

OCBI – Recommendations from the Southeastern Regional Focus Group

STRATEGIES FOR STRENGTHENING BLACK COMMUNITY
IN SOUTHEASTERN IOWA

PREFACE

According to the 2006 estimate, the percentage of the population in the state of Iowa identifying themselves as African American is 2.5%. This is a growth up from 2.1% since the 2000 census. Stereotypically, Iowa is deemed a White state; however as unlikely as it may seem the state can boast a rich history of racial acceptance when you consider historical facts such as the town of Buxton once described as the “Black man’s utopia in Iowa and the University of Iowa’s accepting for admission a young George Washington Carver, when such acceptance was in the very least atypical. The same is true for the Southeastern region of the state. Burlington, in particular is the home of the First Congregational Church, a stop on the Underground Railroad and Grace Morris Allen Jones who founded the one of the first industrial schools for African Americans in the region. Other southeast Iowa communities such as Keokuk, was home to abolitionist Charlotta Pyles and Mt. Pleasant, the home of the Anti-Slavery Friends. The region has indeed proven itself ahead of the times in the area of racial acceptance and harmony.

However, while true that acceptance of a racially diverse population is indicative of a statewide attitude more accepting of physiological differences, that acceptance does not necessarily translate to equal opportunity amongst the racially diverse citizenry of the state. Those citizens who identify themselves as African-Americans have historically been underrepresented and underserved in such areas as education, affordable and desirable housing, business opportunities, and adequate healthcare. Just as having bad fruit spoils the entire basket, such does the disenfranchisement of a population has a negative effect of the prosperity of the state as a whole. This document serves as an assessment of the currently situation in the Southeastern region of the state with regards to the needs of African Americans in the community in an effort to identify actions necessary to minimize if not eliminate opportunistic imbalances base on race, thus providing an overall benefit to the region and the state.

While, this document is intended to identify the needs of the southeast region in its entirety, much of the data included herein is specific to Burlington, Iowa as many of our focus group volunteers represent organizations and groups situated in the city of Burlington.

In putting together this group of community volunteer, we wide range of ages, backgrounds socio-economic and regional living backgrounds, religions and yes—race. The makeup of our group included clergy, engineers, educators, entrepreneurs, business persons, community activists and retirees – All residents of the southeast Iowa region and all deeply committed to the growth of the region, the betterment of its citizens, and correctly the imbalances prevalent to the prosperity of the African-American community rooted in the ongoing and residual effects of institutional slavery and racism. I as coordinator have left the group to pursue career opportunities in the state of Texas. The group, however, has pledged to move forward in their efforts under the leadership of Nicole Williams and continue their pursuit of the goals identified in the OCBI for the region.

INTRODUCTION

Following introduction of the OCBI concept by Rev. Funchess in October 2007, members of the OCBI – Southeast Region first met at the Burlington City Hall – City Council Chambers on 20 November 2007. The event, slated as a town hall meeting was an open invitation to the community leadership and elected officials in the Burlington, West Burlington, Ft. Madison, Keokuk, and Mt. Pleasant areas. There were 22 Individuals in attendance including area Clergy, representatives from the Human Rights Commission, local business owners, Physicians and Health advocacy professionals, School administrators, students, and concerned citizens.

The group continued to meet through June 2008 during which time several issues were brought to the table. Specifically, (1) the need for community-based tutoring of the area's minority students in an effort to decrease disparities in education; (2) the development of a student to student mentorship program to increase self-esteem and encourage stewardship in our youth; (3) the development of a parental advocacy program to represent and provide assistance to parents and students in the schools with disciplinary and academic issues; (4) Encourage civic responsibility and activity by Blacks encouraging them to attend school board and City Council meetings; (5) the problem of disjointedness in the Black community and the need for unity and (6) the development of programs to encourage and aid the growth of Black-owned businesses in the area. Another issue discussed consistently was that surrounding healthcare disparities.

After careful consideration, it was decided that our initial focus would center on education & youth (advocacy, mentoring, tutoring). Secondary to the above-named focus would be Economic Development (career training, cooperative economics, and partnerships with area businesses, and home ownership). The third focus area would be Housing (encouraging home ownership and the development of suitable rentals). Finally and not in the least Health care, recognizing that African Americans disproportionately suffer from preventable disease and that our mortality rate manageable illness.

This document will focus heavily on reconditioning our children and encouraging parental involvement as a means for encouraging prosperity in the community; reprioritizing our community resources to establishing networks, support systems, and resources to enable and encourage the African American community to become self-sustaining in their interaction with other populations and societal integration.

THE POPULATION

EDUCATION

Overall Attainment (Burlington)

The chart below identifies both the current and projected high school and college graduation rates for the area. While the high school rates seem acceptable, the college graduation rate for current residents of the region are well below both the national average of 31%¹ and state average of 41% (20% for African Americans)².

	2006	2011 (Projected)
High School Diploma or Higher	24,714 (89.70%)	24,631 (92.12%)
Bachelor degree or Higher	5,037 (18.28%)	5,389 (20.15%)

Data Source: U.S. Census and Applied Geographic Solutions, Inc.

Nationally, in 2006” the college graduation rate for black women rose by one percentage point to 47 percent.” While the rate for black men was 36% and whites was 63%.

WORKFORCE*

A recent labor study conducted by Iowa Workforce Development revealed that the Greater Burlington boasts a labor force of nearly 111,000. In addition, the 2006 study revealed some interesting findings regarding the area's underemployed:

- 1,390 individuals were underemployed, 35% of which had some post high school education
- The average wage necessary to attract the upper 66-75% of qualified wage application is \$9.86-10.00/hr. The median for the lowest wage was \$8.00/hr.
- Most are willing to commute up to 25 miles one way for the right opportunity
- 90% were interested in seasonal and 75% were interested in temporary positions
- 45% would consider varied shifts

Greater Burlington Labor Study - Executive Summary*

¹ www.censusscope.org

² www2.edtrust.org, 2006 State Summary Report

RACE

The recommendations contained herein are based on an assessment of certain municipalities located in the southeastern region of the state in Des Moines, Henry, Louisa, and Lee Counties; particularly the cities of Burlington, West Burlington, Fort Madison, New London, Danville, Mediapolis, Keokuk and Mt. Pleasant. As previously stated, much of the focus centers around data derived from Burlington as Burlington is home to many of the focus group participants. Population data is listed below for each of the referenced municipalities with Burlington and Keokuk having the largest African American population.

TOWN	TOTAL POPULATION	% AFRICAN AMERICANS
Burlington	25464	5.9
New London	1937	0.5
Danville	914	0.2
Keokuk	11427	5.1
Ft. Madison	10715	3.3
West Burlington	3161	2.9
Mt. Pleasant	8751	3.7
Mediapolis	1644	0.2

Additionally, the next census is scheduled for 2010. It is the focus group's belief that this data will show a significant change (increase) in the African American population due to employer recruiting efforts from nearby states.

EMPLOYERS (from www.growburlington.com)

Over 1,000 Employees

Great River Medical Center

500-1,000 Employees

American Ordnance LLC

(Iowa Army Ammunition Plant)

CNH (Case Corporation)

Federal Mogul (Champion Spark Plug)

General Electric

Vista Bakery, Inc.

Diamond Vogel Paint Company

Flint Cliffs Manufacturing Company

Modern Welding Company, Inc.

500-1,000 Employees (con't)

PPG Industries, Inc.

Precision Resistive Products (PRP)

Sterzing Food Company

200-500 Employees

Lamont Limited

U.S. Gypsum

Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.

Winegard Company

100-200 Employees

Aldi, Inc.

Burlington Basket Company

Dresser-Rand, Steam Turbine Business Unit

The Hawk Eye

Hawkeye Group

IPC Incorporated

Under 100 Employees

Alfagomma America

Antennacraft Company

Borghi, USA

COBO International

Tyson Foods – Although not located in either of the identified focus municipalities, Tyson Foods in nearby Columbus Junction, Iowa (Louisa County) has significantly influenced the demographic of the region with recruiting efforts from the Chicago area of African American production employees.

POVERTY

Even with high profile employers such as Tyson Foods and CNH Case, the economy in the region remains dependent on the service industry, hence the largest employers being the area medical centers. Many of the available jobs in the area are either at or slightly above the state established minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour.

The regional commerce commission has publicly expressed a redefined focus to woo more technologically based industry to the area. However, until the fruits of their efforts are realized the area remains an impoverished region with the per capita income of most areas in 1999 well below the Iowa State per capita income of \$19674.

COUNTY	% BELOW POVERTY LEVEL
Des Moines	10.7
Lee	7.1
Henry	6.7

Additionally, the next census is scheduled for 2010. It is the focus group’s belief that this data will show a significant change (increase) in the African American population due to employer recruiting efforts from nearby states.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND
ENTREPRENUERSHIP**

PURPOSE

The Economic Development Focus Group serves a dual purpose; (1) to provide a platform and resources to educate and support black enterprises so that current and future business owners can find success in Southeastern Iowa’s economic market place and (2) to develop and identify competent resources for training and education that job seekers may pursue and secure living-wage employment allowing for a more enjoyable quality of life.

MISSION:

Our mission is to provide a network of support for established, newly formed and prospective area businesses to enhance the skills and education needed to succeed in the business world for owners while assisting those without entrepreneurial aspirations to develop and promote skills to assist them in obtaining and maintaining gainful employment.

VALUE:

A consequence of improving the economy of the African American community is that the overall economic condition of the region and eventually the state improves. We expand our economic base beyond the enterprises which currently exist. Our efforts will serve to promote of a variety of entrepreneurial efforts that regardless of the product or service being offered allows us to encourage each other to become financially responsible and more accountable for our own prosperity individually and as a whole.

VISION:

1. To create connections between resources and those who have desires and dreams.
2. To create role models for future dreamers.
3. To promote enterprises owned and operated by African Americans.
4. To support economic development in the local community.

IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

The OCBI Southeast Economic Development Focus Group has evaluated the Although there are a small number of Black owned businesses in the area, there remains a larger number of business failures and greater still, many would-be entrepreneurs who for a variety of reasons never branch out to start their own businesses in this community. The Greater Burlington Partnership (Chamber of Commerce) has a membership of 622 area businesses. Combined the populations of the targeted communities is 64013, 3.8% of whom identify themselves as African-American (5% in the city of Burlington). Of the Chamber’s 622 business members, less than 2% are minority owned. While we realize that the Black population in the region (based on the 2000 census) is small and not every area business will seek membership in the Chamber of Commerce, we also recognize that the year 2010 census will likely look drastically different that than in 2000 and the Partnership as a respected measure of the state of business development for the region. That being said, our immediate goal is to increase Chamber membership by Black-owned business to 4%.

We’ve identified two specific categories for which challenges to the economic stability of African American families in the Southeast Iowa region can be divided, namely (1) resources and (2)commitment .

The chart below identifies the various components which fall beneath the umbrellas of Resource, Commitment and Support which have proven detrimental to the opportunity for Black Business startups in our communities.

RESOURCES	COMMITMENT
Stagnant Economy – The area economy is heavily dependent on manufacturing and retail. State government assistance is needed to support local efforts to redefine the region’s industrial base.	Education/Information – African Americans must proactively seek out the appropriate sources, financial and organizational support.
Education/Information – Financial/Business – more opportunities	Networking – Potential entrepreneurs should seek out successful business men

for free or low cost business-related training such as bookkeeping, tax preparation, incorporation, etc.	and women in the community as mentors. Should also actively seek out investors willing to provide support for the venture.
Education/Information – Increased and focused career training, scholarship, internship opportunities should be targeted towards the African American population.	Fear of Failure – Potential entrepreneurs should persevere in their efforts and not be discouraged by temporary setbacks.
Networking – A cooperative network which includes successful African-American business men and women is a much needed resource to ensure the success of potential entrepreneurs.	Investment of Self - Reinvestment Potential entrepreneurs must be willing to sacrifice immediate gratification in light of the potential pay-off from their entrepreneurial efforts.
Credit/Capital issues – No cost or low cost credit and investment counseling is needed to assist potential entrepreneurs in working through credit/capital deficiencies. Additionally, although national buying power for the African- American community exceeded \$845 Billion in 2007 ³ , there yet remains issues of discriminatory lending practices, predatory lending, and collateral obstacles for African American’s seeking new business start-ups	Education/Information – Seeking out the appropriate sources for focused career training, scholarship, and higher education and internship opportunities.

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING

Our group has identified several strategies to correct the circumstances and eliminate the barriers to the African American economic situation as identified above. A successful strategic plan will not only provide services to the community and support to even the playing field but also encourage exploration into entrepreneurship for the region’s African American population, and serve as an impetus to self-sufficiency. This second part purpose of our strategic plan is this area is of the utmost importance as any plan which will serve as a crutch to the community will be self-defeating. In essence, our plan offers a hand-up in contrast to a hand-out.

ENTREPRENEUREAL TRAINING

The Iowa State University extension has offered scholarships for entrepreneurial training to small businesses and potential business men and women in the region. The training provided through the extension not only offers the student business basics such and terminology, types of business, etc. but also provides resources for loans and grants which

³ Black Buying Power: Showing You the Money, www.ebonyjet.com

are vital to business start-ups. The problem, however, is that only a small percentage of African-Americans in the region take advantage of or are even aware of the availability of the course.

Efforts have been made by extension office personnel to encourage participation through face to face networking, organizational participation, i.e. OCBI, etc. However, funding for increased marketing and additional scholarships would prove helpful.

SMALL BUSINESS INCUBATOR

According to the National Business Incubation Association website business incubation is a dynamic process of business enterprise development. An incubator is a business that is set up to help support and encourage business start-up and development.

Business incubators offer shared services, access to equipment, flexible leases, and expandable space. Many incubators are located near other services that are valuable to an incubating business.

Things to consider:

- Small businesses are the fastest growing segment in American commerce
- Small businesses create 98% of all new jobs.
- Over 50% of all small businesses fail in the first year, and 80% within five years

A small business incubator for the region would help prospective business owners in that often entrepreneurs know how to produce "the work," but lack the skills necessary for operating a business. Additionally, start-up costs and fixed expenses of operation are equally burdensome.

The Regional Incubator would provide office and warehouse space to new and existing businesses at competitive market rates. What we are proposing is a non-profit program established would not only give new and existing African-American service and light manufacturing businesses the training and tools to become successful to entrepreneurs but also any area business person seeking to enter the market.

The incubator would utilize existing resources, ideally an older office building in either downtown Burlington or Ft. Madison. The building either government owned or get owner to donate for tax credit.

To ensure the integrity of the Incubator and its mission, requirements will be established that limit tenancy to newly formed or expanding service industry, light manufacturer, assembler, or R&D firms with a minimum of 55% ownership by residents of the region. The industry tenants will bring new revenue into or stem the export of revenue out of the region and create new employment opportunities. Special consideration will be given to enterprises owned by women, veterans, minorities, and other disadvantaged individuals, with a recommended 15-20% set-aside.

HOUSING IN THE SOUTHEASTERN REGION

HOUSING TRENDS IN THE REGION

HOUSING OCCUPANCY

Total housing units	48,634	100.0
Occupied housing units	44,576	91.1
Vacant housing units	4,058	8.9
For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use	644	2.0
Homeowner vacancy rate (percent)	6.40	
Rental vacancy rate (percent)	36.10	

HOUSING TENURE

Occupied housing units	44,576	100.0
Owner-occupied housing units	33,315	75.0
Renter-occupied housing units	11,261	25.0
Average household size of owner-occupied unit	2.56	
Average household size of renter-occupied unit	2.24	

*<http://www.greatriverregion.com/regionalProfile.aspx>

There are a number of programs offered in the area to increase and encourage home ownership and the development and rehabilitation of affordable housing in the region, it's not clear that the availability of such programs is widespread knowledge. Programs such as the Southeast Regional Planning Commission's Project Based Housing, Community Block Grant, Mutual self Help Housing programs appear to be underutilized. We know that the Mt. Pleasant Community has received grants for the Mutual Self Help Program but it is unclear whether other communities have programs/projects on-going.

ENCOURAGING HOME OWNERSHIP

Though we offer no statistics on home ownership percentages for African Americans in the region compared to other populations, we recognize home ownership benefits the community as well as the family. A recent study found "that owning your own home has significant health and well-being benefits, especially for children. The Social Consequences of Homeownership, commissioned by the Homeownership Alliance, found four major areas of social benefits to homeowners—more stable children, more satisfied adults, increased political activity and enhanced property values."⁴ Additionally, home ownership offers stability for a community in that home owners typical stay put 12 years while renter remain on average 3 years.

⁴ <http://www.villagehomes.com/TipsTools/Tips/SocialBenefitsofHomeOwnership.asp>

Although, as previously stated, African-American buying power exceeded 800 Billion dollars in 2007, capital and credit issues remain a barrier to African American economic gains. Even when credit and employment is not an issue, issues of capital remain an obstacle to be overcome. This is particular a problem in the area of real estate and affordable housing

The demand for decent, affordable housing is high in many low-income communities such as the Southeastern Iowa Region. Not only is capital needed to acquire, construct, and rehabilitate affordable rental housing, but also to increase homeownership in the area.

Additionally efforts supporting business development and the renovation of existing commercial structures will prove beneficial in creating jobs and expanding access to goods and services in communities in which African Americans reside.

Stabilizing and strengthening economically disadvantaged African American communities will require increased efforts from local and state government to encourage home ownership and provide opportunities to for the acquisition real estate by this population. Strategies include efforts similar to those by the City of Jennings, Missouri first time home buyers program where the city financed homes for those agreeing to purchase to occupy a home in the city for five years (no longer active) or the City of Shaker Heights infill program designed to encourage the purchase and rehabilitation of city-owned residential property and land by offering reduced-rate mortgages and grants for those looking to acquire or improve upon existing structures and vacant land in the city.

<http://www.shakeronline.com/dept/revite/InfillHousingProjectsInShaker.asp>

The Claflin University Community Development Corporation in Orangeburg, SC has a four-step curriculum designed to help families with the counselor, the family develops an action plan to home ownership including credit counseling, debt reduction/counseling, budget and saving counseling, prequalification for Homebuyer Education, insurance banking services and income and employment related counseling.

The families each receive credit report counseling and are taught how to work toward establishing a good credit history to be presented to a lending institution.

Although, specifics with regards to programs structure and financial are unknown to the group at this time, a deeper look into the referenced programs or similar efforts involving both the Iowa State University Extension Program and the Southeastern Community College would be warranted.

HEALTH

HIV/AIDS – AN EPIDEMIC

With regards to healthcare in Southeast Iowa for the African-American populations, there are many items that are the same throughout the state: lack of adequate insurance, poverty, little or no preventative care, and lack of physicians that individuals trust. There is a severe lack of trust for doctors and certain types of care by African-Americans and rightly so. History has shown us that people have been taken advantage of for the “good” of medical science. These fears within the African-American communities have been passed down to generations so going to the doctor for preventative care is not a major life lesson at times.

In our area, there are a few things that are specific to our counties. For example, poverty here is some of the highest in the state and our unemployment rate is astronomical compared to other areas within Iowa. The economy in Southeast Iowa has been part of a downturn for sometime and unfortunately with that comes the loss of insurance and when the choice between healthcare and food comes up, food wins every time. Another issue is that as our towns are considered rural so there is often only one hospital to choose from that may not offer excellent care for those on Medicaid, Medicare, or without insurance. Some areas have community health centers, but individuals that attend these centers often run into the same problems they face at the hospital.

Several of the health issues that affect African-Americans are preventable and with an emphasis on preventative care and education their numbers could decrease: heart disease and HIV/AIDS being two of the most obvious. Prenatal care would be a close third.

As a community of concerned citizens in Southeast Iowa, we know that education and outreach on these issues can help and will help. However, those organizations that do much of the work are faced with budget shortfalls and their staff often works on donated time to do their jobs.

Money for outreach, education, and training of communities and doctors would be essential to improving the lives and health of African-Americans in Southeast Iowa. Also, state help in getting churches and other organizations involved would be appreciated.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA AND HIV DATA

- 2007 brought a 12% increase in HIV diagnosis over 2006. This is the highest number since reporting began in Iowa. While this increase can be the result of better testing and education in some areas, it is also the reality that we have spend many years mis-estimating the number of HIV positive individuals.
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- 74 persons are living with HIV/AIDS in Southeast Iowa as of December 31, 2006 (Iowa State Department of Health). About 46% of these are minorities, including 40 % African American.
- Data from 2005 census show that together, African American and Hispanic women represent 24% of all US women. However, women in these two groups accounted for 82% (8,807 / 10,774) of the estimated total of AIDS diagnoses for women in 2005.
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- Diagnoses among black, non-Hispanic persons continue to be markedly disproportionate to the size of the population. Blacks make up 2.5% of Iowa's population, but accounted for 20% of the new HIV diagnoses in 2007. Twenty-five blacks were diagnosed in 2007, up 32% over 2006, but down from the peak of 32 persons in 2002.
- Blacks are 10 times more likely to be diagnosed with HIV than are white, non-Hispanic persons in Iowa.
- 15% of Des Moines County families live in poverty, the sixth highest rate in Iowa
(Annie E. Casey foundation: Kids Count 2005)
- This region leads the state in the single parent families, 31.7% (Annie E. Casey Foundation: Kids Count 2005)
- Des Moines County has the third highest sexually transmitted infection rate in the state (2005 Iowa Health Fact Book).
- Des Moines county has 4.9 drug affected children per 10,000.
- In 2005 44 percent of Des Moines County eleventh graders reported consuming alcohol in the last 30 days (2005 Iowa Youth Survey Report)
- 2004 treatment admissions – Iowa is the 3rd highest rate per capita for meth treatment in the nation (US Drug Enforcement State Fact Sheet SMAHSA treatment episode data set).

BARRIERS THAT PREVENT INCREASING AWARENESS ABOUT SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND HIV/AIDS.

- Lack of information, skills and knowledge regarding HIV/AIDS for young adults while half of all new HIV infections occur among children and young people under the age of 25.
- Lack of information on the relationship of substance abuse and the increased risk of HIV/AIDS in men and women.

- **View HIV/AIDS as homosexual problem**, therefore not recognizing the impact of the disease on the general population and not appropriately addressing other risky behaviors.
- **Poverty and lack of insurance** among the working poor decreases the likelihood that they are receiving preventative health care and appropriate, early screening for sexually transmitted infections and HIV. Southeast Iowa's counties have some of the highest unemployment rates with Lee County ranking 99th out of 99 counties (Kids Count Data 2006, Annie E Casey Foundation)
- **Single and broken families** decrease the likelihood that there is the important input of family values to postpone sex and prevent other risky behaviors.
- **Single parent families** also increase the likelihood that children are left unattended for out-of-school hours and may be at risk for engaging in risky behavior.
- **The proximity of Southeast Iowa lends itself to be an area that is attractive to gang activity and drug traffickers with two major highways that intersect in the Burlington community.** There are four prison/correctional facilities within 30 miles, and the community is located within three hours of four metropolitan areas. In fact, while Des Moines County is the 12th largest county in the state, it was the seventh largest contributor to the Iowa Prison system in 2005.
- **Main reasons why HIV is spreading into the African American communities and young adults:**
 1. Lack of communication skills including refusal skills and discussions of safe sex.
 2. Lack of understanding of HIV, STDs, and causes of pregnancy.
 3. Lack of understanding risk behaviors that can increase one's risk for becoming infected with HIV and/or other STDs.
 4. Lack of belief that they can say "No", and control their choices with regards to safer sex or abstinence.
- **Money.** Money is needed so that family planning organizations that specialize in HIV outreach and education in this area can start needed programs, go out on the street and do Rapid HIV tests. Money is stretched as far as it can go right now. Planned Parenthood of Southeast Iowa educators donate their time to do outreach into higher risk communities for a variety of topics, but imagine what we could do with a grant specific to this type of education and outreach.

- **Lack of involvement by churches and prison systems.** Unfortunately, when it comes to HIV care there is little involvement by the African American Churches in our area. A large reason for this is stigma of HIV only being a gay disease and the stigma of the GLBTQ lifestyles within the church. With regards to the prison system, it is lack of money for care and unsure of where to go to train staff and other members of the system.
- **Acceptance of drug and especially alcohol abuse in the community.** The acceptance of drinking and partying and then hooking up as a way to commune with friends needs to be changed to drinking responsibly and looking at drug use in the community.

OUTREACH/WAYS TO HELP CURB THE CRISIS

- **Taking education and awareness activities to the target area.** Informational materials and presenters will be brought together to form a "traveling health fair" and educational speaker's panel. The information must be brought to where the people are living, working, and hanging out.
- **Outreach to stores/churches/bars/etc.** Outreach to areas that African-Americans hang out, by clothes, meet for dinner, etc. This needs to be a hard core outreach. This includes classes at churches, house parties, etc. It works hand in hand with the first bullet point of getting the education and awareness to the community.
- **Outreach to the African-American community about trustworthy health services.** A list of doctors, family planning clinics, etc needs to be created and circulated in the communities of trustworthy, respectful, and understanding health care providers. Many in the African-American community do not trust doctors, rightfully so from history, and those feelings are often passed onto younger generations. It is important to show that there are good and trustworthy health service providers out in the communities.
- **Money.** Money is needed so that family planning organizations that specialize in HIV outreach and education in this area can start needed programs, go out on the street and do Rapid HIV tests. Money is stretched as far as it can go right now. Planned Parenthood of Southeast Iowa educators donate their time to do outreach into higher risk communities for a variety of topics, but imagine what we could do with a grant specific to this type of education and outreach.
- **Alcohol and Drug Outreach.** Work needs to be done with groups to reach out more to the African-American populations with regards to drugs and alcohol. There are programs specific to this population that need to be instituted.

In summary, our group's recommendation is that not only is funding needed for testing and for education the general public regarding this epidemic and other preventable or manageable illnesses; financial and staffing resources are needed to establish community-

wide network of both for profit and nfp service providers for substance abuse intervention, family planning and disease prevention and intervention. This cooperative network would join together to combat this epidemic heads on. Initially, however, efforts would need to focus on gaining buy-in from non-healthcare entities such as religious groups to communicate the fact that the face of HIV is not as many would believe and that to remain silent or to dismiss the problem as an issue of morality is to aid in the proliferation of this virus and its devastating impact in the African American community.

YOUTH AND EDUCATION

The region's Youth and education committee consisted of many Burlington Community School District personnel and concerned community members. The group's report consists of goals and objectives specifically for the school district as well as community lead efforts.

VISION

The Iowa Commission of the Status of African-Americans exists to promote the interests of African-Americans in the state of Iowa and in doing so, fosters the well being of the State's entire citizenry.

MISSION

Our mission is to provide an educational setting where children of color and/or poverty will succeed academically, socially, and behaviorally.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Educational and Youth Focus Groups is to eliminate the barriers preventing children of color and/or poverty from fully accessing educational services.

VALUE

The basic needs of all families of color and/or poverty are met. This will enhance the academic attainment of these individuals which will lead to a better quality of life for all citizens.

THE DATA

- The Burlington Community School District's graduation rate is 79% versus an average of 90.78% for the state⁵. Statistically, for the state there is an 83% high school

⁵ <http://www.iowaschoolprofiles.com/profileschart.asp?t=d&f1=3&s0=08820000>

graduation rate for White Students, a 54% rate for African Americans, and a 48% rate for Hispanics.

- The average daily attendance rate for the entire district is 93.28%.
- At the beginning of the 2007-08 school years, 30 of the 315 children who entered kindergarten had no preschool experience. That accounted for 9.5% of the kindergarten students.

Academically, there exists a discrepancy between white and African-American student achievement. Proficiency in the state of Iowa, as determined in response to No Child Left Behind legislation, is to score at the 41% or above on Iowa Tests of Basic Skills or Iowa Tests of Educational Development. While 75.98% of white students at BHS were proficient, 50.68% of African-American students were proficient. For third through eighth grade students, 78.24% of white students were proficient, compared to 48.47% of African-American students who were proficient.

Also of concern academically is the disproportionate number of African-American students identified for special education services. Eighteen percent of the BCSD population is identified to receive special education services. While white students make up 80% of the total BCSD population, they account for 76% of the population identified as receiving special education services. African-American students make up 15% of the total BCSD population, but 20% of the population identified as receiving special education services.

Although an accurate count of students involved in extracurricular activities, such as sports, clubs, and musical groups, as well as the percent of African-American students in those activities is not available, from a visual standpoint it is obvious that a small percent of African-American students are involved.

Other facts that contribute to the problem of African-Americans not fully accessing educational services include the fact that educators need to be informed about the urgency to address the disproportionate number of children of color and /or poverty who are not achieving in the school district. There exists a lack of cultural competence among the employees of the school district.

Parents within the district are struggling to provide for basic needs for their families. Data from the BCSD's food service indicates that 54.57% of the district's students qualify for free/reduced lunch. Students who live within the boundaries for the school building they attend and cannot be transported per state law, and have geographical or physical impediments to getting to school, cannot rely on their family transporting them to school due to no vehicle, an unreliable vehicle or insufficient funds for gas. As a result, the students are absent from school.

It appears that there is a lack of trust by many African-American families of school personnel. This fact translates into decreased involvement by parents in their children's education. Fewer parents attend parent-teacher conferences and special education IEP meetings.

AVAILABILITY OF RESOURCES

The BCSD is blessed with many wonderful resources to assist with the district's vision of "supporting all students in their quest for lifelong learning."

Some of these resources within the district include: an Early Intervention Counselor serving the five elementary schools, an at-risk counselor for the high school, a truancy officer, and a Freshman Focus teacher at BHS to assist freshman who are failing a class. The district won a grant for the State Voluntary Four-Year-Old Preschool. The district qualifies for the Summer Food Service Program and is able to provide free breakfast and lunch for children at one of the schools in the district for approximately six weeks during the summer.

The schools are served by a number of community counseling groups, including Young House, and Rescare. The district is represented on and supported by the Ongoing Covenant with Black Iowans. The high school has a resource office from the Burlington Police Department who is on campus each school day. The Des Moines County Attorney is involved with the district in the effort to decrease truancy, and works with the district to mediate and/or prosecute truancy concerns. Individual buildings within the district have a business partner. The Burlington Public Library has computer access and services available to all members of the community. The Burlington Youth Development Coalition, a coalition of service agencies and organizations, is working with the district to increase the graduation rate.

STRATEGIC PLAN AND ACTION STEPS

1. The BCSC will reduce barriers to attendance for students who live within the state prescribed attendance area but do not have dependable transportation.
 - a. Action Step: Purchase a monthly bus pass @ \$18.00/month for nine months for each affected student.
2. The BCSC will provide free preschool for all Burlington four year old students.
 - a. Action Step: Add a preschool program at Black Hawk, in addition to preschool programs at Messiah Lutheran and Great River Child Care.
 - b. Action Step: Circulate flyers to sites around the city to advertise the program in addition to information in the newspaper to insure that all parents of four-year-olds are aware of the program.
3. The BCSC will provide professional development and training to the BCSD administrators and teacher leaders in each building, and to department supervisors, so they are able to provide professional development to their employees that will result in an increase in cultural competence and in an increase in the use of culturally responsive teaching strategies.
 - a. Action Step: Send designated employees to trainings on cultural competence and culturally responsive teaching.
 - b. Action Step: Designated employees will train administrators, supervisors, and teacher leaders so they can provide training within their building or employee group.

- c. Action Step: Using the BCSD internal weekly newsletter, provide tips to improve cultural competence and culturally responsive teaching strategies.
4. Each teacher will make three phone calls per week to parents of students in their class to develop a trusting relationship.
 - a. Action Step: Each teacher will provide a log of the phone calls made on a monthly basis.
5. Each school building will form a committee to investigate the factors which cause parents to avoid parent-teacher conferences and determine a solution(s) to increase attendance at conferences.
 - a. Action Step: Set up conferences at neighborhood sites, such as Greenway, Maple Hills apartments, etc. in addition to conferences in the school building.
 - b. Action Step: Acquire door prizes to encourage parents to attend.
6. The BCSC will work with each building's secretary or office clerk to change the focus of the phone calls, made to the home when a student is absent.
 - a. Action Step: Secretaries and office clerks will be taught a script in which they will indicate that the school is missing the child, what the child is missing that day since the child is not at school, and if there is anything the school can do to help get the child to school.
7. The BCSC will hire additional personnel to be a liaison with parents to help them meet basic needs for their families so education can become a priority.
 - a. Action Step: A home/school liaison will be hired to assist parents in connecting with services within the community, such as medical services that accept Title XIX, prescription payment, etc.
8. The BCSD will provide free breakfast and lunch the entire summer in two sites within the district.
 - a. Action Step: Transportation will be provided by a service in the community to pick up students for both breakfast and lunch, transport them to the Summer Food Service Program site, and return them to home.
9. The BCSC will reenergize the extracurricular activities to increase participation of African-American students.
 - a. Action Step: Provide information to each student (grades 8 – 11) on a DVD about Burlington High School's academic and extracurricular programs.
 - b. Action Step: Provide sessions for the faculty sponsor of extracurricular activities and sports on acquisitions and retention of members.
10. The district will set up educational booths at community events to make parents aware of programs that are available which will assist their family.
 - a. Action Step: Set up an educational booth at Steamboat Days, Community Action activities, Juneteenth events, etc.
11. The BCSD will provide teachers at the Burlington Public Library during hours in the evening for parents and students to access assistance.
 - a. Action Step: Train interested teachers in what to do as a resource at the library.
 - b. Action Step: Pay teachers to be a resource at the Library in the evening.

12. A community resource team, including the service agencies and organizations in the Burlington Youth Development Coalition, will be operationalized to discuss individual student needs.
 - a. Action Step: Determine a list of standing members who will be contacted for each meeting.
 - b. Action Step: Determine a weekly day, time, and place for the resource team to meet.
 - c. Action Step: Each building principal will determine a student(s) who is at-risk and whose family is in need of community support to be part of a brainstorming session to look at services available to assist them.

FINANCIAL NEEDS

In order to achieve the Action Plan, the following items will need to be funded:

1. Hiring of a liaison to work with parents (\$15.00/hour for 40 hour work week) - \$24,000.00
2. Funds to hire teachers to be present at the BPL and to be present at an educational booth at community (\$20.00/hour for 2 hours 4 nights per week; \$20.00/hour for 2 hours at events) - \$6,160.00
3. Funds for bussing the students to the Summer Food Service Program (57 days x \$17.49/hr. for 4 hrs. x \$.90/mile for 40 miles)- \$6,039.72
4. Funds for bus tokens for students who live within the prescribed attendance area, but who have various geographical or physical barriers and no viable access to transportation - \$4,050.00
5. Funds to purchase door prizes, such as gift certificates for discount stores, grocery stores, child care, etc. - \$2000.00

Community related objectives for this focus area related to academics as well as the social and moral development of the community's youth. However, the group also determined that it would counter-productive to "reinvent the wheel" will regards to addressing the most urgent needs in the area which are (1) the need for community-based tutoring of the area's minority students in an effort to decrease disparities in education; (2) the development of a student to student mentorship program to increase self-esteem and encourage stewardship in our youth; (3) the development of a parental advocacy program to represent and provide assistance to parents and students in the schools with disciplinary and academic issues.

Programs currently existing in Burlington include:

Burlington School's H.E.R.O. Program (Linda Brockway)
 Burlington School's DECA Program (Linda Brockway)
 Union Baptist Church's Tutoring Program
 Project B-SMART's Go Girl Go Program
 The YMCA – Youth Programs (Contact Kara Jamison)

The OCBI-GB will support and promote the existing programs at the Burlington Schools, Project B-SMART and the YMCA in an effort to minimize the ground work required to

establish such programs, take advantage of proven methods. While the focus of these programs is all children and not just the African-American children, participation will definitely benefit the overall objectives of the OCBI-GB.

The OCBI-GB will present a stand of solidarity and community unification through its support of the Union Baptist Church's tutoring program. It is our hope that by actively and openly supporting/promoting the Union Baptist program, we will not only help to improve the grades of our students, but also deter much of the community-based negativity and divisiveness that has proven fatal to similar programs started in the past.

Although there are several YMCA facilities in the area and Burlington has the J Street Youth Center and Rec Plex, the group has determined that there is a definite need for a full service youth center such as St. Louis, Missouri's Mathews Dickey's Boys and Girls Club or the \$5.8 million Jackie Joyner Kersee center in East St. Louis Illinois which will provide area youth with **computer rooms, learning resource center, music room**, and also areas for athletic activities such as **weight lifting, dance and martial arts**. The center should also have **gymnasium** which will allow children to participate in team sports activities and an art center akin to the Waterloo Youth Pavilion. The difference between the proposed center and currently existing facilities is (1) the center would be full service offering academic, physical fitness, social and creativity enrichment programs. (2) membership would be offered for a nominal annual fee such as the \$12 per year charged by the Kersee center.

While a facility in the region would naturally be scaled down to reflect the area's population, the construction of the new establishment would be made possible by funds raised from of local residents, area businesses, professional athletes, and state/local politicians.

CONCLUSION

While issues addressed in this report were assessed separately and require very specific and differing resources and actions as they relate to the needs of the African American Community, we the members of the Southeastern regions OCBI focus group recognize that consistent with the OCBI nuclear illustration, each of the focus areas are inter-related. In essence, they represent a basic foundation for the building of the solid structure which if the goals of the OCBI are realized, represents the strong African American community.

We also realize that the building of a strong African American community or the prosperity of any segment of our Iowa population will result in the strengthening of the overall community...a strong Black Iowa equals a strong Iowa.

Policymakers and community leaders offer a wealth of ideas and have developed grass-roots initiatives to enhance the social, economic, and physical conditions of African American children and families in the Region. Such initiatives involve various policies and programs, from workforce development, after-school tutoring and mentorship programs, child education advocates, entrepreneurial development, and credit and home-purchasing programs. In that same vein, there is growing recognition of the need for ownership by the affected populations in processes that impact communities. Active participation in the form of Community advisory committees will influence the attitudes (buy-in) of those we are seeking to support and thereby increase the likelihood of success.

Additionally, the concrete visualization of success will greatly impact the development of our children and pave positive pathways to adulthood. In essence, it's not enough for us to tell our children what they can achieve; we have to show them through our own successes.

Initiatives to revitalize neighborhoods and make them better and safer places for families to live and raise their children may often differ in scale, scope and design but developing and sustaining these efforts requires similar investments of not only, money but dedication and time.

Oftentimes as community development leaders, we focus only on the availability of public and private grant funds for financing community development, however we must not ignore the social and overall value in the guidance provided in the form of networking, team-building and mentoring.

Like many impoverished communities, the Southeast Iowa region has its share substance abuse problems, and in recent years an upsurge in crime, teen violence, and pregnancy. Many of the region's problems are exacerbated by its rural isolation and failure of its leaders to proactively seek cultural competency necessary to relate to a transforming demographic.

It is our hope that our legislators, educators and leaders will consider our findings as they consider the allocation of funding, make considerations regarding the building of infrastructure, focused on development efforts and other resources for the next few years.

RECOMMENDATIONS MATRIX WITH ASSOCIATED FUNDING AND SOURCES DEFINED

FOCUS AREA	RECOMMENDATION & FORCASTED OUTCOMES	FUNDING /EFFORT SOURCE
ALL	Community Development Grant Writer/Consultant to develop 5 year strategic and seek out financial resources.	Local, State, Federal Govt, Private Industry, Chamber of Commerce and Grants.
YOUTH/ EDUCATION	Full Service Community Center offering services similar to that offered by the Jackie Joyner Kersee Center, East St. Louis, IL	Local Citizens, Local, State, Federal Govt, Private Industry and Grants.
YOUTH/ EDUCATION	Truancy Committee – Follow-up and increase communication with parents regarding school attendance and brainstorm causation.	BCSD
YOUTH/ EDUCATION	Satellite Conference and Consultation sites for Parents and Students	BCSD, State, Federal and Local Govt
YOUTH/ EDUCATION	Summer Food Program	State, Federal, Local govt, private industry
YOUTH/ EDUCATION	Public Service Announcements and increased efforts to encourage participation in extracurricular activities	State, Federal, Local govt, private industry, and local media
YOUTH/ EDUCATION	Cultural Sensitivity Training for Educators	BCSD, State, federal and local govt
YOUTH/ EDUCATION	Increased pre-school classes in the district	BCSD, State, federal and local govt
YOUTH/ EDUCATION	Adding Cultural sensitivity information to school newsletter	BCSD
YOUTH/ EDUCATION	Full service community center	Religious and community organizations, NFP and FP health providers, managed care,

FOCUS AREA	RECOMMENDATION & FORCASTED OUTCOMES	FUNDING /EFFORT SOURCE
		Southeast Regional Planning Commission , Community Development Block Grant, organizations, Federal, State and local Govt, private industry, grants
YOUTH/ EDUCATION	Transportation Assistance	BCSD, State, federal and local govt
BUSINESS/ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	Small Business Incubator	State, Federal, Local govt, Chamber of Commerce and private grants, Southeast Regional Planning Commission
BUSINESS/ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	Entrepreneurship training	State, Federal, Local govt, Iowa State University extension, Southeastern Community College, private industry, Chamber of Commerce, Southeast Regional Planning Commission
HOUSING	Homebuyers Institute – Includes similar to Claflin University	Lending institutions, State, Federal, Local govt, Iowa State University extension,

FOCUS AREA	RECOMMENDATION & FORCASTED OUTCOMES	FUNDING /EFFORT SOURCE
		Southeastern Community College, private industry, Local Realtors Southern Iowa Home Ownership Program, Iowa Home Ownership education project, Southeast Regional Planning Commission
HOUSING	Home ownership in-fill program – see also HUD’s teacher/officer next door program	Lending institutions, State, Federal (HUD), Local govt, Iowa State University extension, Southeastern Community College, private industry, Local Realtors
HEALTH	Increased funding for disease prevention and outreach services.	Federal, state, local govt, managed care organizations
HEALTH	Increased visibility for disease prevention concerns	Religious and community organizations, NFP and FP health providers, managed care organizations, Federal, State and local Govt
HEALTH	Funding for increased visibility for disease prevention concerns,	FP health providers,

FOCUS AREA	RECOMMENDATION & FORCASTED OUTCOMES	FUNDING /EFFORT SOURCE
	public service announcements and testing.	managed care organizations, Federal, State and local Govt, local media