

## Chamber helps pave 'pathways past poverty'

GORDAN THIBEDEAU • MAY 24, 2010 • FROM THE FORT COLLINS COLORADOAN

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I want to depart just a bit from my usual column topics to give a big thank you to the Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce.

Why thank the chamber?

Well, here at the United Way of Larimer County, we have spent the past several years focused on issues related to the growing rate of poverty in our community. Through the Pathways Past Poverty initiative, we have looked at the contributing factors, pulled together hundreds of community volunteers and experts, and explored best practices from around the nation.

And we are working with volunteers to develop strategies to create systemic change in our community. One part of that change is creating jobs and job training for those who can work in our community.

Gaining employment isn't the solution to poverty, but it's a big step toward self-sufficiency. You need education/ training to get a job, transportation to get there and child care. These issues related to poverty are complex.

The Fort Collins chamber recently announced it is taking a proactive role in promoting a "jobs agenda" that is moving a serious conversation forward around economic development and vitality for our community. It is something we all need to embrace and work to achieve. A strong, vibrant business community provides the jobs necessary to help pull families out of poverty.

There is no cure, but retaining and attracting good jobs in our community is certainly a very big step in the right direction.

While there are people who cannot work because of disability or age, for example, creating job opportunities for those who can work is necessary to sustain a thriving community.

Join me in saying "thank you" to the Fort Collins chamber for starting this important community conversation and helping pave "pathways past poverty."

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