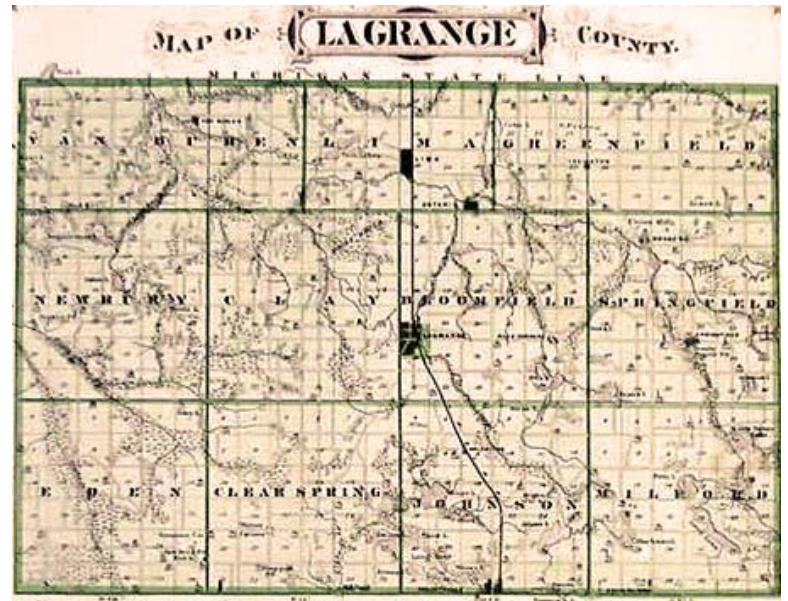




Input Phase Report LaGrange County *4community* Collaboration



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Executive Summary

This report represents the findings of the Input Phase of the research conducted on behalf of the LaGrange 4community Collaboration. The purpose of this research is to assess human service needs in the community and to identify a specific need to be addressed through a collaboration among participating human service organizations. After reviewing the statistical and demographic research and the results of the steering committee survey, the committee determined to focus on youth and childhood issues in the Input Phase.

The Input Phase of a needs assessment consists of primary research regarding the perceptions and opinions of key informants, the public and key stakeholder groups. The instruments used to conduct this investigation in LaGrange County were interviews with 11 key informants, a public survey, and focus groups with key stakeholders.¹

There was a remarkable degree of consensus across the community on the key issues affecting youth and children. The primary concerns were consistently the lack of organized, after school activities for youth and quality childcare.

Respondents to the surveys and participants in the focus groups and interviews consistently observed that organized, after school activities were limited to students involved in athletics or band. Without an activities center, YMCA, or boys and girls club in LaGrange County, most students have no option other than returning home or engaging in unsupervised activities. This is especially difficult for at-risk students with challenging home environments.

Middle school students were expressly identified as particularly vulnerable. Childcare providers in their focus group stated that their programs experienced a major influx of middle school students during the summer, which may certainly indicate that many of these students are returning to empty homes during the school year – a perception shared by educators as well.

Preschool childcare services were also consistently identified as a critical issue. Although participants in the public survey and focus groups generally ranked childcare just below youth activities, key informants and leaders who were interviewed perceived the lack of quality childcare and consequently poor school-readiness as the top issue. Everyone, however, expressed concern over a troubling

¹ Extended interviews were subsequently conducted with the principals of the county's three middle schools after the committee determined to explore interventions with at-risk students. The principals were extremely interested in establishing after school opportunities for students to receive more personal assistance in completing assignments.

trend: participants reported that licensed daycares were closing as unlicensed ones were expanding and exceeding regulatory limits on the number of children they could serve. Licensed daycares are required to meet medical, criminal, health, nutrition and safety standards to ensure that children are in safe, nurturing environments. They are often managed by professionals in early childhood education, and children they serve have the opportunity to engage in age-appropriate, developmental activities. Unlicensed daycares operate more cheaply because they are not required to meet these standards and often do not include age appropriate activities. As licensed daycares continue to close as a result of the cheaper, unregulated alternatives, school-readiness issues may well increase among children entering kindergarten and first grade.

Participants in surveys, focus groups, and interviews indicated overwhelmingly that organized youth activities and childcare were the primary concerns in the community.

Public Survey Results

Executive Summary

As part of the primary research for the LaGrange 4community Collaboration, a public survey was conducted focusing on youth issues. Hardcopies of the survey were distributed through a number of outlets in the community, and a web-based version was publicized in the paper; links were distributed electronically through several organizations. There were 84 respondents.

Recreation for teenagers and parenting were the primary concerns followed by childcare issues. In order to make a composite comparison of the response to each issue, a mean score was calculated on a 3 point scale where “3” represents the highest level of concern.

Key Findings

In regard to the extent that youth issues were a problem in the community, the following issues received a score of 2.5 or above – indicating that they were perceived as major issues:

- Recreation for teenagers at **2.69**
- Adult supervision outside of school at **2.57**
- Teenage pregnancy at **2.56**
- Transportation to activities / recreation at **2.52**
- Latch-key kids at **2.51**
- Affordable after school programs at **2.51**
- Affordable day care at **2.50**

In regard to helping to improve children’s behavior and/or success in school, the following activities were cited as potentially the most effective:

- Increased parent involvement at **2.88**
- Parent education programs at **2.65**
- Program such as Mentor Programs at **2.59**
- Program such as Faith Based Youth Groups at **2.58**
- Program such as 4H at **2.51**

In regard to factors that contribute to children’s negative or inappropriate behavior and lack of success in school, the following were identified as the most critical:

- Lack of parental or adult supervision at **2.90**
- Parents' life skills at **2.88**
- Household or family structure at **2.85**
- Poor reading skills at **2.85**
- Little or no role modeling at **2.81**
- Friends / peers at **2.74**
- Television / Video games at **2.72**
- Lack of educational resources in the home at **2.69**
- Neighborhood influences at **2.60**
- Child abuse or neglect at **2.59**
- Parents' income level at **2.53**

Survey Tables

Q.1. How much of a problem are the following youth issues in your community?

| Public Survey Results | |
|---|--|
| Youth Issue | Mean Value* (3 being the highest) |
| Recreation for teenagers | 2.69 |
| Adult supervision outside of school | 2.57 |
| Teenage pregnancy | 2.56 |
| Transportation to activities / recreation | 2.52 |
| Latch-key kids | 2.51 |
| Affordable after school programs | 2.51 |
| Affordable day care | 2.50 |
| Apprenticeships / internship opportunities | 2.42 |
| Exposure to positive home / family environments | 2.42 |
| Parenting skills for all income and age groups | 2.35 |
| Access to affordable and convenient tutoring | 2.29 |
| Mentoring / role models | 2.27 |
| Access to health services | 2.25 |
| Leadership training | 2.21 |
| Volunteer opportunities / civic engagements | 2.14 |
| Community attitudes toward youth issues | 2.04 |
| Early interventions for developmental delays | 1.97 |

*In order to quantify the results, we assigned the following values: Major Problem = 3, Minor Problem = 2, Not a Problem = 1. The results were averaged and ranked from the greatest to the least perceived problem.

Q.2. How much of a problem are the following child care issues in your community?

| Public Survey Results | |
|--|--|
| Youth Issue | Mean Value* (3 being the highest) |
| Centers with limited hours | 2.31 |
| Center in proximity to work / home | 2.23 |
| Lack of stimulating play and learning activities | 2.19 |
| Adequate outdoor activities / environment | 2.11 |
| Planned nutritional meals | 2.11 |
| Safe and healthy facilities | 1.97 |

*In order to quantify the results, we assigned the following values: Major Problem = 3, Minor Problem = 2, Not a Problem = 1. The results were averaged and ranked from the greatest to the least perceived problem.

Q.3. The following are kinds of experiences children in your community have outside of being cared for at home. Please indicate which two categories you believe are used the most.

| Public Survey Results | |
|--|---|
| Youth Issue | Number Indicated as Most Commonly Used |
| Full time daycare | 47 |
| Cared for in someone else's home | 45 |
| Cared for by grandparent or other relative | 24 |
| Preschool | 14 |
| Sunday school | 12 |
| Head Start | 9 |
| Summer youth programs | 7 |
| Library programs | 6 |
| Cared for at home with a babysitter | 6 |
| Organized recreational opportunities | 4 |

Q.4. How effective do you believe the following would be in helping to improve children's behavior and/or success in school?

| Public Survey Results | |
|--|--|
| Youth Issue | Mean Value* (3 being the highest) |
| Increased parent involvement | 2.88 |
| Parent education programs | 2.65 |
| Program such as Mentor Programs | 2.59 |
| Program such as Faith Based Youth Groups | 2.58 |
| Program such as 4H | 2.51 |
| Program such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters | 2.49 |
| Organized recreational activities | 2.48 |
| Organized social activities | 2.46 |
| Program such as Boys and Girls Clubs | 2.45 |
| After school studies / tutoring | 2.45 |
| Harsher penalties for parents of delinquent children | 2.43 |
| Harsher penalties for delinquent activity | 2.38 |
| Program such as Boy Scouts | 2.37 |
| Earlier intervention by school personnel | 2.36 |
| Program such as Girl Scouts | 2.35 |
| Stricter school rules | 2.26 |
| Specialized schools | 2.20 |

*In order to quantify the results, we assigned the following values: Very = 3, Somewhat = 2, Not at All = 1. The results were averaged and ranked from the greatest to the least perceived problem.

Q.5. To what degree do the following factors contribute to children’s negative or inappropriate behavior and lack of success in school?

| Public Survey Results | |
|--|--|
| Youth Issue | Mean Value* (3 being the highest) |
| Lack of parental or adult supervision | 2.90 |
| Parents' life skills | 2.88 |
| Household or family structure | 2.85 |
| Poor reading skills | 2.85 |
| Little or no role modeling | 2.81 |
| Friends / peers | 2.74 |
| Television / Video games | 2.72 |
| Lack of educational resources in the home | 2.69 |
| Neighborhood influences | 2.60 |
| Child abuse or neglect | 2.59 |
| Parents' income level | 2.53 |
| Lack of recreational opportunities | 2.49 |
| Lack of social opportunities | 2.47 |
| Unidentified delays or disabilities | 2.47 |
| Lack of accessible and affordable tutoring | 2.46 |
| Poor nutrition | 2.40 |
| Inadequate housing for families | 2.36 |
| Lack of appropriate diagnostic programs or interventions by the school | 2.34 |
| First language other than English | 2.29 |
| Easy access to community services | 2.26 |
| Music | 2.24 |
| Lack of quality preschool activities | 2.23 |
| Lack of weather-appropriate clothing | 2.17 |

* Major Problem = 3, Minor Problem = 2, Not a Problem = 1. The results were averaged and ranked from the greatest to the least perceived problem.

Focus Group Summary

Executive Summary

This report represents the preliminary results of five focus groups conducted as part of the primary research for the LaGrange 4community Collaboration. The focus sessions were held with the following groups: educators, childcare providers, the legal community, parents, and representatives from local businesses. This report presents the results of each of the focus groups. The full reports follow this summary.

There was strong consensus among the participants in each of these groups on the primary urgency of two issues:

- The lack of supervised recreational or enrichment activities for youth outside of the school environment
- The lack of affordable, quality childcare

These issues were similarly identified in the public survey as primary concerns.

Participants from all groups reported that the community lacks a Boys and Girls Club, a YMCA, or similar organization that would provide organized activities for youth or families in a safe, supervised environment. This vacuum has been recognized as a problem for many years. The major barriers include:

- The rural character of the community making the transportation of youth and children to and from a central location a major challenge.
- Lack of constructive parent involvement with at risk children.

Participants all cited an existing facility, the Shed, which was initiated by a group of parents and is managed by a board of directors. Although this facility has some limitations, it is minimally used during the week and could serve as an after school activity center. Any solution to this problem will require a strong partnership with the school systems in the community.

The lack of after school opportunities for youth was followed by concerns about affordable, quality childcare for both preschool and after school services. This perception was shared across the focus groups and in the public survey as well. This perception is reinforced by the fact that licensed daycares are closing as more unlicensed daycare are opened. These unlicensed facilities are cheaper, are not required to meet state health and safety standards, and often serve more children than legally authorized under law. Participants in the childcare focus group reported that these unlicensed operators rarely offer developmentally appropriate, education activities. This trend away from licensed facilities could lead to

children entering kindergarten and first grade behind their more privileged peers in being prepared to learn.

Key Findings

Educators:

1. The need for recreation and after school opportunities was clearly the top issue raised by this collection of school administrators and teachers.
 - Several participants commented that some children will purposefully miss the bus home or volunteer for community service in order to avoid returning to an empty house after school.
2. Participants acknowledged that transportation issues will be a major hurdle in providing after school activities.
 - A central location for county-wide recreation opportunities may compound transportation issues.
 - Participants discussed the possibility of adding a central location to each school corporation's bus routes.
 - Shuttle buses do exist for after school programs which drop kids at a few designated areas rather than directly home.
3. Participants stated that ever tightening budgets are forcing schools to cut many of their enrichment activities.
 - Athletics programs are still quite strong in LaGrange County.
 - There are fewer and fewer opportunities for non-athletes.
4. Participants signaled a need and willingness for the separate schools and school corporations to work cooperatively in addressing after school needs.

Child Care Providers:

1. Recreation opportunities for middle and high school children were identified as major needs.
2. Participants explained that there is no lack of child care providers in the county but that quality and legally managed centers are declining.
 - Many state licensed daycares are going out of business because of the rise in less expensive unlicensed providers.
 - Participants noted that many unlicensed providers greatly exceed occupancy limits and fail to provide educational and age appropriate activities.

3. Participants report that daycares would benefit from greater interaction with schools and early grade teachers about expectations of children entering school.
4. The participants would welcome more convenient and increased professional development opportunities.

Legal Community:

1. Again, recreation / after school opportunities and affordable daycare were reported to be the major needs.
 - All participants responded that there were not enough youth activities available.
 - A lack of a variety of activities is also an issue. There are plenty of opportunities for athletes but few for non-athletes.
2. Lack of engagement and apathy among parents was cited as a key contributor to children who fall behind or get in trouble.
3. Transportation was again mentioned as a major hurdle for after school activities.
4. Participants indicated that enrichment activities might be offered with the assistance of institutions such as Goshen College or the Purdue Extension service or with local volunteers.

Business Community:

1. Once again, lack of after school activities and recreation was said to be the largest problem facing youth in LaGrange County.
2. There is great interest in the county in a youth activities center. The largest obstacles to creating a center are:
 - Funding: One participant responded that funding agencies want to see an existing, successful program in place before they would fund a youth center.
 - Transportation: Lack of transportation limits children's ability to participate in activities outside of school, particularly if they live in rural areas. One participant commented that families in the eastern portion of the county wouldn't participate in a program centered in LaGrange.
3. Middle school students were identified as the age group most in need of after school activities.
4. Poor parenting skills were cited as a primary cause for many problems children face.
5. Teen pregnancy ranked as the top issue in the business community focus group.
6. Participants commented that there is a shortage of affordable, quality daycare options. Many participants felt that even most licensed daycares lacked appropriate developmental activities for children.

Parents:

1. The participating parents report that there is very little for teenagers to do outside of athletics and band. In the absence of organized or activities, many teens attend unsupervised parties.
2. Parenting skills and a lack of parental engagement was again identified as a root cause of youth problems.
3. A need for mentoring positive role models was discussed. Parents mentioned that, due to budgetary constraints, Big Brothers & Big Sister was decreasing its role in LaGrange County.
4. A lack of programs available to address the literacy needs of both children and adults was reported to be a major problem.
5. A growing language divide was identified as the result of a rapidly growing Hispanic population. The parents recommended that language courses be available including the introduction of Spanish education beginning in elementary school.
6. Participants expressed the need for a true community collaboration to overcome the transportation problem in regards to youth activities. It was suggested that there are a variety of entities with vehicles which could be used to help with transportation.

Educators

Participants: Karen Albert, Teacher, Westview Junior High; Troy Albert, Principal, Westview High School; Molly Grossman, Teacher, Howe Military High School; Jim Blake, Lakeland High School; Pat Boles, Principal, Lakeland High School; Bonnie O’Connell, Parkside Elementary; Kaila Koomler, Prairie Heights.

To get the participants thinking about youth issues, a short survey was distributed at the outset of each focus group session. This survey covered a range of youth issues and asked respondents to indicate whether they perceived each issue to be a major problem, minor problem, or not a problem.

In order to quantify the results, we assigned the following values: Major Problem = 3, Minor Problem = 2, Not a Problem = 1. The results were averaged and ranked from the greatest to the least perceived problem.

| Focus Group Survey Results: Educators | |
|---|---|
| Youth Issue | Mean Value (3 being the highest) |
| Affordable after school programs | 2.83 |
| Affordable day care | 2.67 |
| Mentoring / role models | 2.67 |
| Parenting skills for all ages and income groups | 2.60 |
| Recreation for teenagers | 2.50 |
| Transportation to activities/recreation | 2.50 |
| Latch-key kids | 2.50 |
| Adult supervision outside of school | 2.50 |
| School Readiness for Children Entering Kindergarten/1st Grade | 2.50 |
| Exposure to positive home/family environments | 2.50 |
| Community attitudes toward youth issues | 2.33 |
| Access to affordable and convenient tutoring | 2.33 |
| Teenage pregnancy | 2.33 |
| Apprenticeships/ internships opportunities | 2.00 |
| Volunteer opportunities / civic engagement | 2.00 |
| Access to health services | 1.83 |
| Early interventions for developmental delays | 1.80 |

After completing the survey, participants were asked to discuss the issues that they indicated was a major problem as well as any issues that may not have been included in the survey. Bold or non-bulleted items represent questions or comments made by the focus group facilitator.

- Recreation opportunities and transportation for recreation are a major problem. The Shed is great but many children can't take advantage of it due to lack of transportation.
- There are a lot of great activities available but the children's access to these are limited by their parent's ability to drive them.
- At Westview, they have shuttle buses for after school programs but these buses don't get them straight to home, only to a few designated drop-off points.
- Affordable after school programs is also a problem.
- LaGrange County has great sports programs, but what about non athletes. There are few enrichment activities such as science programs available to students. Parkside School Started a program called Camp Invention but funding wasn't available to keep it going. The program is offered either one week during the summer or one night a week for five weeks. Teachers or parents are paid to teach and a coordinator the program. Scholarships were available for some students. DEKO offered to help fund the program if it were brought back.
- **What is the price per student?** \$200 per child. Parents can volunteer which bring costs down. **Does Curriculum change with age?** A couple of years ago the program only went to 6th grade but they are looking to extend it to higher grades. High school kids are used as counselors.
- Ever tighter school budgets cause these types of programs to get cut first.
- Attitudes towards youth issues are one of the greatest problems. Budget restrictions force schools to cut enrichment activities. There are great programs out there but the problem is coordination and logistics
- Through all of this, we are missing the kids with unengaged parents.
- An actual location for before and after school programs is a problem. A local church which offers programs is always full and is expensive.
- Many people rely on relatives to watch kids but as new families move in, they don't have that support structure.
- Parkside has offered before and after school daycare but it was underutilized.

Keep in mind that we need to identify a need and have clear performance measures and outcomes. We need to target the children who aren't receiving the support. Not programs that help children who don't need help.

- The three schools in Lakeland all have a poverty level of 50 – 55 percent. As for at risk, we can look at children with English as a second language.
- There is a definite need for after school programs. Community service often fills in for detention. Often kids will ask for community service voluntarily rather than go straight home. Some kids will purposefully miss the bus home after school so that they can stay at school rather than return to an empty home
- Need a bona fide, safe way to get kids back to home. Money for buses, driver, gas, insurance, etc.

Any after school program would have to require that parents of at-risk students pick them up. Still leaves out those whose parents won't make the effort.

- Aren't we supposed to be looking cooperatively? One centralized location where kids from all schools can be served. A program where we can all work together. The barriers are that we are all try to work on our own programs but we should attempt to get together address problems collaboratively.
- Trying to establish a central location may compound the transportation problem.
- Any program should serve a range ages and offer a range of services. Need that one location. Either renovate or build.
- Churches would participate. Also, the high school building trades program could help build or renovate a facility.
- Possibly add a central location to each schools bus route.
- The number of students who will participate depends on the activities and services. Important to get input from students.
- Could have a board of students with adult supervision to govern facility and programs.
- The Shed could be an existing facility.

Key Findings: Educators

5. The need for recreation and after school opportunities was clearly the top issue raised by this collection of school administrators and teachers.
 - Some participants commented that some children will take steps such as purposefully miss the bus home or volunteer for community service in order to avoid returning to an empty house after school.
6. Participants acknowledged that transportation issues will be a major hurdle in providing after school activities.
 - A central location for county-wide recreation opportunities may compound transportation issues.
 - Participants discussed the possibility of adding a central location to each school corporation's bus routes.
 - Shuttle buses do exist for after school programs which drop kids at a few designated areas rather than directly home.
7. Participants stated that ever tightening budgets are forcing schools to cut many of their enrichment activities.
 - Athletics programs are still quite strong in Lagrange County.
 - There are fewer and fewer opportunities for non-athletes.
8. Participants signaled a need and willingness for the separate schools and school corporations to work cooperatively in addressing after school needs.

Child Care Providers

Participants: Tara Christner, Little Stones Daycare; Abi Stanley, Little Stones Daycare; Vicky Rainsberger, Helping Hands Childcare; Mary Baugh, MM Daycare; Elaine Lambright, Nature’s Corner Daycare; Donald Marshall, Nature’s Corner Daycare; Pat Troyer, Pat’s Kids.

To get the participants thinking about youth issues, a short survey was distributed at the outset of each focus group session. This survey covered a range of youth issues and asked respondents to indicate whether they perceived each issue to be a major problem, minor problem, or not a problem.

In order to quantify the results, we assigned the following values: Major Problem = 3, Minor Problem = 2, Not a Problem = 1. The results were averaged and ranked from the greatest to the least perceived problem.

| Focus Group Survey Results: Child Care Providers | |
|---|---|
| Youth Issue | Mean Value (3 being the highest) |
| Latch-key kids | 3.00 |
| Community attitudes toward youth issues | 2.67 |
| Mentoring / role models | 2.60 |
| Parenting skills for all ages and income groups | 2.60 |
| Recreation for teenagers | 2.50 |
| Teenage pregnancy | 2.50 |
| Adult supervision outside of school | 2.50 |
| Transportation to activities/recreation | 2.40 |
| Exposure to positive home/family environments | 2.33 |
| Apprenticeships/ internships opportunities | 2.25 |
| Access to affordable and convenient tutoring | 2.20 |
| School Readiness for Children Entering Kindergarten/1st Grade | 2.20 |
| Affordable after school programs | 2.17 |
| Early interventions for developmental delays | 2.17 |
| Affordable day care | 2.00 |
| Volunteer opportunities / civic engagement | 2.00 |
| Access to health services | 1.80 |

After completing the survey, participants were asked to discuss the issues that they indicated was a major problem as well as any issues that may not have been included in the survey. Bold or non-bulleted items represent questions or comments made by the focus group facilitator.

- Recreation for school age children / teens is a major problem. Their just walking around and getting in trouble.
- There are no places for the kids to go.
- All child cares have mixed ages, Up to 10-11 years old. Currently, none of the childcares present have waitlists.
- Older kids don't want to go to daycare. They perceive it to be for little kids.
- Affordability of day care is also a major issue.
- Disagree about the parent's ability to afford childcare. It's more a matter of parents setting the right priorities.
- Daycares need fulltime children to make money. Can't take just for before or after school students.
- **Are there enough child care opportunities in the county?** Yes, although a lot are unlicensed.
- **Are they getting age appropriate activities?** Unlicensed daycares don't provide the appropriate activities but they are cheaper.
- **Are there convenient places to get continuing education for early childhood providers?** Ivy Tech and Goshen College are 45 – 60 minutes away but daycare providers are already working 12 hour days.
- **Do childcare providers receive feedback from schools on preparedness?** Some schools will not provide information on what kids need to be ready.
- **What types of activities or program would be helpful to improve child care?** Parents in general need education on child development. Also, many adults have literacy problems. There are no adult literacy programs in the county.
- Professional development opportunities for childcare providers would be very helpful.
- More of a relationship with early grade teachers and schools would also be helpful.

- Older children have younger siblings that they care for. When summer comes, the daycares are at capacity and can't take in the school age children. Activities have to be geared to the younger children and the older get bored, they aren't engaged.
- Parents don't want to pay for care for older children (10 and up)
- Older kids don't want to do child care but there is no place safe for them to go. Transportation is again an issue. Existing school shuttles can be utilized.
- Most parents pick up their kids between 3 and 4pm.

A youth center could also act as an information hub for child care activities as well as a place for childcare providers to get professional development information and age appropriate activities.

- **Are there other issues you would like to discuss?**
- Mentoring programs are needed. Older kids like individualized time with adults, like with a local pastor for example, not group time.
- **Is volunteerism alive and well in the county?** No. Many parents don't feel smart enough. Maybe they work in a factory and have little education. They don't feel successful as adults and don't want to volunteer. **How about with retirees?** There is no retired volunteer organization.
- Noble County is developing a volunteer training and recruitment center.
- One problem with a youth activities center is that kids will leave the center. It would need good supervision.

Key Findings

5. Recreation opportunities for middle and high school children were identified as major needs.
6. Participants explained that there is no lack of child care providers in the county but that quality and legally managed centers are declining.
 - Many state licensed daycares are going out of business because of the rise in less expensive unlicensed providers.
 - Participants noted that many unlicensed providers greatly exceed occupancy limits and fail to provide educational and age appropriate activities.
7. Participants report that daycares would benefit from greater interaction with schools and early grade teachers about expectations of children entering school.
8. The participants would welcome more convenient and increased professional development opportunities.

Legal Community

Participants: Kim Luczkowski, Northeastern Center; Tom Carder, Northeastern Center; Wendy Petty, Department of Child Services; Dana Smith, Statt, Wheeler, and Zabona; Terry Martin, Lagrange County Sheriff’s Department; Ron Chupp, Northeastern Center; Tom Fitch, Shipshewana Police Department; Carol Stump, Circuit Court Probation; Jeff Wible, County Prosecutor.

To get the participants thinking about youth issues, a short survey was distributed at the outset of each focus group session. This survey covered a range of youth issues and asked respondents to indicate whether they perceived each issue to be a major problem, minor problem, or not a problem.

In order to quantify the results, we assigned the following values: Major Problem = 3, Minor Problem = 2, Not a Problem = 1. The results were averaged and ranked from the greatest to the least perceived problem.

| Focus Group Survey Results: Legal Community | |
|---|---|
| Youth Issue | Mean Value (3 being the highest) |
| Recreation for teenagers | 3.00 |
| Community attitudes toward youth issues | 2.67 |
| Affordable after school programs | 2.60 |
| Transportation to activities/recreation | 2.60 |
| Exposure to positive home/family environments | 2.60 |
| Latch-key kids | 2.33 |
| Affordable day care | 2.20 |
| Adult supervision outside of school | 2.20 |
| Early interventions for developmental delays | 2.00 |
| Access to affordable and convenient tutoring | 2.00 |
| Teenage pregnancy | 2.00 |
| Mentoring / role models | 2.00 |
| Apprenticeships/ internships opportunities | 2.00 |
| Parenting skills for all ages and income groups | 2.00 |
| Access to health services | 1.67 |
| Volunteer opportunities / civic engagement | 1.50 |
| School Readiness for Children Entering Kindergarten/1st Grade | 1.40 |

After completing the survey, participants were asked to discuss the issues that they indicated was a major problem as well as any issues that may not have been included in the survey. Bold or non-bulleted items represent questions or comments made by the focus group facilitator.

- Affordable daycare and quality daycare is a major problem. Two area churches offer childcare but they are not always affordable. Talking specifically about preschool.
- Lack of affordable daycare leads to a lot of other issues such as latch-key kids.
- There is not enough attention or awareness to youth needs such as behavioral problems which may be more mental health related than by choice. Children with development delays get left behind with No Child Left Behind. Raise awareness that bad outward behavior could be caused by more serious underlying problems.
- Recreation for teenagers is also a major problem. Not sure if its lack of options or lack of awareness of the options such as area lakes.
- Transportation to activities is the biggest problem. Parent's not involved and unwilling or unable to help; kids get bored and get in trouble.
- Children like to skateboard but there is no place to do that so they do at city hall etc. Actually, there is a skate park in Topeka and building one in Lagrange. I work with teenagers and children but they have never talked about the skate parks.
- A skate park may only serve a certain "clique".
- Only 30 percent of kids will fit the skater or different profile.
- For the most part, people are not invested in the larger community. They only worry about there own.
- Public awareness and outreach will be important for any project that is done.
- **How many of you believe that there are not enough activities?** All responded that there were not enough activities.
- There is a lack of variety with activities. There is plenty to do for athletes but not others. Activities in the summer are also is a problem.
- When kids say they are bored it's because they want to close the door to adults and mask there feelings. When you talk to them you find out that they have a lot of interests.
- A lot of schools are at fault for pushing athletics over everything else.

- Apathy with parents is a major problem. Is it because there too busy? Don't care?
- Lack of funding to cut enrichment activities at schools lead to problems.
- There seems to be a culture of preference for athletes and athletics while minimizing children with other interests.
- The athletes aren't the ones that are getting in trouble. Athletes which do get in trouble are over looked and rules not enforced.
- Lack of parental involvement is a major problem for kids that go through legal system. The kids with apathetic parents hang out with other kids in the same situation. Often leads to drug and alcohol use.
- Often times it takes a court order to get parents to parenting groups and education.
- The community isn't as involved because the scale of the problem isn't like it is in large communities.
- The rumor is that schools will tell children who aren't wealthy or athletes that they shouldn't be in school and should get a job.

Do you have any ideas for possible projects?

- In Goshen schools, they brought in art education students from Goshen College. They brought college students in to the schools to teach children to play musical instruments.
- Transportation would be a big need to get kids around and cover liability.
- The schools have the "late bus" for the athletes.
- An art league for children would be a great program. It could be used for school credits. It could be an after school project, once a week or once a month. There are a lot of artists in the area who could be volunteers.
- Purdue Extension is a great resource in the area. Purdue offers to help court ordered kids to cultivate their interest. Transportation is again a problem.
- Ultimately, it all comes back to parents.
- Getting volunteers is always a problem. It is always the same people volunteering and eventually there will be some burn-out.
- A central location could be a problem because there are cliques from each school corporation.

Are there any problems specific to middle school kids?

- I work with high school kids; by the time they get there they've already decided here is nothing for them to do.
- Generally, programs that get started for kids are utilized by the over achievers. Other kids see that and don't feel like getting involved with something that the over achievers are involved in.

Key Findings

5. Again, recreation / after school opportunities and affordable daycare were reported to be the major needs.
 - All participants responded that there were not enough youth activities available.
 - A lack of a variety of activities is also an issue. There are plenty of opportunities for athletes but few for non-athletes.
6. Lack of engagement and apathy among parents was cited as a key contributor to children who fall behind or get in trouble.
7. Transportation was again mentioned as a major hurdle for after school activities.
8. Participants indicated that enrichment activities might be offered with the assistance of institutions such as Goshen College or the Purdue Extension service or with local volunteers.

Business Community

Participants: Sherryl Rhinesmith, LaGrange County REMC; Eric Perkins, Stroh Farm Supply; Jim Gust, Bird House Printing; Bob Schlemmer, Schlemmer Hardware; Steve Scott-Welty, Galerina Folk Arts; Beth Sherman, LaGrange County Chamber of Commerce; Jack Price, Price's Laundry; Robin Clark, J.O. Mory; Stan Clark, Farmers State Bank.

To get the participants thinking about youth issues, a short survey was distributed at the outset of each focus group session. This survey covered a range of youth issues and asked respondents to indicate whether they perceived each issue to be a major problem, minor problem, or not a problem.

In order to quantify the results, we assigned the following values: Major Problem = 3, Minor Problem = 2, Not a Problem = 1. The results were averaged and ranked from the greatest to the least perceived problem.

| Focus Group Survey Results: Business Community | |
|---|---|
| Youth Issue | Mean Value (3 being the highest) |
| Teenage pregnancy | 3.00 |
| Adult supervision outside of school | 2.50 |
| Parenting skills for all ages and income groups | 2.50 |
| Latch-key kids | 2.43 |
| Transportation to activities/recreation | 2.38 |
| Exposure to positive home/family environments | 2.38 |
| Recreation for teenagers | 2.33 |
| Apprenticeships/ internships opportunities | 2.33 |
| Affordable day care | 2.25 |
| Affordable after school programs | 2.22 |
| Mentoring / role models | 1.88 |
| Access to affordable and convenient tutoring | 1.86 |
| Community attitudes toward youth issues | 1.78 |
| Access to health services | 1.71 |
| School Readiness for Children - Entering Kindergarten/1st Grade | 1.67 |
| Early interventions for developmental delays | 1.50 |
| Volunteer opportunities / civic engagement | 1.38 |

After completing the survey, participants were asked to discuss the issues that they indicated was a major problem as well as any issues that may not have been included in the survey. Bold or non-bulleted items represent questions or comments made by the focus group facilitator.

- We need a youth recreation center; A place for kids who aren't in sports to go, especially in the winter.
- If you don't have access to transportation, you are out of the loop in terms of recreational activities. The transportation problem increases the further you get away from the main towns. There is no late transportation for non-athletes. There is currently a study underway to see if LaGrange County can support a public transportation system.
- I don't know of too many kids who aren't involved in something solely because of a lack of transportation. Families and neighbors help and share responsibilities. Kids are usually able to find away.
- People not from LG do not have that support to help. They live in Wolcottville and coordinating rides to and from Lagrange is a major obstacle.
- There are some socio-economic issues that play into this problem. For instance, Wolcottville vs. Lagrange or Shippshewana is a major difference. In Wolcottville, there are lots of kids in that area that are not staying active.
- Parenting skills is also a major issue. In our child's class there are a number of emotionally handicapped kids as described by the teacher. All agree that parenting skills is a major problem.
- The problem is that people that need to go to parenting class probably wouldn't go. That goes back to need for recreation and affordable after school programs and other adult supervision. Latch key kids are a problem because there are no other recreation and transportation options for kids.

How is daycare in LaGrange County?

- It is tough to find something affordable and quality. Many daycares are babysitters basically but there are not as many structured daycares with developmental activities that are affordable.
- Maybe the licensed daycares are over-regulated which keeps them uncompetitive and keeps people from starting a licensed daycare.
- The fact that daycares need to make money forces them to employ minimum wage or low skilled workers even at licensed daycares which means that the licensed daycares aren't always of a higher quality.

- Licensed daycares are higher quality in that they are required to have all the medical, criminal, health, nutrition and safety checks which is a major plus.
- Most licensed daycares in the county are faith based.

Are there any other important issues?

- There is a gap from early childhood to high school. Middle school kids, age 9-12, seem to be in that gap. There are no programs for that age group and they often become the odd man out.
- It seems like the age 10 – 16 group is left out and they are the ones that need the most structure and help.
- The emphasis in this county has always been on athletics. If you play sports you are recognized as one of the leaders of the school but only 1/3 of the school children are involved in sports. The most successful program for kids is 4-H and we should try to build on that.
- The largest reason that kids don't get involved in 4-H is that their parents won't let them. 4-H keeps them active in the summer and gives them a project over the winter.
- The kids in sports and 4-H are the ones who already have the family support in place. It's the other kids who are having problems. It comes back to parenting.
- It is unfortunate to say, but there are always 10 percent of people who will succeed and 10 percent who won't but there are 80 percent in the middle who, with help and activities, will be successful.
- They offered free parenting classes and no more than 2 or 3 parents would show up. Parents won't admit that they need the help, it's a pride issue.
- Back to 4-H, how many families would have the capacity to do even small level cattle or farm activities.
- 4-H is not only farming, they do a lot of other things. Kids have perception that 4-H is only for farm kids, but it is not.
- 4-H may want to look at doing after school programs.
- There are after school programs currently. My wife runs an art club at the school; they try to meet once every 2 weeks.
- Perhaps better awareness of existing programs is what is needed; our 12 year old son would love to work with an art club but we have never heard of that program.
- Funding is the primary reason why we can't solve all of these problems.

- The Amish community is trying to do the very same thing. They are looking for funding to build an after school facility for there community and they will get it done.
- Transportation could also be a boom to local retail. Maybe it could be done privately
- From a funding standpoint, you have to get the program running and successful before you can get after funding.
- The complex at the High School could be a site for after school programs. It was to be a community center but that didn't work out. It is used for too many school related activities.
- People from east side of county aren't going to participate in a program centered in Lagrange.
- We need to get all three School corporations to work cooperatively.
- Kids need to get out of the school environment for after school activities. They need a different form of structure than school.
- There is a difference between being occupied and being occupied constructively. Many kids do not have the skills to be productive adults. Maybe there is too much emphasis strictly on education. You can still be successful without higher education.

Key Findings

7. Once again, lack of after school activities and recreation was said to be the largest problem facing youth in LaGrange County.
8. There is great interest in the county in a youth activities center. The largest obstacles to creating a center are:
 - Funding: One participant responded that funding agencies want to see an existing, successful program in place before they would fund a youth center.
 - Transportation: Lack of transportation limits children's ability to participate in activities outside of school, particularly if they live in rural areas. One participant commented that families in the eastern portion of the county wouldn't participate in a program centered in LaGrange.
9. Middle School students were identified as the age group most in need of after school activities.
10. Poor parenting skills were cited as a primary cause for many problems children face.
11. Teen pregnancy rank as the top issue in the business community survey.
12. Participants commented that there is a shortage of affordable, quality daycare options. Many participants felt that even most licensed daycares lacked appropriate developmental activities for children.

Parents of LaGrange County Students

Participants: Kris Strawser, Rayian Klopfenstein, Alma Moore, Sharon Prine

To get the participants thinking about youth issues, a short survey was distributed at the outset of each focus group session. This survey covered a range of youth issues and asked respondents to indicate whether they perceived each issue to be a major problem, minor problem, or not a problem.

In order to quantify the results, we assigned the following values: Major Problem = 3, Minor Problem = 2, Not a Problem = 1. The results were averaged and ranked from the greatest to the least perceived problem.

| Focus Group Survey Results: Parents | |
|---|---|
| Youth Issue | Mean Value (3 being the highest) |
| Affordable after school programs | 3.00 |
| Teenage pregnancy | 3.00 |
| School Readiness for Children - Entering Kindergarten/1st Grade | 3.00 |
| Recreation for teenagers | 2.67 |
| Adult supervision outside of school | 2.67 |
| Exposure to positive home/family environments | 2.67 |
| Affordable day care | 2.50 |
| Mentoring / role models | 2.33 |
| Community attitudes toward youth issues | 2.00 |
| Early interventions for developmental delays | 2.00 |
| Transportation to activities/recreation | 2.00 |
| Access to affordable and convenient tutoring | 2.00 |
| Latch-key kids | 2.00 |
| Apprenticeships/ internships opportunities | 2.00 |
| Parenting skills for all ages and income groups | 2.00 |
| Volunteer opportunities / civic engagement | 2.00 |
| Access to health services | 1.50 |

After completing the survey, participants were asked to discuss the issues that they indicated was a major problem as well as any issues that may not have been included in the survey. Bold or non-bulleted items represent questions or comments made by the focus group facilitator.

- In last 1 1/2 years, recreation for high school kids has been very lacking. Her son is spending a lot of time at parties on weekends. He does like to go to the Shed twice a month but that's not enough.
- Her children are in sports but if kids are not into sports there are no activities outside of sports or band.
- Her daughter has tried to organize movie nights because she see's her friends going down hill with the partying.
- These problems also point to lack of supervision by parents.
- There is a parenting skills problem. This problem goes across all income levels, not just low income.
- Parents don't seem to discipline there children as much as they used to.
- There seems to be fewer guidelines and consequences for children.

How can we engage children constructively?

- It goes to mentoring because some kids have no adult role models or the adult role models they do have aren't around much and the children are floundering.
- There are Big Brothers and Big Sisters for elementary children but not aware opportunities for teens.
- Big Brothers and Sisters is not quite as active as it once was. BB&S has had realignment and budgetary restrictions. BB&S has just announced the pulling of services for Lakeland due to budgets but still serves Prairie Heights.

Are there other issues?

- The Hispanic community has more than doubled in just two years in the Lakeland School Corporation. I would like to see Spanish instruction or classes available to kids to as low as elementary grades. There is a language barrier between the English speaking and growing Hispanic populations.
- Its not that new Spanish speaking residents don't want to learn English but it is so difficult for adults' to learn a new language.

- I believe that literacy problems among Spanish Speaking students have lowered ISTEP scores in the county.

What about literacy issue?

- It is a problem for both adults and children
- There are GED classes offered in several locations in the county. Enrollment tripled when they took the programs out of the high schools.
- Head Start is a great program but they are required to serve only families in extreme poverty. It is very limited.
- There doesn't seem to be a lot of developmental instruction in daycare but rather just play time. Kindergarten teachers are teaching more of the basics (i.e. what an A looks like). Kindergarten teachers see it as a big problem

Do you have any specific recommendations?

- I wish there was an alternative to partying on the weekends.
- In addition to the Shed, there is Club JV. Both are religion based which may cut down on the number of kids who participate.
- Key Latch program was great for many years but went away due to lack of funding and participation. It was a before and after school program.
- So many families have both parents work. Latch key kids a major problem.

If an after-school program were designed, which age groups should be targeted?

- I would say grades 1-8. Lack of supervision in the summer is the biggest problem.

What about transportation?

- The parks department has a bus for its program, the Northeastern Center, Council on Aging, Head Start, and the schools all have vehicles. A collaboration to provide transportation from all the various organizations would be a big help.

Are there any other issues you want to talk about?

- One issue is teenage dating and abuse. There is support for domestic abuse but the problem starts before marriage. We need more education for teens.
- Lakeland has a program called Academic Success. They target incoming freshman which have been identified as likely not to succeed based on middle school grades. The main thing that these children asked for was food. They are lacking proper nutrition or enough food.

- The kids in this program could be a good population of at-risk youth to concentrate on.

Key Findings

1. These parents report that there is very little for teenagers to do outside of athletics and band. In the absence of organized or activities, many teens attend unsupervised parties.
2. Parenting skills and a lack of parental engagement was again identified as a root cause of youth problems.
3. A need for mentoring positive role models was discussed. Parents mentioned that, due to budgetary constraints, Big Brothers & Big Sister was decreasing its role in LaGrange County.
4. A lack of programs available to address the literacy needs of both children and adults was reported to be a major problem
5. A growing language divide was identified as the result of a rapidly growing Hispanic population. The parents recommended that language courses be available including the introduction of Spanish education beginning in elementary school.
6. Participants expressed the need for a true community collaboration to overcome the transportation problem in regards to youth activities. It was suggested that there are a variety of entities with vehicles which could be used to help with transportation.

Steering Committee Survey

A general issues survey was distributed to the 4community steering committee members and other leaders in Lagrange County in order to determine the greatest community needs. The survey was completed by ten respondents. Their names and the organizations which they represent can be found in the table below.

| Survey Respondents | |
|--------------------|---|
| Name | Organization |
| Sherryl Rhinesmith | LaGrange County REMC |
| Randy Packer | Parkview LaGrange Hospital |
| Laura Lemings | LaGrange County Community Foundation |
| Nateeka Clawson | Parkview LaGrange Hospital |
| Kevin Brown | Wells Fargo Bank |
| Robin Tuttle | United Fund of LaGrange County |
| Susan Medlin | LaGrange County Council on Aging |
| Carol Ellinger | Habitat Liaison |
| Merrily S. Hamp | Purdue Extension |
| Larry Graham | Northern Indiana Public Service Company |

Respondents were asked to determine whether each issue presented could be characterized as a major problem, a minor problem or not a problem. A no answer option was also available if the respondent had no opinion on that issue. In order to quantify the results for easy analysis, each answer was assigned a numeric value (Major Problem – 3, Minor Problem – 2, Not a Problem – 1 and No Answer was not assigned a value). Responses for each issue were then averaged to determine a mean value.

The survey identified some key community needs. Health care, substance abuse and elderly needs ranked among the greatest.

The two highest rated issues were:

- Addictions to substances
- The ability to pay for health care.

Other issues that gained significant attention include:

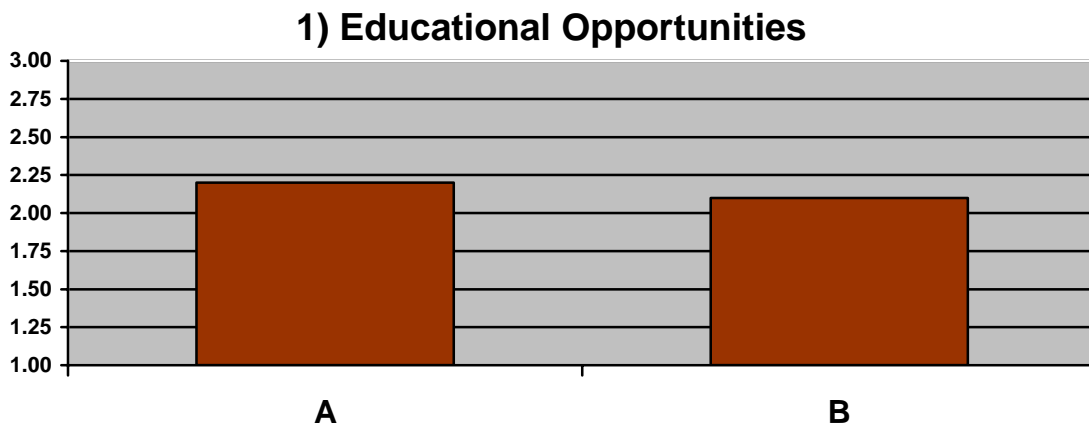
- Cultural diversity services
- Finding transportation
- Child care affordability
- The availability of recreational activities for teenagers.

The lowest rated issues include vision and dental health services, housing related environmental issues and clothing for the needy.

Results

| Summary: Highest Rated Issues | |
|---|---|
| Community Issue | Mean Value (3 being the highest) |
| Addictions to Substances (i.e. Meth, Crack, Alcohol, etc.) | 2.89 |
| Paying for Health Care | 2.89 |
| Needs of the Elderly | 2.67 |
| Cultural Diversity Services | 2.63 |
| Finding Transportation | 2.60 |
| Finding Affordable Child Care | 2.60 |
| Access to Health Insurance | 2.57 |
| Finding recreational activities for teenagers | 2.56 |
| Access to Legal Assistance | 2.56 |
| Eligibility and Availability of Housing Assistance Services | 2.50 |
| Health Needs of the Elderly | 2.50 |

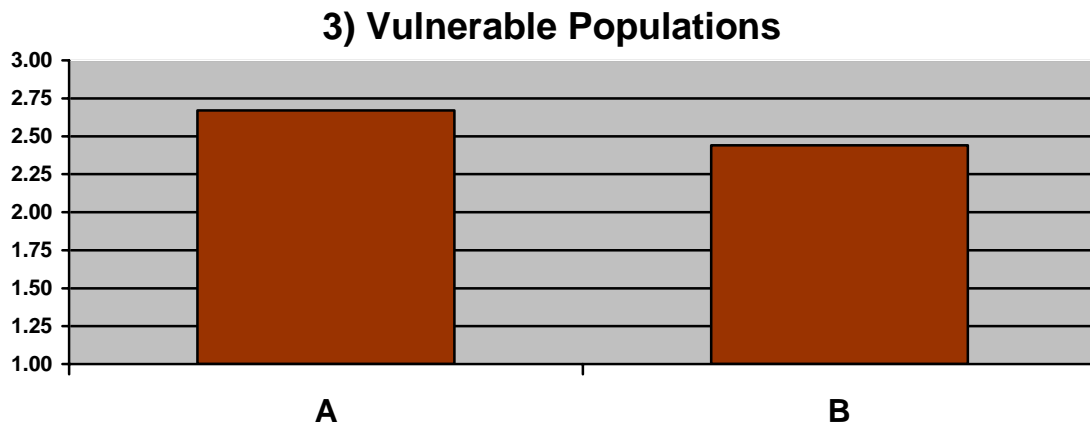
| 1) Educational Opportunities | |
|--|-------------------|
| Community Issue | Mean Value |
| A. Present Educational Attainment Levels | 2.20 |
| B. Challenges and Barriers to Learning Opportunities | 2.10 |



| 2) Affordable Housing | |
|--|-------------------|
| Community Issue | Mean Value |
| A. Housing Costs | 2.20 |
| B. Housing in Need of Repair | 2.11 |
| C. Housing Related Environmental Issues | 1.67 |
| D. Eligibility and Availability of Housing Assistance Services | 2.50 |



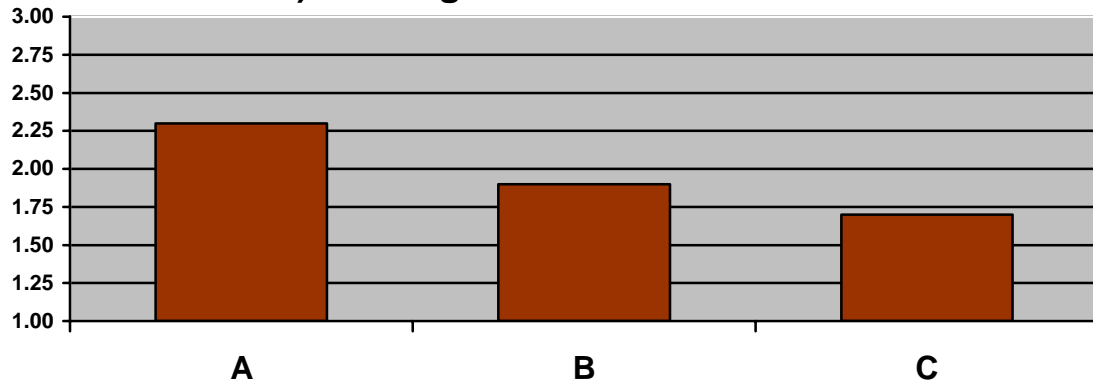
| 3) Vulnerable Populations | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Community Issue | Mean Value |
| A. Needs of the Elderly | 2.67 |
| B. Needs of the Disabled | 2.44 |



4) Meeting Basic Human Needs

| Community Issue | Mean Value |
|----------------------|------------|
| A. Emergency Shelter | 2.30 |
| B. Hunger | 1.90 |
| C. Clothing | 1.70 |

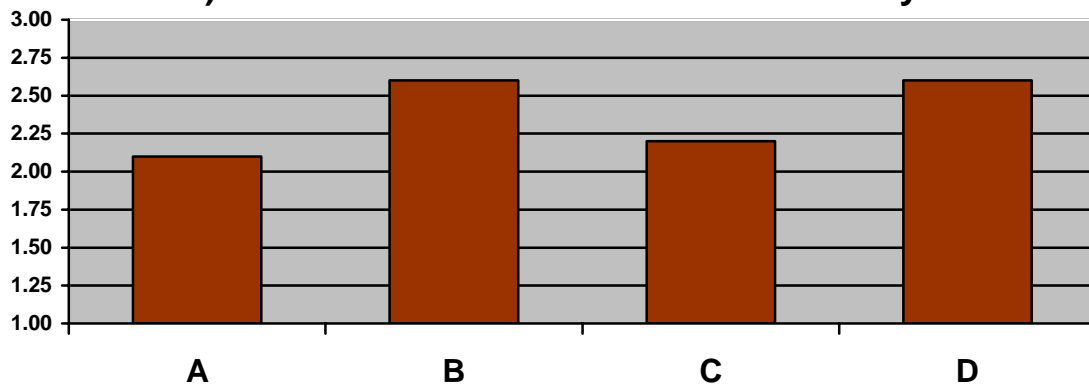
4) Meeting Basic Human Needs



5) Household Economic Issues & Poverty

| Community Issue | Mean Value |
|-----------------------------------|------------|
| A. Finding Employment | 2.10 |
| B. Finding Transportation | 2.60 |
| C. Affordable Loans and Legal Aid | 2.20 |
| D. Finding Affordable Child Care | 2.60 |

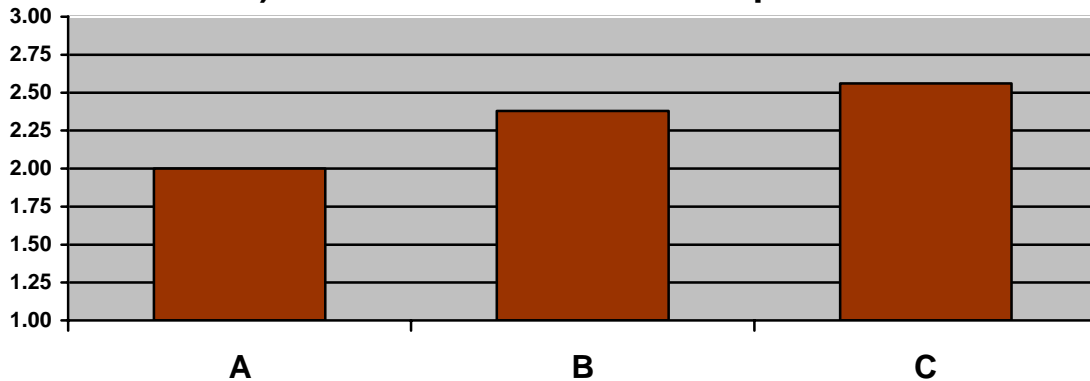
5) Household Economic Issues & Poverty



6) Youth & Childhood Development

| Community Issue | Mean Value |
|--|------------|
| A. School readiness of children entering 1st grade | 2.00 |
| B. Finding affordable after-school programs | 2.38 |
| C. Finding recreational activities for teenagers | 2.56 |

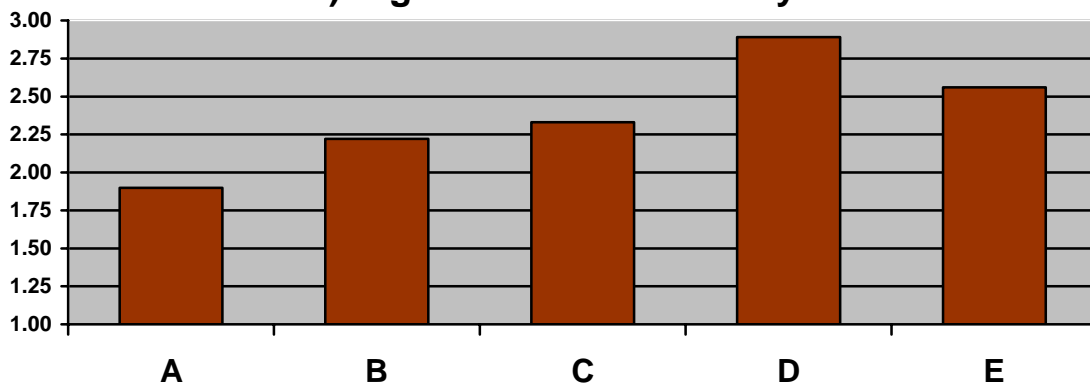
6) Youth & Childhood Development



7) Rights & Personal Safety

| Community Issue | Mean Value |
|--|------------|
| A. Household Crime and Vandalism | 1.90 |
| B. Domestic Violence | 2.22 |
| C. Child Abuse and Neglect | 2.33 |
| D. Addictions to Substances (such as Meth, Crack, Alcohol, etc.) | 2.89 |
| E. Access to Legal Assistance | 2.56 |

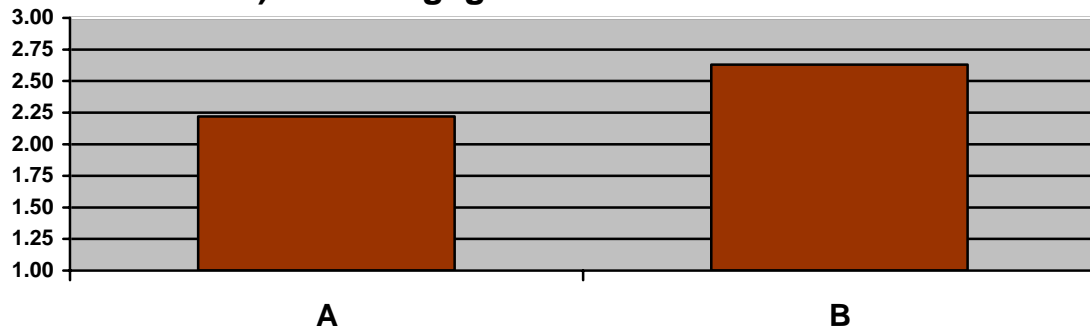
7) Rights & Personal Safety



8) Civic Engagement & Volunteerism

| Community Issue | Mean Value |
|--------------------------------|------------|
| A. Volunteerism | 2.22 |
| B. Cultural Diversity Services | 2.63 |

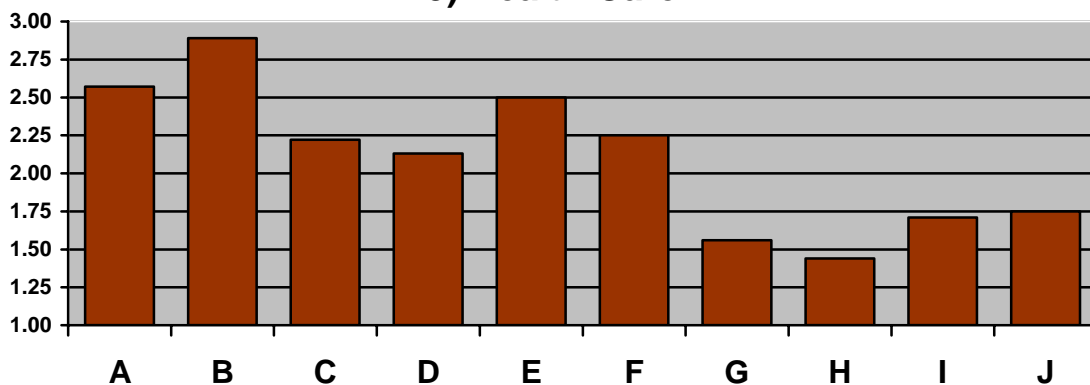
8) Civic Engagement & Volunteerism



9) Health Care

| Community Issue | Mean Value |
|---|------------|
| A. Access to Health Insurance | 2.57 |
| B. Paying for Health Care | 2.89 |
| C. Service Gaps | 2.22 |
| D. Cultural Barriers (such as language) | 2.13 |
| E. Health Needs of the Elderly | 2.50 |
| F. Addiction Services | 2.25 |
| G. Dental Health Services | 1.56 |
| H. Vision Health Services | 1.44 |
| I. Reproductive Health Services | 1.71 |
| J. Mental Health Services | 1.75 |

9) Health Care



Comments

- Would love to see a recreation in the county to address a lot of these needs...Wells Fargo would be excited to participate in such an effort.
- Transportation, affordable childcare, diversity of employment opportunities, and the education level of the general population is impacting quality of life in LaGrange County. The Town of LaGrange is 51.6% below poverty and this town is the county seat. The youth have no comprehensive after-school and/or summer programming to keep them from developing negative behavior patterns. Many elderly who are home-bound and need a special diet cannot get it through Meals on Wheels due to logistical and contract issues (from the Area Agency on Aging office) and federal guidelines. Affordable safe, decent housing is an issue. There is no recognized neighborhood housing organization or CHODO in LaGrange County. Funding is always an issue.
- Since I do not work or live in the community or county it was difficult to answer many of these questions from the somewhat limited exposure I have to LaGrange County

Key Leader Interviews

Executive Summary

Ten key leader interviews were conducted to gain further insights into youth issues in LaGrange County. The report is divided into three sections: Key Findings tabulated and ranked results from a general youth issues survey, and comments on youth issues.

The following ten individuals were interviewed:

| Name | Organization |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Jack Dold | LaGrange County Chamber of Commerce |
| Lesa Jordan | Work One |
| Senator Robert Meeks | Indiana State Senator |
| Joe Pierce | Farmers State Bank |
| Kathy Royer | Learning Generation Initiative |
| Mike Strawser | LaGrange County Council |
| Paul Thomas | Prairie Heights School Corporation |
| Gary Zehr | LaGrange County Economic Development |
| Randy Zimmerly | Westview School Corporation |
| ANONYMOUS | ANONYMOUS |

Key Findings

1. These community leaders clearly perceive early childhood issues to be the largest youth issue facing the county. The affordability of day care and the school readiness of children entering kindergarten and the first grade were the highest rated issues. These two issues are clearly related and the perception is consistent with information gathered in focus groups and the public survey.
2. The issue of a lack of recreation and transportation opportunities for youth did not dominate the interviews as it did in focus groups although one respondent did recommend the establishment of a facility for activities such as a YMCA.
3. Two respondents felt that there were plenty of opportunities for youth to stay active by volunteering, particularly teenagers. One respondent cited the local hospital and Habitat for Humanity of organizations with volunteer opportunities. It was reported that many organizations have difficulty finding volunteers.
4. Deficient parenting skills, regardless of income or class, are viewed to be a major problem which is consistent with focus group discussions. One respondent acknowledged this problem but noted that the county is working to address it.

The key leader interviews consisted primarily of a general youth issues. This survey was also completed at each focus group session and was a significant portion of the public

survey. This uniform survey allows us compare perceptions of youth problems across various sectors of the community.

This survey covered a range of youth issues and asked respondents to indicate whether they perceived each issue to be a major problem, minor problem, or not a problem. In order to quantify the results, we assigned the following values: Major Problem = 3, Minor Problem = 2, Not a Problem = 1. The results were averaged and ranked from the greatest to the least perceived problem.

| Key Leader Interviews: Issue Survey | |
|---|---|
| Youth Issue | Mean Value (3 being the highest) |
| Affordable day care | 2.63 |
| School Readiness for Children - Entering Kindergarten/1st Grade | 2.60 |
| Teenage pregnancy | 2.50 |
| Parenting skills for all ages and income groups | 2.50 |
| Affordable after school programs | 2.43 |
| Latch-key kids | 2.38 |
| Adult supervision outside of school | 2.33 |
| Access to health services | 2.29 |
| Apprenticeships/ internships opportunities | 2.14 |
| Early interventions for developmental delays | 2.00 |
| Recreation for teenagers | 2.00 |
| Transportation to activities/recreation | 2.00 |
| Exposure to positive home/family environments | 2.00 |
| Mentoring / role models | 1.75 |
| Access to affordable and convenient tutoring | 1.60 |
| Volunteer opportunities / civic engagement | 1.57 |
| Community attitudes toward youth issues | 1.56 |

In addition to the general survey, interview respondents were asked to comment directly on the issues that they felt were major problems. Respondents were then asked to offer any specific recommendations that they may have to address one or more youth issue. Responses to those questions are found below.

Do you have any comments on the issues that you indicated to be a major problem or are there any issues that you feel are important that were not included on the list?

- Greater cooperation and coordination throughout the community would enhance the availability of activities for youth.
- As far as activities are concerned, there are plenty of volunteer opportunities available but most people do not get involved.
- Transportation issues are a major problem, particularly for youth in rural areas
- Parenting skills is a problem but this issue is being addressed by the community.
- There is plenty of opportunity to volunteer, especially for teenagers, at places like the hospital and Habitat for Humanity (older kids).

What specific recommendations do you have for addressing youth needs in LaGrange County?

- LaGrange County needs to establish more facilities for activities such as a YMCA.
- A significant problem in Lagrange County is that there is no middle class. We need employment opportunities for adults to be able to better provide necessities for their kids.