

The Harvest Form

Community Conversations #1: Helping others by telling our stories

Date: 5/21/2011

Location: First Christian Church Olympia

Hosts: Joy Lile and Angie Kelly

What community partners helped to support this café?

FSC, POWER, First Christian, Oly Childcare Collective, volunteers

How many participants? 11

How many children? 7

What was the purpose for this café conversation?

To offer a space for families who have struggled with homelessness or low-incomes, and isolation as a result of these barriers. To come together to perhaps find common bonds and to form powerful connections with each other, and to recognize the strengths it takes to endure such a struggle.

What questions were used at this Café?

Partner share: How do you ask for help? How do you know you need it, and who do you ask?

Question 1: What did it take to get you here today? What internal motivations or beliefs do you hold that lead you to want to show up to an event like this?

Question 2: What would make you know you are a valued member of this community? For example, in a relationship, what are some of the factors in place that show you that you are valued and fully respected?

What were some highlights, insights, themes from the café?

- What did it take to get us here? Curiosity, interest in meeting other people in similar situations, interest in finding childcare and meeting other parents. Also a chance at the café to have adult conversation while our children were able to engage safely in the care of other adults. A sense of bravery. A belief that connection with others is important. Trust in the groups organizing the event.
- What makes you feel valued? A sense of reciprocity, finding ways to contribute, finding things going on and communities that speak to you. One participant said he really values finding ways he can give back to his community – watching kids at the bus stop, helping out on the church grounds, and helping the special needs class at the school.
- Who do you ask for help? We can rely on our intuition as a guide in finding people we can trust to ask.
- One participant said several times that the café experience was the first time in her life that she has had an opportunity to share and speak about her life story and circumstances. She was interested in continuing to work on the cafes, and expressed interest in participating in the debrief meeting and perhaps also within the host committee.

- Another participant stated that she was very grateful for the day, that it felt to her that what happened was very important and that there had been a need for something like this for a long time.
- Future conversations: talking about resources, what will our community do when we can't find resources? How can we come together? We will also announce the upcoming Power Outage about filling the gaps of community resources.
- Participants had a lot of similar concerns: finding childcare was top on their list, people said that it is stressful to look for childcare while you are working, and finding someone you can trust is difficult. Exhaustion, isolation, resiliency, pride, bewilderment, frustration, pain, struggles, strength, faith, hope.
- We feel valued when we know our children are valued. When our children are included by others as meaningful beings. This helps us to feel that we can be a part of a community or a group – when we trust that we do not have to be alone in our children's safety and positive growth experiences.
- Building reciprocity – reaching out to others is important if you have needs, “You have to build bridges if you want to meet people on the other side.”
- We have to reach out to others and share our stories to make our struggles not be in vain.
- Remember the struggle is temporary, in life and in parenting.

What did the Kid Café consist of?

The kids went to the organic garden at Fertile Ground Guest House to played in the playground, do a little bit of gardening and meet the chickens. When they came back, they drew pictures of the garden and the chickens.

What's next for this café community?

We have 2 follow-up Cafes and we will go from there. We will invite people to come to POWER meetings and to join the TimeBank project which is upcoming.

Who will you share this harvest with? (The Community Café Leadership Team posts harvests we receive on our website. Let us know if you prefer that we not post your harvest.)
 FSC, POWER, First Christian Church, CCLT, Facebook,