

Pathways Past Poverty looks to reverse trends

Initiative to present 2008 poverty estimates to the public Tuesday

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It's now no secret that Larimer County has faced rising poverty for the past several years as the area has tried to bounce back from the double hit of a recession early in the decade and offshoring of some of the community's best high-tech jobs.

Hundreds of volunteers have come together in the Pathways Past Poverty initiative to begin drafting strategies to reverse those trends, focusing on areas such as affordable child care, financial literacy and retraining.

The U.S. Census Bureau on Tuesday will release the 2008 poverty estimates for local communities across the country. Pathways Past Poverty will sponsor a public presentation of the data at 11:30 a.m. Tuesday at the Fort Collins Police Services Community Room, 2221 S. Timberline Road.

The numbers are based on survey data collected throughout 2008, before the current recession took a firm grip in the area. In all likelihood, the data will show a leveling off or perhaps a slight decline in the poverty rates for Fort Collins and Larimer County, after a major jump in the middle part of the decade.

From 2005 to 2007, the Fort Collins poverty rate averaged 17.5 percent, up from 14 percent at the beginning of the decade. Throughout Larimer County, the poverty rate averaged 12.6 percent from 2005 to 2007, up from 9.2 percent in 2000.

However, it's almost certain that poverty in Larimer County rose significantly in 2009, though those numbers won't be available until next year at this time.

The county economy continued to add jobs throughout 2008, despite the sharp recession nationally. But that trend has ended, and as of August, Larimer County had 5,300 fewer jobs than a year earlier, a record loss for the county.

At Tuesday's session, Pathways Past Poverty officials will give the community an update on their work so far and talk about what's ahead in the coming month.

In the teeth of this current recession, there's clearly a lot of work ahead.