

Study Quantifies Efforts of Nonprofits Groups' efforts combat hunger and poverty

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In 2005, domestic violence victims found that Pennsylvania was not following the law exempting them from welfare work requirements due to trauma or other effects of abuse.

Enter Just Harvest, which promotes economic justice through public policy and services that combat hunger and poverty. The organization stepped in to ensure that welfare caseworkers were trained to offer correct, consistent benefits and information.

In 2007, the monthly allowance that covered medicine, toiletries and other necessities was only \$60 for people with mental illness living in state-sanctioned homes. The Consumer Health Coalition, which works to overcome barriers to quality, affordable health care, joined a campaign to raise the allowance. The efforts succeeded, and the allowance is now \$85.

Every dollar spent on behalf of the disadvantaged by these and other nonprofit advocacy groups brought a return of \$122 in benefits to local communities. Advocacy also meant clean water in rural communities, support for the ill and education for students with cognitive disabilities.

That's according to a new study that looked at 13 organizations across Pennsylvania, including three from Pittsburgh -- the two above and Lydia's Place, which advocates for female offenders and their families.

The study, to be released today, was produced by the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, an independent watchdog of foundations, based in Washington, D.C. Looking at the five-year period from 2005 to 2009, it describes and quantifies their efforts.

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