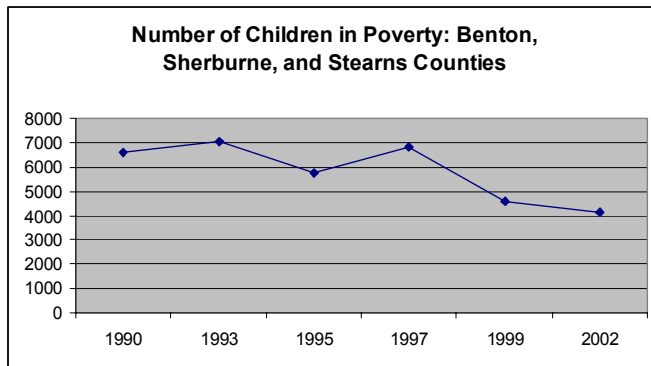




CommunityVIEW Focus: Women & Children in Poverty

Over 4,000 children in our community live in poverty.



Source: CLIKS: County, City, Community-Level Information on Kids; www.aecf.org

Although the statistics show a declining number of children in poverty, there is widespread belief that these statistics understate the need for help. In 2002, the Jobs Now coalition of Minnesota estimated that a family of four with two working adults in our community needed to earn \$44,700 to cover their basic needs. For that same year, the Department of Health and Human Services set the poverty guideline at only \$18,400.

Nearly 10,000 children received support in 2003.

- 9,594 children in our tri-county area received free/reduced-price lunch.
- 3,864 children were on food stamps.
- 50 children were born to teen mothers.
- 509 children were in out-of-home placements.

Source: 2003 data for Benton, Sherburne, and Stearns County from CLIKS: County, City, Community-Level Information on Kids; www.aecf.org

The Causes of Poverty

Understanding the causes of poverty allows us to wisely choose actions that can work to alleviate it. A comprehensive review of poverty research conducted by Philip DeVol acknowledges the polarization between those who claim the poor cause their own poverty through their choices, and those who claim broad political and economic forces create poverty. DeVol embraces both viewpoints, recognizing that the contributors to poverty are both widespread and well supported by research.

DeVol concludes that the research supports these four broad causes of poverty:

Causes	Examples
1. Behaviors of the Individual	Work ethic Domestic violence Spending habits Planning skills
2. Human & Social Capital in the Community	Childcare for working families Availability/quality of education Middle-class flight
3. Exploitation	Internet scams Cash-advance lenders Temp work Drug trade
4. Political/Economic Structures	Decline of unions Immigration patterns Taxation patterns Economic disparity

The Central Minnesota Community Foundation does not attempt to address the political and economic structures of our community, but we do look for opportunities to change individual behaviors, create human and social capital, and give those in poverty the tools to avoid exploitation.



70% of those in poverty are women and children.

- 16,210 people in our community live in poverty.
- 31,500 people in our community live at or below 150% of the poverty level.
- 70% of those in poverty are women and children.

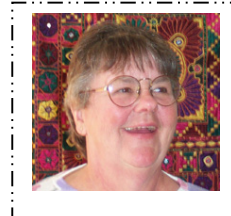
Situational and Generational Poverty

Situational poverty exists when circumstances throw a person or family into poverty for a period of time. A job loss, an illness, and divorce are examples of situations that could cause poverty. When that poverty persists for two generations or more, it becomes generational poverty. Children born into generational poverty learn the hidden rules of poverty – a focus on immediate problem-solving rather than long-term thinking, for example – and need more help to learn the skills necessary to move out of poverty.

The Women's Fund

The Women's Fund at the Central Minnesota Community Foundation is committed to providing grants that improve the lives of women and children. Our current targeted areas of need include: Elder Women, Women in Transition, and Middle-school Girls. Poverty touches women and children in all these areas, and we have prepared this report to help us better understand how to serve those in need. For more information, please contact Barb Carlson (bcarlson@communitygiving.org) at the Central Minnesota Community Foundation: 320-253-4380.

Maxine Barnett: Addressing Poverty



Domestic violence is a prime example of a situation that can throw a family into poverty. Without help and support, that situational poverty can extend to future generations. This problem is local and immediate. For example:

- 197 women were residents at our local emergency shelter during the past year.
- 30% of these women had no source of income when they left their homes.
- 35% of these women were on public assistance.
- 217 children resided at the shelter.

Maxine Barnett, the director of the Central Minnesota Task Force on Battered Women, has spent the last 26 years shaping programs that give women the skills and support they need to overcome the consequences of domestic violence. These programs range from domestic violence prevention through classroom presentations to immediate emergency support at Anna Marie's to long-term education on parenting and budgeting in transitional housing to legal and healthcare support.

Most importantly, Maxine has focused on long-term solutions rather than a "band-aid" approach. She structures her programs to provide lasting changes in the people served. The women served learn:

- How to think responsibly, not as a victim
- Confidence in their own value and abilities
- How to make good decisions
- How and where to connect with others

If you have an example of a local initiative addressing poverty, please send it to slorenz@communitygiving.org.

Note: The sections on Situational and Generational poverty and the Causes of Poverty draw on the article "Using the Hidden Rules of Class to Create Sustainable Communities" by Philip E. DeVol at aha! Process, Inc. Ruby Payne is the founder of aha! Process, Inc.