

**POVERTY IN OUR MIDST:**  
**HOW IT AFFECTS FAMILIES IN MANITOWOC COUNTY AND**  
**OUR COMMUNITY**

At the Annual Meeting in 2015, the membership voted to adopt a two year study (2015-2017) regarding poverty in Manitowoc County. Four sub-committees were formed: Economic Factors, Food, Housing, and Health. Since then the committee added a Transportation section. These committees have been gathering information for the study. In 2015 the committee had a program for the membership and the community. Terri Zueger-Halvorsen shared her power point on “Hunger and Poverty in Manitowoc County” which gave an overview of poverty challenges in the county.

In 2016 we sponsored a program “Housing Issues in Manitowoc-Impact on Low Income Families” with five people from local housing agencies who discussed the challenges of housing in our community. We had a second program that year “Managing Poverty in Our Schools: Manitowoc and Two Rivers Public School Districts” with both Superintendents participating. They explained what the school districts were doing to assist children facing poverty.

As the Health committee was gathering information, they recognized the need to address how poverty and addiction are related. As part of their information gathering and the writing of their piece, they began to focus on addiction. In 2017, the League sponsored a program on “The Science of Substance Abuse and Treatment Options.” A grant from the West Foundation and a donation from Pathways to a Better Life covered the cost of the speaker, Dan Walters who is a pharmacist. He spoke to about 150 people about the impact of smoking, alcohol and other drugs on the brain and some treatment options.

In January of 2018 the focus of a League meeting was “Facing Hunger in Manitowoc County: The Growing Challenge.” Speakers representing FoodShare, Meals on Wheels, Peter’s Pantry, Salvation Army Pantry, TEFAP (Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program) and Grow-It-Forward shared their information on the importance of their federal, state and local programs. The committee submitted an article about this program to the local newspaper for the “Your Turn” column.

Shortly after this program, the Board of the Reis Endowment Fund in Two Rivers responded to the newspaper article regarding the Hunger meeting. They set up a Reis Endowment Fund/Food Pantry Account and said they would donate matching funds for this account up to \$7500. The money raised would be distributed to the four local pantries in Manitowoc and Two Rivers. Later, an article and picture in the newspaper showed Peter's Pantry receiving a check from this fund. A few weeks later, the Foundation reported the community had donated \$3200 and with the donations of the Reis Board members and the Endowment Fund, the pantry fund was now at over \$12,000

The committee has planned to provide the membership and the community with the first piece of this study "Poverty and Addiction" at the May Annual Meeting, 2018. Members of this committee have included Jean Biegan, Jaci Collins, Theresa Collins, Ginny Finnel, Julie Grinde, Cecilia Held, Ann Larson, Nancy Lodl, Beth Satchell, Nancy Slattery, and Darlene Wellner.