

Solutions from the community, for the community

Erie, Pa., has been hit hard by the loss of manufacturing jobs, leaving 17% of individuals and 11% of families living in poverty. The dialogue-to-change process has made space for residents to voice their concerns and identify possible solutions to reduce poverty and violence, as well as attract new businesses.

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.



Erie resident Tiffani Staley speaks up during the action forum

Early childhood became the focus of one of the action teams because many children are falling short academically. In a partnership with local school leaders, the team developed the “6 Steps for School Readiness” workbook so parents can increase their child’s learning potential. Since they began distribution four years ago, early childhood education enrollment has increased 3% in Erie, while it has declined in all other Pennsylvania counties.



One action team established a community garden in Little Italy

In an effort to eliminate barriers families face to accessing quality health care, an action team is working to establish school-based health care centers for low-income children. Multiple locations applied for federal grants and received a combined \$970,470. They hope to open the centers in the fall of 2012.

Night-time violence is also a key concern for local residents. In an effort to increase safety, an action team partnered with the local government to improve lighting around the city by replacing broken streetlamps and trimming branches that obstruct the light. After the program started in 2008, reported robberies decreased from 317 to 121 in just one year.

These are just a few of the remarkable changes happening in Erie. Every new round of dialogues brings forward new ideas. The city has created a sustained program which will continue to find innovative ways to help residents make their voices heard and take action.

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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