women
- Mentor young women
- Personal introspection
- Religious organizations/churches
- Women in leadership roles
 - Take this initiative as flagship
- Broad focus

Next Steps

The participants determined that the next steps that need to be taken in order to begin making progress on this issue are:

- Find leader
- Don't reinvent the wheel
- Ask existing organizations if they want to get involved
- Personal responsibility – support other women
- ICW statewide theme/campaign
- Create local commission for women

Needed resources:

- Media support
- Point organization (possibly YWCA)
- Rally around this theme
 - Multiple organizations involved
- Location
 - Women's resource center
 - Paid staff to support

Jobs, Jobs, Jobs – Good Paying Jobs

Jobs, jobs, jobs – good paying jobs was identified as another of the top priorities issues by the participants of the Evansville listening session. This issue received eight votes. The discussion of this topic is below.

Frame It

The participants of this discussion identified the following challenges in creating and accessing good paying jobs

- Awareness and availability of jobs at a variety of skills and education levels
- Gender stereotyping
- Better/equal pay

What's In Place Now?

The participants identified the following programs that help address the issue of good paying jobs. They ranked these organizations as follows (3* or less – needs improvement; 4* or more - works well)

- Raising Incomes Committee (Commission on Homelessness)**
- WorkOne*****
- Growth Alliance for Greater Evansville (GAGE)***
- Urban League*****
- Evansville Minority/Women Business Enterprise Utilization Board(WMBE)***
- Evansville Bar Association*****
- Small Business Development Center*****
- Vocational Rehabilitation*****
- Hoosier College Promise (Higher educ. For less tuition)***

Who Should Be Involved?

The participants identified the following organizations/groups that they believe should be involved in helping to address the lack of good paying jobs.

- Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Partners – collaborative
- Evansville Human Resource Association
- Secondary and Higher education
- Major corporations
- Chamber of Commerce
- Male champions
- Community leaders (both formal and informal)
- Women in need of jobs/better jobs
- ANEW
- Women in Construction
- Sororities
- Women Labor/Union groups
- Churches
- Female Veterans
- Univ. of Evansville Women's Awareness
- League of Women Voters

- Department of Labor
- YWCA
- Albion Fellows Bacon Center
- Circles

Community/State Action

The participants determined that the following actions should be taken in order to help promote good paying jobs for women.

- Women's employment report card (complete through USI & the state)
- Chamber of Commerce – exposure
- Education/awareness to reach community regarding women & jobs
- Women's career event – varying venues & types of jobs
- Teaching women how to advance
- Teaching women to be entrepreneurs
- Attract more good employers without raising taxes
 - Good paying
 - Gender equitable
 - Established
 - Woman friendly, etc...
- Teach women to negotiate salary
- Networking
- Teach interviewing skills

Next Steps

The participants determined that the next steps that need to be taken in order to begin making progress on this issue are:

- Create a local commission for women (funded long-term)
- More research
 - On workplace status (commission with USI researchers)
 - On impact on women and children
 - Elderly, widows, single women, etc.
- Create an effective childcare system to support working women including before and after school
- Have equal representation from all economic classes and ethnic groups
- Flexible employer policies to support employees with children (e.g. job matching with social situation)
- Review existing efforts to enhance/modify as needed
- Create a movement to empower women to make change

24/7 Public Transportation

24/7 public transportation was identified as one of the top priority issues for women in Indiana during this session. The issue received six votes. The discussion of the topic is below.

Frame It

The participants of this discussion identified the following challenges within the issues of 24/7 public transportation

- High need for good, affordable public transportation countywide
- Average low income person can't afford a car
- Elderly cannot afford a car or can no longer drive
- Lack of funding to support – need to explore new funding options
- Better bus stops (need shelters) – possibly obtain sponsorships?
- There are no safe bicycle/walking trails

What's In Place Now?

The participants identified the following programs and organizations that are currently working to address the need for 24/7 public transportation.

- Congregations Acting for Justice and Empowerment (CAJE) (Meeting 4/11/11)
- Trails Co – planning for more trails connecting neighborhoods, schools, and employment
- Mayor – makes decisions

The group noted that:

- Progress is being made, but not enough
- There is limited bus service, routes, and hours
- There is a need for creative funding ideas

Who Should Be Involved?

The participants identified the following organizations and people that they believe should be involved in helping to address 24/7 public transportation.

- Citizens advisory groups
- Employers – big companies
- Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)
- Grant writers
- United Way
- Universities – faculty/student organizations
- Mini bus
- Carpooling – Park-Ride

Community/State Action & Next Steps

The participants determined that the following actions should be taken in order to help address 24/7 public transportation. The group combined this section with the next section of “Next Steps.”

- Work with United Way – Community Fund & Welborn Foundation
- Appropriate county monies
- Outreach to big corporations to help with funding
- Continue the work of CAJE
- Identify “sister city” that has same issues ie. Peoria, IL – learn from them
- Get Chamber of Commerce involved in issue

Conclusions

There are many barriers that create challenges to women in Indiana. The Hoosier INsight: Women's Issues Listening Sessions project is the first step in starting the conversations to help to address the inequalities that women still face in our state. The results of all of the sessions that will be held around the state will contribute to a report that will help to identify the top 3-5 issues that present major challenges to women in Indiana. These discussions are the beginning of a process to help move women in Indiana forward by engaging Indiana residents in public deliberation.

The Hoosier INsight project will help ICW continue to voice the needs, concerns, challenges, and viewpoints of women in Indiana. By better understanding the specific needs and desires of women, the commission will be able to better identify the ways in which they can help to remove barriers that hinder their participation in all areas of society. A larger de-briefing event will occur once the results of the listening sessions, as well as the supplemental online women's issue survey, are compiled and will help promote the outcomes of the project. This will help to raise awareness for the issues and to aid in the development of a statewide action plan to deal with the top priority issues across the state.