

## PROFILES OF COMMUNITIES ADDRESSING POVERTY

**HOFFMAN, MINNESOTA:** There are big changes happening in this rural town. Just five years ago, Main Street storefronts stood empty, the poverty rate was at 11%, and the population was in a steady decline.

Hoffman residents worked together to revitalize their town through the Horizons program, an anti-poverty community leadership initiative funded by the Northwest Area Foundation.



*Volunteers at the Hoffman clothing exchange*

Transformations can be seen in every corner of town. Some actions have had an immediate impact, such as painting houses, installing playground equipment, establishing community gardens, and cleaning a park. Participants have also worked toward long-term changes:

- Residents successfully lobbied to raise the ban on townhouses, allowing young families and older people to access affordable housing.
- With help from a small business incubator, 26 new businesses fill once empty stores.
- An empty building was converted into a “health mall,” which includes a podiatrist, chiropractor, massage therapist, and audiologist.



*A volunteer distributes donations at a local food shelf*

**NESHOBA COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI:** Over one-fifth of residents in Neshoba County, Miss., live in poverty, and they are working together to turn those numbers around. By participating in Turning the Tide on Poverty, an initiative led by the Southern Rural Development Center, over 100 residents organized to talk and work together to build a prosperous community. Participants were inspired to take action after connecting with other members of the community and are working to:

- Expand Family Life Education Classes to give families access to resources such as Money Mentors and parenting classes.
- Update the Community Resource Guide and establish a citizen’s corps to help people access information.
- Give community garden kits to low-income families and explore new partnerships to help stock food shelves.

**ERIE, PENNSYLVANIA**, has been hit hard by the loss of manufacturing jobs, leaving 17% of individuals and 11% of families living in poverty. In partnership with Mercyhurst College, the city is working towards a multifaceted solution to their waning economy.

The program was launched in the heart of the city and has spread to six of the suburbs in the last five years. Community members voiced their concerns and put their ideas into action. Here are the results:

- School leaders developed the “6 Steps for School Readiness” workbook so parents can increase their child’s learning potential. Early childhood education enrollment has increased 3% in Erie, while it has declined in all other counties in the state.
- The city pursued federal grants to build school-based health centers to eliminate barriers to health care for low-income children.
- The local government worked to increase safety and reduce night-time violence by improving lighting throughout the city. Reported robberies decreased from 317 to 121 in just one year.



*Erie’s Little Italy*

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## About Everyday Democracy

A national leader in the field of civic participation and community change, Everyday Democracy helps people of different backgrounds and views talk and work together to create communities that work for everyone.

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