



# Community Needs Assessment: Executive Summary



*Prepared for  
United Way of Muscatine  
and  
Its Community Partners*

## ***Purpose***

- The United Way of Muscatine (UWM) leadership, in partnership with County Community Services, City of Muscatine, Muscatine Community College, Muscatine School District, Unity Health Care and the Greater Muscatine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Health Support Foundation and with additional funding by Alliant Energy and the Greater Muscatine Community Foundation conducted a community needs assessment of the greater Muscatine area to identify common human needs in its service area.
- Information gathered from this study will be used to update the UWM strategic plan to meet the needs of the community. In addition, a baseline report card will be developed as a data comparison for the future and for further needs assessments.
- Covered by the assessment were a variety of specific issues relative to the following general community attributes:
  - Safety
  - Education
  - Housing
  - Social
  - Health
  - Leisure
  - Economic
  - Environment
  - Transportation

# Methodology

---

## ***Research Approach***

The community needs assessment was completed in four phases as described below:

### ***Phase I—Secondary Research***

- Conducted by Iowa State University

### ***Phase II—Community Leaders In-Depth Interviews***

- Broad spectrum of interviewees identified by steering committee
  - Government, education, business, faith-based, human services
  - Many demographical backgrounds
- Interview instrument custom designed
  - Indicators, conversations with committee
- Interviews lasted up to two hours
  - Conducted March 8-April 3, 2008

### ***Phase III—Quantitative Telephone-based Survey***

- Instrument custom designed
  - Feedback from Phase I
  - Committee input
- Media package deployed
- 380 Muscatine County residents
  - Random sample
  - Representative of US Census
- Conducted May 9 through May 20, 2008

### ***Phase IV—Service Provider Study***

- Instrument custom designed
  - Committee input
  - Feedback from Phases I & II
- Sent to 59 committee selected service providers
  - Reflective of breadth of service sectors
- 21 Completes
  - Completed throughout month of July, 2008

# Table of Contents

---

Title **Error! Bookmark not defined.**  
Title **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

# Findings: Comparative Overview—Assets

---

- There is a consensus of opinion among respondents that Muscatine is a place residents *choose* to live because of all the assets the community has to offer.
- Community leaders, residents, and local service providers alike identify what they consider to be the strengths of their community:
  - Top among them, *education*
  - Abundant natural resources
  - Residents feel *safe* in their community
  - Homegrown companies
- Community leaders, specifically, also identify the number of *activist citizens* who care about their community
- Those *community leaders*, in turn, are cited as being committed, active and involved by local residents and service providers.
- Service providers are quick to identify the *resources* upon which they can depend:
  - Private businesses, corporations and local industry
  - United Way of Muscatine
  - Muscatine County Services, DHS, the County
  - Healthcare organizations, Unity

# Findings: Comparative Overview—Challenges

---

Community leaders, residents and local service providers all have similar ideas about the challenges faced by Muscatine, but there is a divergence of opinion regarding the priority of challenges.

## **Community Leaders**

- Recognize **poverty** and the inadequacy of **youth services** as challenges, but do **NOT** place them at the top of their priority list
- See **education, jobs and health care** as top priorities
- Have a general uneasiness that as the **local industry** leaders retire and leave the leadership of homegrown companies in the hands of successors, that those new industry leaders will not have the same level of **commitment to the community** that Muscatine previously enjoyed

## **Local Residents**

- Are satisfied with education within the community, and find that there are other issues that should take precedence:
  - **Services for teens** in crisis and issues of **poverty**
  - Concerned that **community leaders** don't quite understand completely the needs of local residents.
  - **Jobs and the economy** -the stability of the local job market and jobs that don't always pay enough to support a family in the community

## **Service Providers**

- Are more in line with residents in terms of recognizing top priorities for the community
- See huge gaps between what they feel are critical services for the community and how well the community is currently addressing those needs
  - **Services for teens** was considered the most important need in the community, and scored the lowest in terms of how well those needs are currently addressed
  - **Services for at-risk populations, for minorities, for low income people, for young children and the elderly, and for those with substance abuse problems** are also far behind where local service providers feel they need to be

# Findings: Telling the Story of Community Challenges

---

## From the Community Leader Viewpoint

- When asked to identify what the top priorities should be for Muscatine County, *poverty* was seldom mentioned by community leaders interviewed. ***Child abuse, teen pregnancy, the dropout rate, and domestic violence*** were mentioned by only one community leader in an unprompted open-end question. In fact, when asked specifically, many said these issues were not problems within the county. Yet:
  - Over 11% of county residents live below the ***poverty*** level (U.S. Census Bureau)
  - The county has a ***teen pregnancy*** rate of nearly 13%—ranking 11th in the state (Iowa State University)
  - There is a high ***dropout rate***, with 20% of residents never having graduated from high school (U.S. Census Bureau)
  - Over 82% of county residents don't go on to ***college*** (U.S. Census Bureau)
  - In 2007 there were 152 confirmed ***child abuse*** reports, ranking Muscatine County 7th in the state (Iowa State University)
  - Muscatine County has the second highest ***divorce*** rate in the state (Iowa State University)

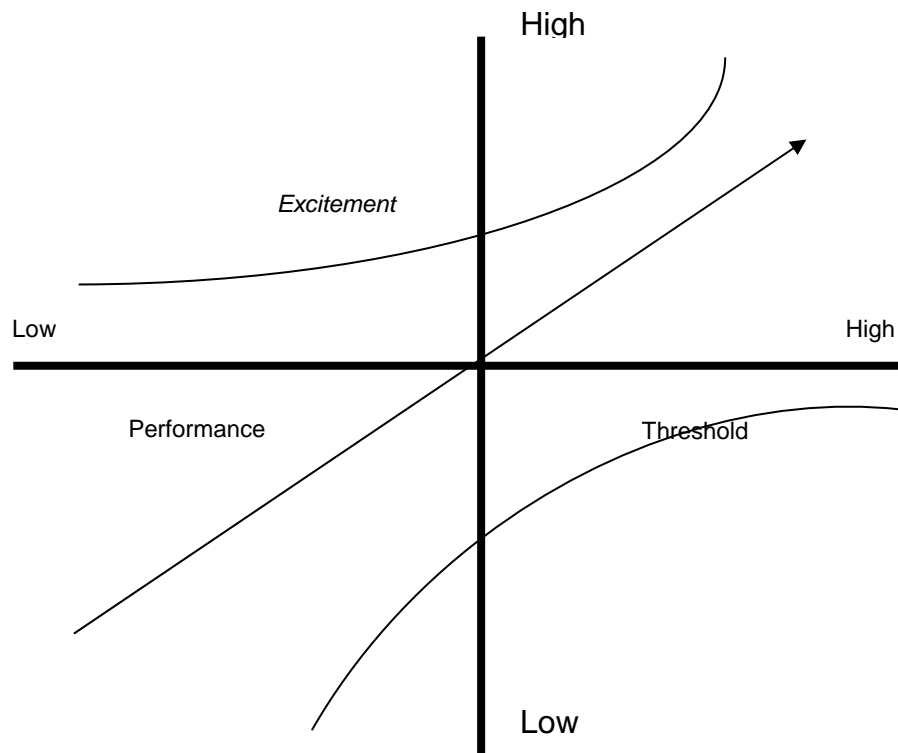
## From the Community Resident Viewpoint

- In Muscatine County, as determined by self-reporting of respondents, survey results show that ***poverty*** is a prevailing issue:
  - 5,403 residents said they couldn't afford ***housing***
  - 4,503 residents couldn't afford ***food*** for themselves or their families
  - 3,602 residents indicated they couldn't afford ***shoes or clothing***
  - 4,974 residents couldn't pay their ***utility bills***
  - 4,588 residents couldn't find affordable ***day care***
  - 6,990 couldn't find a ***job***
  - 5,532 indicated they couldn't afford the ***education*** they needed to help them get a job
- Additionally, the results demonstrate a need for services to help alleviate ***child abuse*** and provide assistance for ***families in crisis***:
  - 4,631 residents needed help dealing with ***substance abuse*** problems and 3,045 in dealing with ***violence and/or abuse in the home***.
  - 14,537 residents suffered from ***anxiety or depression***, and 5,746 said they couldn't afford ***mental health care***.
- Survey respondents also indicated a serious need for ***services for teens and children*** in Muscatine County:

- 7,333 residents needed assistance dealing with ***teenagers or children with behavior problems.***
- 5,403 needed help for a teenager at risk of ***dropping out of school*** because of ***behavior problems***, and 4,760 because of ***academic problems.***
- ***Following are the results from a Kano analysis of 33 community attributes tested in the quantitative survey of local residents, showing a path for prioritization for services according to resident perceptions in Muscatine.***

# Findings: Telling the Story of Community Challenges

## Perception and Importance Ratings *The Kano Model of Satisfaction*



- The Kano Model of Satisfaction divides attributes into four distinct categories.
- To determine where attributes fall within the four quadrants, regression analysis is used to determine the direct importance respondents place on each attribute versus the motivational importance (determined by correlating overall perceptions against individual perception ratings).
- This analysis will provide important information about the drivers of quality of life within Muscatine County. In terms of assessing community needs for Muscatine County, using the Kano Model will help to prioritize resources—both human and financial—in order to optimize quality of life for community residents.

# Findings: Telling the Story of Community Challenges

---

- **Threshold attributes** are “must have” attributes.
  - Adequate performance is required in these specific areas to even begin to provide quality of life within the community. High performance of these attributes, however, does little to increase overall satisfaction. But, poor performance in these areas can drastically reduce overall perceptions.
  - An example of a threshold attribute would be brakes on a car. As long as the brakes work well, customers can only be satisfied; however, poorly performing brakes will cause dissatisfaction, and without brakes the car is not going to sell at all.
- **Performance attributes** tend to be strongly correlated with overall perceptions.
  - Performing well in these areas tends to greatly increase perceptions and satisfaction.
  - An example of a performance attribute would be gas mileage on a car. The higher the gas mileage, the more satisfied the customer. In other words, with performance attributes, **more is better**.
- **Excitement attributes** are the unexpected “delighters” when performed well.
  - Overall, these attributes are the differentiating areas that can be used to increase perceptions. While excitement attributes can increase overall satisfaction, the absence of these attributes does not affect overall perceptions. These characteristics are considered “bonuses.”
  - An example of an excitement attribute would be heated seats on a car. Excitement attributes offer excellent opportunities for community building and promoting a sense of community. In addition, these are typically community characteristics that draw families to an area—good news for employers and the local economy.

# Findings: Telling the Story of Community Challenges

---

## **Attributes Tested:**

### **1=There are plenty of jobs for professionals**

2=Jobs in the manufacturing, service and general labor sectors have pay and benefits enough to provide a living for local families

3=The local economy is stable, and residents have job security

4=Economic growth

5=The local crime rate

6=Residents feel safe

7=The presence of an undesirable neighborhood

8=Local law enforcement is effective

9=There are good educational facilities

10=Students are prepared for post-secondary education after graduation from high school

11=Students are prepared to enter the workforce after graduation from high school

12=Class size in the public schools

13=The graduation rate

14=There is post-secondary education available

15=Education available is relevant to the local job market

16=There is lower-income housing available

17=There is housing to meet the needs of seniors

18=There are programs to help low-income families buy homes

19=There is adequate child care available

20=There are services and resources for people with disabilities

21=There are services and resources for the elderly

22=There are services for people with substance abuse problems

23=There are adequate resources for families in crisis

24=There is basic health care available without having to leave town

25=There are health care alternatives for people facing financial barriers

26=There are facilities for recreational activities

27=There are events that promote a sense of community and bring residents together

28=There are services for teens in crisis

29=There are services for teens in need of assistance

30=Ethnically diverse populations come together as a community

31=There are clean air, water, and environmental conditions

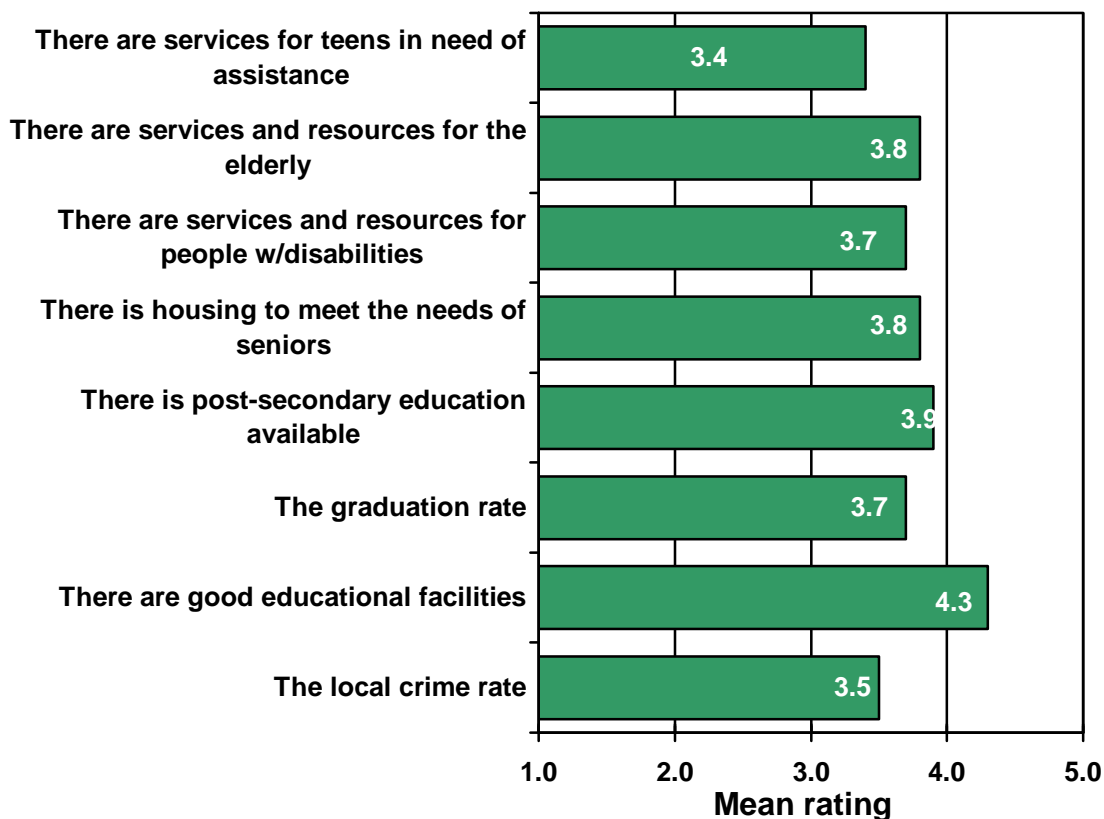
32=Community leaders understand the needs of local residents

33=The best the community has to offer is accessible to all residents regardless of income or ethnicity

# Findings: Telling the Story of Community Challenges

## Threshold Attributes

Q2. Rate how well your community is performing in the following areas:

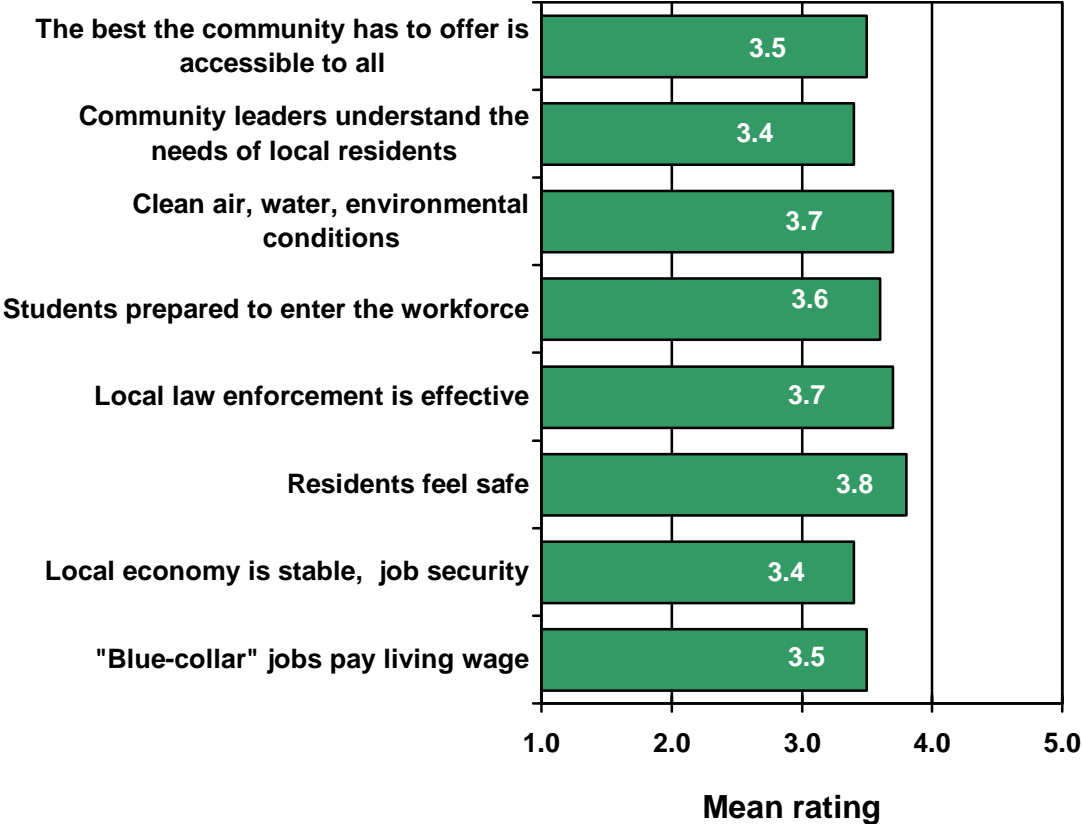


- Typically, threshold attributes are a top priority. However, these only require adequate performance— typically a 3.5—but **must be adequate** to even begin to address the needs of local residents.
- Seven of Muscatine County’s eight threshold attributes are performing acceptably at this time. **It will be important, however, to monitor these attributes to make certain they do not weaken.**
- Reflected throughout this study is the need for more services for teens in the Muscatine community. At this time, they are inadequate.
- Education attributes from multiple areas receive high marks.

# Findings: Telling the Story of Community Challenges

## Performance Attributes

Q2. Rate how your community is performing in the following areas:

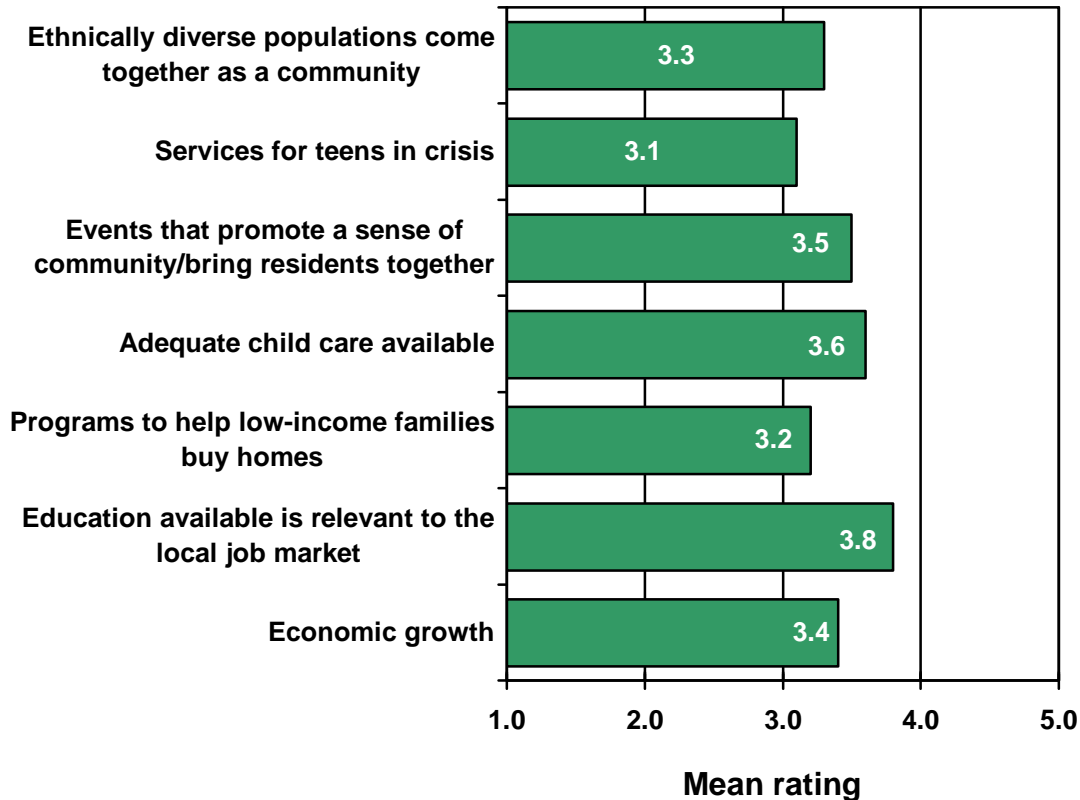


- These eight performance attributes are the most important drivers of overall satisfaction with quality of life in the community, and should be a top priority for Muscatine County. Remember, more is better with these community attributes, and the goal would ideally be a mean score of 5.
- There is a lot of opportunity for Muscatine County in these eight areas. Settling for adequate performance will actually decrease quality of life within the community.
- Community leaders are being looked to for leadership in relational, social, and economic areas.

# Findings: Telling the Story of Community Challenges

## Excitement Attributes

Q2. Rate how well your community is performing in the following areas:



- Muscatine County is fortunate to have seven opportunities to create excitement with residents, create community unity, and raise the level of quality of life for locals.
- These identified excitement attributes—if performed well—will do a great deal to bring residents together and raise the level of satisfaction among those who live in Muscatine County.
- In addition, these characteristics (again, if done well) will also attract new residents to the community.
- As with performance attributes, Muscatine County needs to look into what can be done to raise the bar in these areas.

# Findings: Telling the Story of Community Challenges

---

## From the Community Service Providers Viewpoint

- Service providers surveyed have somewhat different ideas than local community leaders about where the focus should be in Muscatine County as far as allocating resources to provide services.
- While community leaders and local service providers agree that health care and jobs/economic stability are top priorities, they worry that community leaders are not as aware as they could be about the huge crisis Muscatine faces regarding **teen and youth issues** such as **teen pregnancy**, the **dropout rate**, **drugs**, and the **lack of programs** for local teens.
- In addition, service providers conveyed the concern that community leaders are not quite as familiar with certain community challenges as they are, having to deal with them on a personal basis each day; for example, **poverty** issues and **families in crisis** without resources to assist them.
- Sometimes the most frustrating thing to local service providers is that when there *are* services available for local residents, they either don't know about them or don't have the means of transportation to get to them.
- Service providers acknowledge that there are plentiful resources within the community, but see huge **gaps between what needs are, and how resources are allocated to meet those needs** in Muscatine. (See following tables)

# Findings: Telling the Story of Community Challenges

## Meeting the Need (Service Providers' Study)

1=Not at all important 2=Somewhat unimportant 3=Neither important nor unimportant 4=Important 5=Very important  
 1=Very poor 2=Poor 3=Average 4=Good 5=Very good

Q3. From the following list of community services, please indicate how important you feel each is in terms of serving Muscatine County's specific needs.	Importance Mean Rating	Performance Mean Rating	Percent Very Important	Percent Very Good
Q4. Considering both the amount of services available, and the comprehensiveness of available services, rate Muscatine County for each of the following in terms of how well needs are being met.				
3/4.5 Services for teenagers	4.6	3.0	71%	
3/4.10 Services for at-risk populations	4.6	3.1	60%	
3/4.4 Services for young children	4.5	3.7	67%	15%
3/4.2 Services for the elderly	4.5	3.8	62%	10%
3/4.1 Services for people with disabilities	4.5	3.9	55%	19%
3/4.3 Services for low-income people	4.4	3.5	48%	5%
3/4.6 Services for minorities	4.4	3.3	57%	10%
3/4.9 Services for people with substance abuse problems	4.3	3.4	5%	14%
3/4.8 Protecting the environment	4.1	3.1	29%	5%
3/4.7 Promoting art and culture	3.7	3.6	14%	5%

# Findings: Telling the Story of Community Challenges

## *Immediate Challenges (Service Providers' Study)*

<b>Q13. What do you see as the three biggest challenges facing Muscatine County today? (Top responses)</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<i>Teen/youth issues (i.e., pregnancy, drop-out rate, substance abuse, programming, etc.)</i>	7	33%
<i>Jobs</i>	6	29%
<i>Poverty</i>	4	19%
<i>Families in crisis, programs for parents and children, family values</i>	4	19%
<i>Healthcare</i>	3	14%
<i>Education</i>	3	14%
<i>Transportation</i>	3	14%
<i>Lack of affordable housing</i>	3	14%
<i>Child care—affordable, available</i>	3	14%

# Findings: Telling the Story of Community Activists

---

- *Muscatine County is fortunate to have many, many **local residents who care** about their community and those in need.*
  - *85% of residents have **donated money** to a local non-profit or community organization in the last year*
  - *Well over half have **volunteered their time** within the last year*
  - *Almost 75% **would be willing to volunteer** their time, and over 70% would participate in community and community-building activities in the future*
  - *Volunteers are **most interested** in being involved in:*
    - *Protecting the environment*
    - *Services for the elderly*
    - *Services for young children*
    - *Services for people with disabilities*
    - *Services for low-income residents*
    - *Services for teens*
    - *Services for minorities*

# Findings: Achieving Focus

---

## Leading the Way to Quality of Life in Muscatine County

- Residents of Muscatine County know things aren't perfect. They know there are **areas that challenge quality of life** in their community that need to be addressed.
- Yet, when asked what **the most important thing their community could do to serve the needs of residents**, a third did not have any idea what that would be. Among the other two-thirds, opinions varied widely and expressed more personally vested opinions than a community-wide focus.
- Clearly, **Muscatine County residents need their community leaders** to set priorities and coordinate a focus on services for locals.
- How does a community, like Muscatine, go about determining the best way to **prioritize critical resources** in order to accomplish the best results?
- **Community leaders** need to take the lead and seek out additional **essential feedback** from:
  - **Local residents** concerning what kinds of issues they are facing; and,
  - **Community activists and service providers**—those people who are in the trenches each day
- **Muscatine County is on the way.** The data has been collected. The results have been analyzed. Community leaders are motivated. Local residents have weighed in. Area service providers have expressed a desire to take part in a coordinated effort.
- Next, it will be critical to **make the best use of the research results in guiding the way** to a **focused, well-prioritized** community action plan—a true partnership between leaders, activists and service providers.

# Conclusions

---

- While highly motivated and well intentioned, Muscatine County community leaders appear to have a lower than ideal level of awareness with the depth and the seriousness of certain issues currently facing the community.
- Most community leaders see education as a top priority for Muscatine County. And, as testimony to the ability of those leaders to drive success, local residents and service providers/activists alike point to the level of excellence that has been reached in education in Muscatine County, particularly in terms of facilities. It appears that threshold has been met.
- Having crossed the threshold to build educational excellence in the county, it is now time to switch to maintenance while shifting the focus to urgent issues which compromise the whole of life in Muscatine County. Local residents and service providers/activists agree on areas which need immediate attention:
  - **Teens/children:** the need for a place for teens to gather and activities to keep them engaged in positive behavior, teenage pregnancy, teens at risk of dropping out of school because of academic or behavior problems, the need for affordable day care
  - **Jobs:** low-paying jobs, temporary employment, poor benefits, jobs moving out of town, people unable to find jobs
  - **Poverty:** the need for low-income housing and more services for the poor
  - **Health care:** the need for affordable/available health care, mental health care, and dental care
- Other major issues need attention as well, such as the needs of the elderly and disabled, and the environment. Also, it appears that many of the issues intertwine with the primary issues; for example, transportation needed primarily by the poor in order to get to jobs or job training education, or even transportation for seniors to get back and forth to medical appointments.
- Local service providers seek to network in a formal, organized manner that will assist them in carrying out a coordinated plan. This will help them avoid duplication of efforts, and maximize the effects of valuable, limited resources.
- Muscatine County is fortunate to have many assets—the riverbank, local industry and business, excellent educational infrastructure, and a population that feels a strong sense of community pride among them. But most importantly, it is the people who live here. Muscatine County possesses a strong volunteer base; people who are willing to give not only their time, but also their money. Muscatine is also fortunate to have service providers who sincerely care about getting the job done. In addition, there are strong leaders who are motivated and committed.

# Conclusions

---

- In going forth with a community-wide action plan, disparate groups of leaders, activists, volunteers and service providers will best facilitate quality of life in Muscatine County by coming together with ***a united focus and a clear recognition of community assets and challenges.***

# Recommendations

---

- **Formalize a method for prioritization of focus:**
  - The best source for community leaders in determining where to begin/focus seems to be local service providers, since their assessment of local needs is in line with what community residents are saying is the case.
  - Local service providers need a formalized network, or umbrella organization, where they can meet or send representatives to work together to provide community leaders with a comprehensive assessment of where critical needs for services are in the community, and where those needs are falling short of being met.
  - Facilitate communication between service providers and community leaders, either by representation at meetings, regular reports, or some other means.
- **Determine which issues/challenges interact with one another:**
  - For example, working to provide adequate and relevant job training can also work to alleviate poverty, or expanding transportation options can get seniors to health care appointments and unemployed/underemployed residents to job training.
- **Find ways to most effectively use resources/assets:**
  - Community volunteers, for example, are ready to go to work for their community; however, they need direction and an organized way to give them the opportunities to volunteer in areas in which they have particular interest.
- **Services for Teens:**
  - This needs to be a top priority for Muscatine County. Teens need a place to go where they can interact with mentors, educators and counselors—both professional and volunteer—and to positively interact with each other.
  - Can the highly-rated educational facilities in Muscatine provide a physical place for this to happen? Would teens prefer somewhere away from school to gather after hours? Is there a specific service organization best equipped to take on this venture?
  - Focus groups would help provide key insight.
  - With the high probability of teen parents within the community, a support network should be established for them offering services and education to ensure that their challenges do not reach crisis level.
  - Services for teens may work to improve the drop-out rate, teen pregnancy rates, and substance abuse, as well as give important relief to families in crisis.

# Recommendations

---

- **Jobs:**
  - Bring the local high schools and Muscatine Community College together to create programs that are responsive to the needs of local employers. Ensure that those educational opportunities are accessible to those who need them:
    - Program **options for adults** who also work
    - Program **options for high school students** who want to enter the workforce after high school
    - **Childcare** options to eliminate barriers, both in terms of cost and availability
    - **Transportation** availability for those who otherwise could not attend
  - Involve local industry and business to guide educational programming.
  - Ask local industry/business to facilitate activities which provide them with the qualified workforce they seek; for example, a physical place to locate a second-shift daycare, transportation services for trainees, sponsorship of job candidates who will work for employers once they complete the required training, etc.
  - Communicate the advantages of life in Muscatine County to attract a qualified workforce, with their families, to the community. Excitement attributes can guide these efforts, along with communicating performance attributes.