

## WHY COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS?

To better serve, we must be willing to build relationships, identify key issues, set realistic goals and take action.

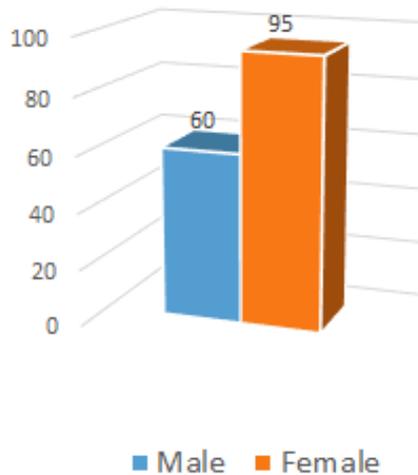
United Way of DeKalb County partnered with other DeKalb County organizations and businesses to host Community Conversations. These conversations were geared towards reaching out to the public to better understand the community's goals and aspirations. During these conversations, community members were able to express concerns, share successes and have open discussions on how to create more community impact. United Way of DeKalb County Board, Staff and Volunteers would like to thank all who attended and participated in these conversations. You truly have helped make a difference in your community!

**United Way strives to do better, to make our community better and to strengthen the lives of all.**

Beginning in June 2019, we started our Community Conversations with United Way partner agencies. During those initial conversations, we had the opportunity to share how Community Conversations would not only help shape the future of United Way but also strengthen partnerships and communication within DeKalb County. As planning continued, it was our goal to make sure that all areas of the county were diversely represented in sharing their community visions. We reached out to several small community groups, business leaders and their employees as well as other Non-Profit organizations. We utilized the months of July and August to plan and train our committee members. Community Conversations were then held through the months of September - December. Final analysis of surveys and notes were then completed by the beginning of January for presentation to the United Way Board Members.

# THE FINAL NUMBERS

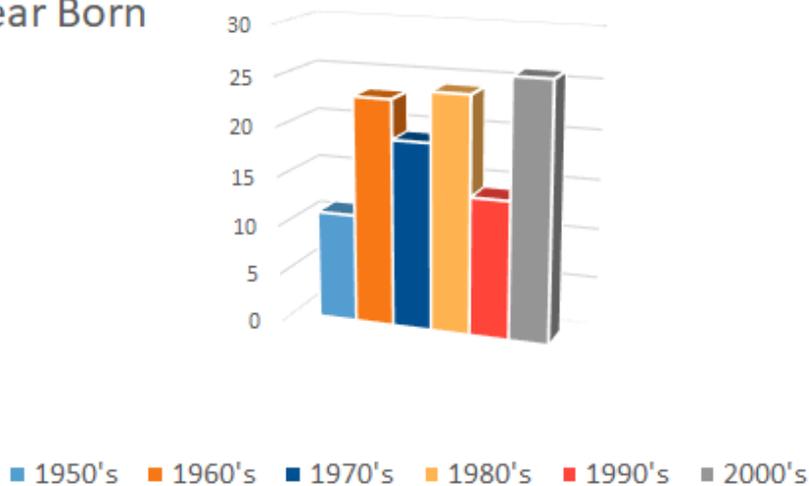
Gender



## Asking all:

- What are your goals and aspirations for your community?
- How do the issues being discussed personally affect you?
- What is stopping us from change?

Year Born



# THE FINAL NUMBERS

## Ethnicity



- American Ind/Alaskan Nat
- Black/Non Hispanic
- White/Non Hispanic
- Unknown
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Hispanic
- Other

## Including all:

Our goals and challenges do not have boundaries, all voices in DeKalb County matter.

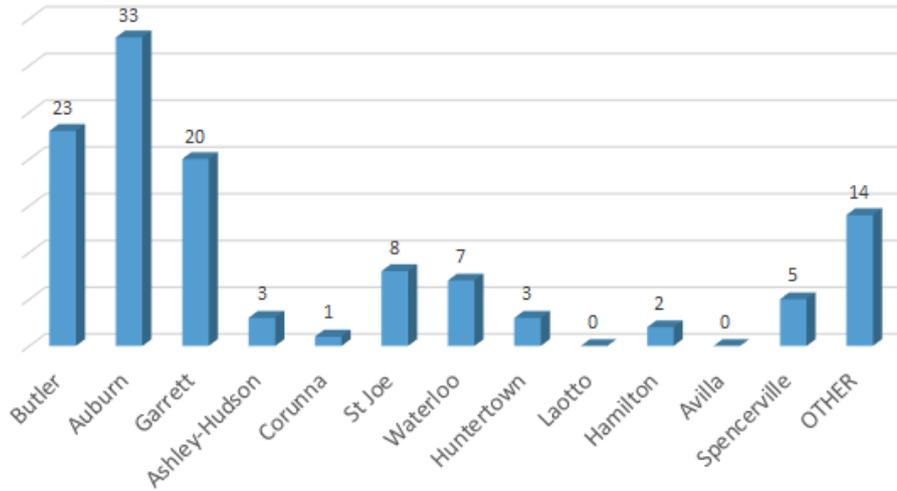
## Education



- Elem/Jr H
- Certificate
- 4 yr
- Doctorate
- HS/GED
- 2 yr
- Master/Prof Degree
- N/A

# THE FINAL NUMBERS

## Home

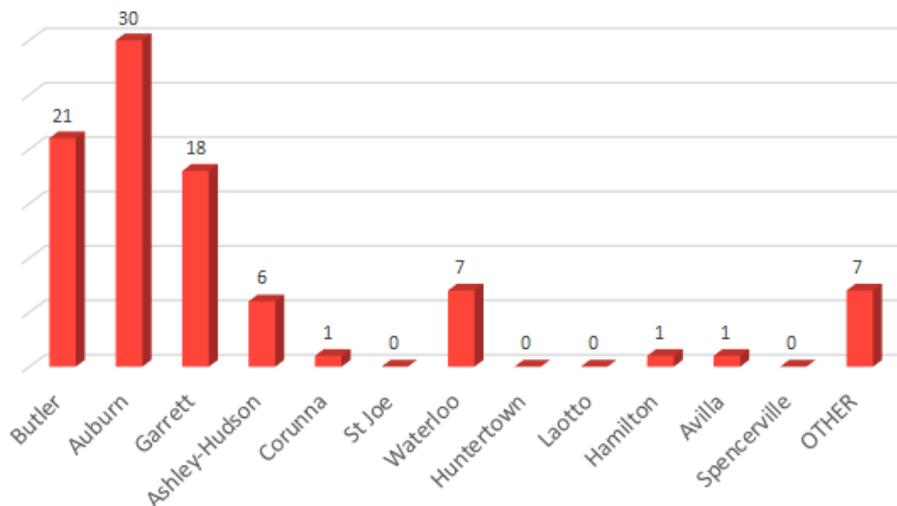


## Impacting all:

We are all better together.

We all strive for a better future for our families and our community.

## Work



# ASPIRATIONS

## COMMUNITY & FAMILY

- Safe and clean, free from drugs and violence where children can go to the park and play without worry
- Healthy neighborhoods and neighbors where people do things for one another to be kind and helpful
- Positive role models that encourage good behavior, morals and character
- Growing community with a wide range of housing opportunities for all
- One that works together to solve problems, shares resources and trusts one another
- Strong community that is emotionally, physically and spiritually healthy
- Pride in ourselves, our community and our homes
- Activities for children and teens to participate and volunteer within their own community
- More families that stay, have a permanent home.
- Neighbors who know each other, interact and look out for one another
- Keeping teens off the streets in the middle of the nights

**"I see too often that negative and unhealthy relationships seem normal and they don't know the difference."**

**"Parents need to volunteer to show their kids, they also need to teach boundaries, accountability and have expectations."**

**"Moral decline has no economic limits."**

**"You don't see kids outside playing ball anymore, you don't see kids playing around period."**

**"People use the library as a free babysitter."**

**"Kids want people to give a rip about them."**

**"It takes a village to raise a child."**

**"I don't want my kids to grow up here, I want them to see and experience other things."**

# ASPIRATIONS

## RESOURCES & PARTNERSHIPS

- Resources that are easier to find and understand what is available
- Collaborate and share resources to strengthen them, do not compete or overlap
- Affordable transportation that is easily accessible
- Encouraging parents and others to tap into the resources that are available
- More widely advertised resources
- More proactive approach to finding others who need help, more door to door to reach more people
- Better communication on what is going on and reaching the outlying areas or smaller towns
- Community or county wide calendar or one location to find out what is available or what is going on near you
- Kids who may be in trouble with the law or making bad choices are looking for safe places and people to talk to for help
- Kids want to volunteer or need volunteer hours for school and do not know where they can get involved

**"Effort...people are willing to spend all kinds of money to promote a fancy car festival but won't advertise someone or something that could help save a life."**

**"It's all about the business factor, we don't prioritize the people stuff."**

**"What would our community be like if we had more community projects?  
You would see who is at risk because you have developed a relationship."**

**"I have to go to 6 different community websites or pages to see what is going on."**

**"Taking care of our oldest and our youngest shape our community."**

**"We are working in silos, no one is working together."**

# ASPIRATIONS

## EDUCATION

- Return to educating youth on basic life skills so they are prepared as adults
- Schools that are committed to the positive life-long growth of the kids, not the most money, best technology or highest test scores
- Increased education on sex, drugs, stress, mental health and addiction without fear of community and parental backlash; real honest conversations
- More licensed childcare facilities especially on the east side of the county
- 2nd and 3rd shift workers have no choice for childcare
- Schools are based off of technology although some do not have internet/WiFi access
- Students feel like they are pushed to use technology
- More tech assistance is needed for students as well as teachers
- Teens want things to do that do not require a pricey membership like an outdoor fitness park

**"Replace the tablets with Tonka trucks."**

**"Schools are too worried about test scores and not about the students."**

**"Can't get to work if your childcare situation is not consistent or safe."**

**"I had a disabled daughter and it took me years to find someone willing to provide care."**

**"Nobody takes getting in trouble seriously, it depends on popularity and how you get in trouble."**

**"My laptop doesn't work so I go ask for help and it can take days before I get a new one or it gets fixed, then I'm behind in my homework."**

**"I want a place where you can say your opinion."**

# ASPIRATIONS

## HEALTH

- Mental Health concerns including drugs, suicide, cutting, stress and depression
- Kids are stressed over college, grades or the feeling of belonging
- Adults are struggling to make ends meet, find child care or pay their bills
- Drug abuse from self medication is occurring due to pride, affordability or stress
- Teach youth and adults appropriate coping skills for their own actions or responses
- Help is sometimes refused by a parent because of the stigma on them or their children
- More awareness and education to see the signs of mental health
- Affordable healthcare
- Educate parents as generational drug use is still an issue in the home
- Basic needs must be met before mental needs can be met (Maslow's Hierarchy)
- Drug and alcohol addiction programs that help the entire family
- Stigma free where those who may be struggling are lifted up and not looked down upon or judged for their mistakes

**"I struggled with mental health issues before I was an addict."**

**"You don't know when that cry for help will be the last cry for help."**

**"With a busy lifestyle, people don't slow down and spend time with family, they find ways to compensate or cope."**

**"Why can't an addict be the one to reach the community?"**

**"Children as young as 10-13 years old are using drugs."**

**"We felt nothing was out there for us when we were using."**

**"There is too much vaping and smoking of cigarettes, probably half the school is doing it."**

**"Bullies hurt others because they are hurting inside, they don't feel like they are good enough or they carry too much baggage and put it on others."**

# ASPIRATIONS

## POVERTY

- DeKalb County does not have a homeless shelter
- Lack of affordable housing and transportation for those who fall within the ALICE population
- Reaching families and children in poverty to help educate and break the generational cycle
- Difficulties with finding good paying jobs for those with little education
- Struggling parents don't have time and money, therefore the kids suffer as a result
- People released from jail have nothing and nowhere to go to start over
- Feeling helpless and hopeless can continue the cycle of bad choices
- Making it easier for struggling families to find the resources needed for family and home
- Activities or programs for youth and teens with financial difficulties
- Can empty buildings be utilized for space
- There are many school activities and programs but cost is high
- Help people understand what poverty really is and what it looks like

**"It's cheaper to move away from a problem than it is to stay and fix it or change it."**

**"I know what my kids have seen due to my drug use, but they still see it in the community and all around them."**

**"I was a crappy mom and my kids got pushed to the wayside."**

**"I can't visit my kids at lunch because I am a felon."**

**"We live in a very transitory community, we have to find a way to keep people in their homes and children in their schools."**

**"I only think there is one answer, relationships. So how does an organization help build relationships?"**

**"I had one young girl from school say, "My cousin is spending the night at her friends house, so I can sleep in bed with only two other people."**

*What's keeping us from*

# MAKING PROGRESS?

## **STRUGGLES**

- People will talk about issues but there seems to be a lack of those who really want to do the hard work.
- Parents not utilizing the resources available
- Lack of larger partnerships to tackle the same issues or problems
- Space for the homeless
- Pride
- Persistence and personal connection
- Non-profits are too busy doing the work and it's hard to bring people together
- Activity with results, a baseline for growth
- People are too busy to help or volunteer
- Knowledge and willingness to participate
- Lack of concentration of effort
- Being honest with ourselves on what is really happening around us
- Politics are taking over society and tearing people down

**"Frustrating bureaucratic processes."**

**"I don't know if our community is really open to growth."**

**"Our school was willing to pay for several students who needed glasses, all the parents had to do was take them and it took 3 phone calls to the parents before they we could get them to go."**

**"You have to be able to measure it."**

**"Too much "me" mentality."**

**"People who don't like change."**

**"We come to an awareness of a need, but then nothing happens."**