



METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY

Karl F. Dean
Mayor

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(Photos available upon request)

Nashville's Poverty Symposium Reveals Working Families Hardest Hit by Poverty *Nearly 300 Leaders to work on City-Wide Plan to Reduce Poverty by 50% by 2010*

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, a single-parent would have to work 95 hours per week at minimum wage in order to afford a two-bedroom apartment at fair market rent in Nashville, which is \$723 per month.

Earlier this week city leaders, advocates, organizations and residents packed the ballroom of the Nashville Convention Center for the Nashville Poverty Symposium to hear what is currently being done in our city as well as the service gaps that prevent families from being able to sustain themselves.

“Many of the people that are in poverty are working full-time, everyday. Yet the wages that they are earning are not sufficient enough to bring them above the poverty level,” said Cynthia Croom, Executive Director of the Metropolitan Action Commission.

The symposium, hosted by the Metropolitan Action Commission and the Nashville Chamber Public Benefit Foundation met with about thirteen local agencies for several months to develop the content of the symposium.

“There isn’t one approach or one organization that can solve the issues of poverty, it takes all of us coming together,” said Howard Gentry, CEO, Nashville Chamber Public Benefit Foundation.

The morning panel discussed services currently available in health care, housing, child care, food, economic opportunity, neighborhood and workforce development and healthcare. The panelists also shared any service gaps that exist. Paul Haynes, Executive Director of the Nashville Career Advancement Center said that finding employment now has variables such as the availability of child care during non traditional work hours.

“If a parent has a job that ends at 6:30 p.m. and the child care center closes at 6 p.m. The parent has to make the choice to leave work which means that likely they would lose their job,” said Haynes.

The second panel made up of recipients of various programs, were asked to talk about the impact of these services as well as issues that should be addressed that would provide more support to families. Panelist Monroe Simmons, owner of a small carpet cleaning service, talked about the need for more support for small businesses.

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“I purchased my supplies, equipment, van and a television commercial that airs on the local cable company using the money I made cleaning carpets, but it’s hard to get contracts from government or other businesses because I have the status of a micro business instead of a small business,” said Simmons.

Nashville Mayor Karl Dean challenged businesses, residents, government agencies and community groups to commit to an action group on one of the key areas presented at the symposium. Over 65% of the people that attended the event signed up to participate in an Action Group.

Avi Poster, a member of the Poverty Symposium Planning Committee, shared the overall goal of the action groups. “We are not attempting to reinvent the wheel, but to coordinate the efforts of all of us working together,” said Poster.

The Action Groups, which are scheduled to begin on October 31, will meet once per month. The Planning Committee will gather the results of the groups and present them to the Mayor by May 2009. Mayor Dean has charged the group with developing a plan for reducing poverty by 50% in Davidson County by 2010.

Anyone interested in participating in an Action Group should call the Metropolitan Action Commission at 862-8860, Ext 200.

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Nashville Symposium Event Sponsors:

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