

## Current Issues

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Issues are determined by the JOSHUA Board of Directors and are reviewed annually. [Read more...](#)

Official Issues Task Forces  
 Workforce Housing  
 Health Care  
 Treatment Instead of Prison (TIP)/Brown County Drug Court

### Workforce Housing

This issue is tied to Diversity in Our Schools. When low-income students are separated from other students, their chance of success diminishes greatly. The best way to keep our schools diverse is to make our neighborhoods diverse, because if neighborhoods and housing developments are economically diverse, the schools will have a good mix of students as well. Economic diversity in a community can open doors of opportunity to all. JOSHUA believes people should be able to afford to live in the communities where they work, and that any form of segregation hurts everyone.

In February 2006, JOSHUA launched a Workforce Housing Task Force. We invited people from local government, business, Homebuilders Association and other community groups to come together to look for ways to improve the availability of housing for all sectors of our community.

In October 2009, a preliminary draft for an Employer Assisted Housing bill was presented at our annual meeting. [Click here to download the pdf and read the entire bill.](#)

[Click here to view who is part of our Workforce Housing Task Force](#)

### Health Care

#### Our Value Statement

Health is not a commodity that can be bought or sold. Health is a state of being. It calls for a process of nurturing the physical and mental well-being of all God's children, recognizing that every human life is of infinite value. Therefore, we believe that quality, accessible health care is a basic human right.

In 2009, the committee:

- Explored the health issues surrounding childhood obesity while still addressing issues of Health Care Reform.
- Helped to organize Health Care Hearing at 1st United Methodist Church in February at which a health care committee member gave testimony.
- Encouraged congregations to talk about the issue of Health Care Reform as people of faith and write postcards to our federal legislators expressing their own views on reform.
- Held Summer Prayer Services for Health Care Reform at Baird Park
- Sent two members of JOSHUA in June who joined with other people of faith in Washington, D.C. to pray and rally for health care reform.
- Participated in a non-partisan forum on Health Care Reform at Harmony Cafe.
- Participated with other organizations in a Rally for Health Care Reform at UWGB.
- Participated in press conference at Congressman Kagen's office regarding need for Health Care Reform.
- Participated at a Congregational meeting hosted by St. John the Evangelist Roman Catholic Church regarding questions about faith and health care reform.
- Offered resources and assistance to congregational Core Teams who want to host "Faith and Health Care Roundtables" to discuss how we approach this issue as people of faith.

### Treatment Instead of Prison (TIP)

Because we value compassion, JOSHUA supports Treatment Instead of Prison (TIP). We believe we are called to treat every person the way that we would want to be ourselves to be treated if we fell into similar trouble. And, because we value good stewardship, we support TIP because it saves tax dollars. Communities can be made safer by dealing with underlying causes of crime. We believe that TIP is fair; we believe it is a way to be "smart on crime," rather than just

being though; we believe that now is the time for Wisconsin to invest in treatment alternatives to incarceration.

In July 2005, JOSHUA's state-wide umbrella organization, WISDOM, finally achieved the first-fruits of their efforts on behalf of nonviolent drug and alcohol offenders. The budget passed by the Wisconsin legislature in July provides grant money for counties to create programs for people who need drug and alcohol treatment to get their lives back on track, rather than being short-circuited by incarceration. JOSHUA's TIP Committee has begun efforts to encourage the creation of a pilot Drug Treatment court Project in Brown County. The Coordinating Council for this pilot program will include people from the court system, law enforcement, the Department of Corrections, and other community groups and agencies. In 2009, a drug court was established in Brown County.

Wisconsin Organizations Supporting TIP have called for the state of Wisconsin to allocate \$22 million per year for treatment alternatives in the 2007-09 budget. This would fund creative programs in every county and would result in a net savings to taxpayers of more than \$40 million. Other Events"Coming Home to Stay"

A forum about promoting success for those returning home from prison was held on November 28 at St. Bernard Catholic Church in Green Bay. The forum was co-sponsored by JOSHUA & members of the Brown County Corrections Relations Board. It was a very successful event with about 80 people attending. The audience was a good mix of people from JOSHUA congregations and from the broader community. The program started out with some comments from Rev. Joe Ellwanger. Joe is from Milwaukee and helped get JOSHUA started 5 years ago. He is currently the State Coordinator of the Treatment Instead of Prison (TIP) campaign, and he talked about why it's key to get communities involved in supporting people who are returning home from prison. The forum panel was made up of Charles Thomas, an inmate at Sanger Powers Correctional Center soon to be released to live in Brown County; Orrie Kotecki, an agent from the Division of Community Corrections; Bob Williams, a volunteer in prison ministry; and facilitator, Jim Golembeski, Director of the Bay Area Workforce Development Board. Following the panel presentation, there was a question and answer period that went on for almost an hour, testifying to the interest and concern generated by this issue. Many people signed up afterwards to become more involved with the Community Circles of Support project set to begin early in 2007. The forum demonstrated how our community can benefit when faith communities partner with a diverse range of individuals & other groups.

For more information on how to be part of a Circle of Support, contact Him Golemeski at 431-4102 or... [Click here for a brochure about the new Brown County Restorative Justice Program.](#)