



**Friends of
South End Community Outreach Ministries (SECOM)
Newsletter
October 25, 2010**

Dear Friends,

Are people poor because of who they are or because of their circumstances?

It's a sensitive question that has caused many arguments. Forty-five years ago Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who was then assistant labor secretary, wrote a report that introduced the concept of a "culture of poverty". It was a controversial thought then and it still is. That the subject is still being debated indicates that there are elements of truth to both sides of the argument.

Two items in the news recently make this argument even more interesting:

- Poverty rates are at a 15 year high of over 14% and
- poverty is growing in the suburbs.

From those two pieces of news it would seem that it is the economy that is creating poverty. Not only has poverty increased to record levels with the economic downturn, but it is now afflicting areas which hadn't traditionally had to address the issue. But that doesn't tell the entire story. The economic slowdown is temporary. Increased poverty in the suburbs may only be a demographic change to their populations. Therefore increased poverty may be merely a contributing factor.

In the past month I've been invited by a foundation to visit two out-of-town human services agencies. Both have been around for a very long time, are well respected by the people they serve, their communities and their staff and they are successful in helping families. One expressed that they were in the business of changing people's state of mind. The other made it a high priority to improve the self image of the families they served. Listening to them it would seem that there is a culture of poverty. That the people they serve needed to change their mentality if they were to escape poverty. But it is hard to believe that many people choose to be poor.

It seems too simplistic to believe that one circumstance or another is the sole reason for poverty. There must be some combination of factors that leads people into poverty and then often keeps them there.

The complexities of poverty make it a difficult problem to solve. There is no one clear cause and therefore no one clear solution. Feeding people takes care of the immediate need but it only paves the way for a longer term solution. Waiting to see the long term results of our other programs can be agonizingly painful. For that reason we are thankful to everyone that has stayed with us through the years as we continue to fight the battle.

A few random items on our schedule for your consideration:

- 1.) On Wednesday October 27 from 10 am to 5 pm Planned Parenthood of Western and Northern Michigan will be at SECOM to do free HIV testing. If you know of someone who might be at risk, please have them come to our facility that day.
- 2.) Holiday Basket sign ups continue on Tuesdays and Thursdays. We don't want anyone to go hungry this year so please help us get the word out. Call Mildred at 616.452.7684 for more information.
- 3.) In January we will be starting a twice a week program for families with children 0 to 5 years of age. If you are interested in teaching or assisting in a child development program, please email me at development@secomministries.org or call 616.452.7684.
- 4.) We still need a few presents for children in our Pride for Parents program. Please call Cher at 616.452.7684 if you can help.
- 5.) ACCESS of West Michigan is eligible to get an additional \$25,000 from ArtVan if they receive the most votes. Follow this link <http://bit.ly/btCusV> to vote for an organization that does so much to help Kent County and SECOM.
- 6.) For more on the culture of poverty debate, follow this link: <http://nyti.ms/cPm5pG> to the New York Times article.

Thanks to everyone for being a part of our ministry to Kent County.

Best Regards,

Robert Heys
Development Director

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Please feel free to forward this email to anyone you think might be interested.

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