

TIMES-NEWS

Fighting Poverty

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According to 2012 reports from the Cato Institute, “the United States spends nearly \$1 trillion every year to fight poverty.” Generational poverty exists in Cassia County and families who find themselves in these circumstances manage many of the same issues that any family has. Variations in response to issues and their skills at handling situations.

Dr. Ruby K. Payne, Ph.D., asked the audience at her recent ” Ed Sessions” engagement if their communities had a future story? She went on to say that in order to achieve lasting change, it takes time. In fact, her timeline for the future story of any community is 20 to 25 years. The seeds for eventual change begin now, however. Deciding where a community is headed and potential end goals must include every section of the community. Growth and development at every level is a critical component to success. As a community works toward accepted goals through social, economic and educational policy support, today, the future story will take shape. Advocacy for changes in policy and practice are equally important.

Dr. Payne’s focus is that of generational poverty, but the principles guiding the overall vision are pertinent to any aspect of the community. The purpose of her specific initiative is to “enable resourced individuals to better understand the realities faced by individuals who are under resourced. Improving the lives of under-resourced individuals in the community and providing them the capacity to expand their own resource bases and achieve self sufficiency” will pay dividends for the whole community.

She shared the thinking that there is a “radar-related’ dynamic in communities.

What she educates business, school and community leaders to see on their radar is the group that fall under poverty. This demographic of our community is to be understood and developed, not avoided and criticized. Dr. Payne’s research shows that ”based on data from the past two decades, every 1 percent reduction in the poverty rate requires a corresponding 2 percent rise in the share of the working age population with employment.” The bottom line is that working to grow every demographic within a community enhances the long term benefits for a city.

Dr. Payne stresses that “under-resourced adults are problem solvers who generally don’t have the same information that resourced individuals do. Knowledge is a form of privilege, just as social access, race and money are“. Her action plan for communities includes bridging gaps within the community itself and reversing patterns that keep community members from fully participating

in decisions that affect their lives. Bridging the gap comes through making changes in how people are approached on a variety of levels. Differences in hidden rules, support systems, motivation, and relationships are factors that influence behavior and decisions for every class within the community.

If Cassia County is to build our community story, it will take the awareness, support and interest of us all to bring about real understanding and growth. Adopting some the themes touted by Dr. Payne is an avenue that our community should thoughtfully consider.

The efforts to include each family and every social class in the Cassia School District in the educational process is an action plan, not merely a lip service. Sustained parental involvement is a theme that the school district promotes and efforts to better engage all of our parents are being reinforced, not diminished.