



CIRCLES[®]
Hilton Head Island



Become a Circle Ally.

Building a friendship with someone in poverty will have a life-changing effect on both of you.

Learning Together

Participants are called “Circle Leaders,” and volunteers are called “Allies.” After both groups receive training, two Allies are matched with every Circle Leader. These intentional friendships are the foundation of the Circles model. Circle Leaders set their own goals and run the weekly meetings. As an Ally, your job is to listen, ask questions, and make suggestions. You’ll help Circle Leaders use their unique gifts and skills to reach their goals, and Circle Leaders will help you understand poverty in your community.

Circles Reduces Poverty

It’s about intentional relationships across income lines. While middle-income and high-income families enjoy networks of support through their jobs, schools, and neighborhoods, families living in poverty rarely develop such contacts. Many who live in poverty are hardworking and motivated, so when a circle of support forms around them, advice is offered, contacts are shared, and the fears that keep people in poverty start to disappear.

Circles Changes Communities

Volunteers and participants grow and learn together. While participants navigate their way to prosperity, volunteers get an in-depth education on the culture of poverty. Participants’ successes and challenges are also analyzed at monthly meetings with community leaders across sectors. This new understanding enables a community to identify, discuss, and often resolve the barriers that keep people in poverty. By changing the mindset, systems can be transformed from poverty management to poverty reduction.

Circles Is Working

Many communities are using Circles because the results are so encouraging. After 18 months, those in the program achieve an average 71% increase in their income.

Circles gives you an opportunity to

- Support someone as they leave poverty for good
- Use your experience and networks to help others
- Improve your problem-solving and conflict resolution skills
- Expand your perspective about the culture of poverty
- Take an active role in improving your community

Leaders and Allies commit to

- Honesty
- Building an intentional friendship
- Attending regularly
- Being open to new perspectives
- Trusting the process even when it’s challenging

“Being a Circles Ally is like being a VIP on the floor at a Knicks game. You see the ‘thrill of victory’ up-close-and-personal.”

KEN SMITH
CIRCLES ALLY

“When you listen intently to individuals and families living in poverty and engage in relationships with them, you develop a different understanding of their circumstances and a deep desire to create change.”

JEANNIE CHAFFIN
FORMER DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
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