OPENING HEARTS AND MINDS IN RURAL NORTHEAST ARKANSAS

Arkansas Community Development Society Grant Program
October 30, 2014
NOR THEAST ARK AN S A S

- Randolph, Clay, Lawrence
- Declining Economic Opportunity
- Declining Growth
- Scant Progress
- Two decades of plant closures
Northeast Arkansas Intermodal Authority Announces Major New Industry Coming to Northeast Arkansas
PECO POULTRY COMPLEX

• $165 Million Investment
• Top Ten Poultry Producers
• Feed Mill
• Hatchery
• Processing Plant
1,000 NEW JOBS
PECO POULTRY INDUSTRY

• Needs 600 chicken houses to be built and owned by local growers

• Purchases locally produced grain
PECO POULTRY INDUSTRY WILL...

• Bring spin-off jobs
  • Trucking
  • Transportation
  • Housing
  • Agriculture
  • Retail opportunities
County Hospital to Expand, Add New Services

Population Growth, Needs Spur Downtown Revitalization

School Board Approves High School Facility Attributes to Growth, Increased Tax Revenues
AN OPPORTUNITY ........

AND A CHALLENGE
POTENTIAL INFLUX OF LATINO WORKERS
WORRIES

• Native population overwhelmingly white
• Ethnic diversity almost non-existent
• People don’t want change

• Concerns
  • Crime?
  • Schools?
  • Medical and Social Services?
  • Taxpayers?
CULTURAL CLIMATE FED BY.....

- Misinformation
- Fear
- Distrust
- Prejudice
THE CHALLENGE IF WE WANT TO SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITIES
OPENING HEARTS AND MINDS TO CULTURAL CHANGE IN RURAL NORTHEAST ARKANSAS
MULTI-FACETED APPROACH

• Raise community awareness
• Create open, welcoming environment
• Replace fear with knowledge
• Replace prejudice and stereotyping with truth, understanding, acceptance
1. To Engage the Mind

*Immigration in Arkansas: Let’s Look at the Facts*

2. To Engage the Heart

*Community Reading and Discussion Groups*

3. To Effect Cultural Change

*Community Conversations*
Despite the fact that immigrants make up a small share of the total Arkansas population currently, they make up significant shares of workers in major industries such as manufacturing, construction, and agriculture, where they contribute to the state’s economic competitiveness and tax base.
Arkansas, like other states, is facing an aging native-born population; immigration can rejuvenate the state’s population and support future workforce growth.
In 2010, the state received $7 in immigrant business revenue and tax contributions for every $1 it spent on services to immigrant households — K–12 education, health-care, and corrections.
POCAHONTAS READS………

(O R BRTC READS…..)

(O R HOXIE JR. HIGH READS..)

(O R WILLIAMS BAPTIST COLLEGE READS…)

(O R WALNUT RIDGE HIGH SCHOOL READS…)
ENRIQUE’S JOURNEY

• Based on L. A. Times Pulitzer Prize-winning series
• Classic book used in classrooms and communities
• Honduran boy looking for his mother
• Frank and honest discussion: the immigrant experience
• Will include website, social media presence
COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

• Identify actions each community might take to shape a future all can share

• Broaden conversation to other groups

• Seek opportunities to bring non-native speakers to community

• Move from awareness to action
Goal of project

To replace fear with knowledge and to replace prejudice and stereotyping with truth, understanding and acceptance
“OPENING HEARTS AND MINDS TO CULTURAL CHANGE IN RURAL NORTHEAST ARKANSAS”

• Provides community development individually and collectively

• Uses traditional methods

• Low-tech but high touch approach is fresh and unique

• Is easily replicable and adaptable for use in other communities
We need this project

We will be better, stronger communities if we open hearts and minds.