

## **Listening For God In Our Community**

Our discussion was with DHHS.

Department of Health and Human Services provides funding and services for low-income adults, families and children. This is where people receive funding to pay rent and bills, Medicaid, Food Card also Child and Adult Protective Services for those at risk or being abused. They have emergency services for people in need of paying utilities with shut of notices and car repairs. They provide information for other agencies in the area.

### **1. What are the strengths of this community?**

- The agency works with Grand Traverse, Leelanau and Kalkaska Counties.
- Grand Traverse and Leelanau Counties have a lot of recourses, such as mental health, the court systems and DHS.
- We are a strong faith-based community with volunteers who want to help others.

### **2. What are some issues that need to be addressed?**

- There is a large homeless population, many whom live in the Pines.
- There are homeless people who want to work, but they have a difficult time with transportation.
- Many of them have mental health issues or addictions. There are resources, but they don't always know how to get in for services. The agencies tend to be in silos and there is a lack of communication between them. For instance if a person is having mental health issues, but they need Medicaid to receive the services. Someone should communicate that and help the individual with the application.
- Through the Health Department there is a program called Community Connection who will assist with the application, but if they don't know to call and set up an appointment with them, they won't get the help.
- Another large need in the community is children who are aging out of the foster care system. They have no family to go back to or natural supports. Most people want to help little children and the older teenagers are left to care for themselves.
- There is a need with the senior population, there is a huge need for affordable housing, agencies who can help with care and meeting the needs of those who can't drive or need assistance with medications and groceries. • There is the Commission On Aging, but there is a large waiting list to receive services.
- Transportation, even though BATA has expanded, there are still holes in their system, especially out in the county.

### **3. How might our congregation be a part of meeting the needs?**

- Volunteers to take on the older children to help guide them with their individual needs. Maybe invite them to have a holiday or dinner with their family. There is a program FYOY through DHS for the purpose of helping these children. If there is an interest in volunteering there is a contact person at DHS.
- Families in need could use a place to pick up needed items such as books, socks, underwear, games for individuals or families including foster families. DHS would like to put out donation boxes to collect these items.

- There used to be a bike program in town where a person could take a bike and when they were done they just left it in a designated area. That program has not been around for a number of years.

Kathi and I talked about our food pantry as often people come to DHS to apply for a food card, but they have an immediate need.

We also discussed Thrivent, and there may be a way to get seed money for the donation boxes.