

Improved Access to Childcare

Guide – Trina Stephens, MDC

- Attendees were all concerned about the exorbitant cost of childcare and ensuring that care is high-quality. Children are our future workers, entrepreneurs, etc., and they should be well-prepared. At the same time, we need childcare so that today's workers are able to do their best for their career and families.
- Concerns were also raised that childcare workers should earn a living wage. What are the intersections between these two areas – livable wage and affordable childcare?
- Few politicians seem interested in solving the childcare crisis. What can we do besides write to them?
- Some employers are doing a good job of this. We should highlight those employers. Wegman's is one example.
- Finding resources for parents is difficult, too. The Childcare Resource Center is in our community, but not many parents know about it. Why are only 14% of eligible children getting assistance with childcare? How do we reach out to them?
- What to do?
 - More high-profile community events related to the childcare crisis and why it matters as a community.
 - A centralized place for people to access assistance and information.

A member from the group offered this over email after the event - "The best source of information and advocacy work is the [NC Early Education Coalition](#). The lead issue this legislative session is to fund Child Care WAGE\$. This program provides salary supplements to all child care teachers in the state based on educational level. One emphasis you will see in advocacy strategies is promoting the voices of the teachers and program leaders. There's lots of info on the site. If after you look at it and you have questions, let me know and I can point you in the right direction. There is a critical time for advocacy so I'm glad there is interest."

Equitable Public Education

Guide – Kellie Easton, Action4Equity

- Policy change and advocacy is critical. In NC, the state general assembly holds a lot of power over public schools. However, that should not deter us from doing things at the local level, where a lot of impact can be made, as well – particularly around local equitable access to resources, materials, playgrounds, etc.
- Funding is a major issue. The Leandro decision in the courts stated that NC is breaking its own constitution by not funding equitable education and giving every child access to a "sound, basic education." However, the general assembly has not done anything about it, despite NC having billions in reserves.
- Advocating around issues AND changing the lawmakers elected in Raleigh are both important.
- Action4Ashley took a lot of courage from Kellie and the conscious decision to "go all-in" on this issue at the risk of being black-balled. There will be hard times. Make sure you are ready and committed.

- “Change moves at the speed of trust.” Action4Equity’s leadership relies on the trust they have built amongst themselves in the last few years, and all are willing to step out and be courageous around important issues. This trust builds on itself, and it also builds on hard times and conversations that you go through together.
- For white people getting involved in racial equity work, it’s important to listen and show up, but not dictate the answers. Be ready to support the work that communities of color have decided to work on.
- What to do?
 - Go to school board meetings and show up in your role – parent, community member, etc, but show up for ALL CHILDREN.
 - Stay connected with others interested in the work and stay informed about community issues.
 - Have a place on the WF website with weekly ways to get involved (board meetings, events, town halls, etc) would be great.

Fair and Livable Wages

Guide – Vivian Perez-Chadler, Asset Building Coalition of Forsyth County

- A livable wage means so much more than just what the minimum wage should be.
- We have to look at wage disparities as a significant cause of poverty. Many orgs want to focus on financial literacy, but that doesn’t address the root cause – unlivably low wages. Living wages would play a big role in eliminating poverty. Lack of living wage is a big barrier to self-sufficiency especially for women and girls.
- COVID19 has highlighted an issue that has been going on for decades. We need to be positioned to make changes to our systems that were not working long before COVID.
- We must consider the benefits cliff when discussing raising wages.
- Living wage isn’t one size fits all. It depends on the family composition
 - Data from Forsyth Futures.
 - 1 adult working full-time needs a livable wage of \$10.84 to meet basic needs
 - 1 working adult with 2 kids needs a wage of \$26.21
 - 2 working adults/2 kids needs a wage of \$14.18 each.
- What to do?
 - We need to engage politicians and employers in the conversation about livable wage AND benefits cliff.
 - Find the organizations already working on this issue and connect with them.
 - Women’s Fund could have a Resource Page on their website that would include links to advocacy groups to learn about or join, like Asset Based Coalition

Affordable Housing

Guide – Andrea Kurtz, United Way of Forsyth County

- Zoning impacts density, what kinds of housing can be built where (single family, multi-family, etc), and ultimately cost.

- Developers seem to drive most of the zoning and housing decisions in Winston-Salem, and they are interested in profit, not people.
- It's very hard to find landlords that will accept Section 8 Housing vouchers.
- Models from other communities
 - Our community doesn't use the tools available to the city that other communities are using, such as significant city investment in incentivizing housing that is affordable to people at different levels of income.
 - The housing we have is mismatched to the wages that we have in our community.
 - We need to invest publicly and privately in infrastructure so that housing costs are lower AND provide people with higher, livable wages
- We need to educate the community about the challenges and opportunities to address the affordable housing crisis.
- Landlord monopolies in an area are a problem for residents looking for housing if they've had bad experiences in the past
- American Rescue Plan federal funding can be used for affordable housing. We can use this money to close some of the gaps. There are projects that are shovel ready but don't have the funding they need.
- What to do?
 - Get involved with existing organizations working on the issue. There is a new advocacy group forming called "Folks for Good Housing". Housing Justice Now works on tenant rights and protection.
 - Attend community education events and stay informed.