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KOSCIUSKO COUNTY LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

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## KOSCIUSKO COUNTY LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Plans are underway to build a new middle school in the Whitko School District. This action will vacate the existing Pierceton Middle School making the possibility of space available for consolidated community services in the Pierceton area. The purpose of this Kosciusko Leadership Academy white paper is to propose a plan for the vacated space. It will consist of a collaborative effort to provide assistance through a "one stop" facility to include: a clothing bank; food pantry; family and parenting education program; classes on raising, preserving and preparing foods; child care facility which would include pre-school, day-care and latch key; a well baby clinic and home health care area; satellite welfare, medicare and social security offices; consolidation for the Holiday giving programs (packaging of Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets), and a Red Cross blood bank site would be established to meet community needs. A local service center would serve the mobile population as well as assist those who do not have the means to travel into Warsaw or neighboring communities for assistance.

The Pierceton Community can be enhanced through the development of this plan which would consolidate these site services into the facility currently located within Pierceton in the to-be-vacated Pierceton Middle School. Two to three rooms may be set aside in the school for use by the Pierceton Community in the establishment of the service agency base for residents to serve the townships of Monroe, Washington, Jackson and Richland.

### DEMOGRAPHICS

Senior citizens, children, blended families, multi-family units, and single individuals are among those to be served through the Pierceton facility. Many of the families served through the charitable work during the holidays are

families whose children attend Pierceton Elementary School. Pierceton Elementary School, a part of the Whitko Community Schools, is unique in the fact that its school boundaries cross the county line. When dealing with students, school and community problems, it is very often necessary to deal with agencies in two separate counties. The service site could facilitate faster and more efficient services to the parents and their children. Of the parents, guardians and custodians of those students who are located in the Pierceton area, 48% of them work within a forty mile radius of Pierceton, Indiana. Sixteen percent of the wage earners of parents of those children are self employed or are in an agriculture-related field or farm work. Sixteen percent of the parents drive truck, are mechanics, work in construction or are service electricians. Five percent of the wage earners work in government, management sales, education, ministerial work or architecture. Seven percent of the wage earners are students, railroad workers, armed forces personnel or miscellaneous unskilled workers.

In excess of 30% of the students are on free and reduced lunch program. Their families have an average of six children and a yearly income of \$15,000 or less. Services to assist families such as an Early Childhood Education Parenting Program and Pre-School Program for children age four have been implemented in the local school. These programs provide tuition scholarships for families meeting specific economic guidelines. Through the establishment of the Early Childhood Pre-School Program, Whitko's Early Childhood Coordinator has been working with low income parents in the 16 to 24 year age bracket who have toddlers at home in the hope that early intervention with the children may increase the chance of school readiness and that early intervention may assist the family as they attempt to provide for their children.

Thirty-four percent of the residence in the Whitko Community School Corporation between the ages of 25 to 34 have not completed high school. Plans are currently being discussed for bringing the G.E.D. program back to the evening school setting and providing ways to open the doors to adults who need to finish a minimal amount of work to achieve diploma requirements.

The mobility rate at Pierceton Elementary School is approximately 62%. The reasons for this are varied: job mobility, unemployment or reassigning child custody are often economically related and contribute to the mobility rate. The intent of this plan is to provide quality services in a consolidated setting where each family or individual may seek and find assistance.

#### PROPOSED PLAN

In order to meet the needs in providing a collaborative effort for social agencies within the Pierceton community, the following plan is being proposed.

1. A discussion should be initiated with the township trustee and the Pierceton Community Services Board regarding their willingness to coordinate the services.
2. The Board of School Trustees be approached and asked to establish an area of the vacated Pierceton Middle School building to be used by and for Pierceton Community Services. This area could house a clothing bank and food pantry; classroom for First Aid and parenting education programs; instruction in gardening, canning and preservation of food; child care facility including a Latch Key, Early Childhood and Pre-School Program; a well baby clinic with a county nurse available to provide advice for home

health care; satellite offices for welfare, social security; and a site to house a Red Cross blood bank.

3. A discussion meeting with social and philanthropic groups within the community soliciting suggestions for collaborative efforts and willingness to assume specific tasks within the collaborative arrangement should be organized.

4. A community meeting where need for collaborative services, facility and tasks are established and supported.

5. A request for Board of Directors for Pierceton Community Services to handle the collective effort should be solicited.

6. Implementation of the plan to occupy the site and organize community needs services.

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