

FAQ's

On becoming a Circle Ally

What is the time commitment?

In general, each month you are encouraged to attend at least one community dinner and agree to meet with your Circle Leader a total of 4-10 hours a month.

Am I expected to help my Circle Leader, financially?

Allies provide friendship and stability for their Circle Leader. They are encouraged NOT to give money to their Circle Leaders

If I am feeling "in over my head" how can I find the support that I need?

Allies will have periodic meetings with Empower Portages own "Circles Coach" where Allies can come together to listen and help encourage each other.

How will our Circle know when the Circle Leader is ready to move forward without the support of the circle?

In general you will just know. The Circle leader will have reached all or most of their goals and has financially moved out of poverty.



Circles™



Become an Ally!

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Becoming a Circles® Ally

- Build Lasting Friendships
- Provide emotional support and social resources
- Help people in poverty create greater stability
- Help break down the barriers holding people in poverty

www.empowerportage.com

Preparing to be an Ally

People in poverty face many issues and hurdles navigating the middle class world. Understanding the issues and how to be most helpful is essential for Circles Leaders to be successful. Prospective Allies must complete the following steps.

- A short orientation training to help you understand what the Circles™ community is all about.
- Bridges out of Poverty training #1
- A “Final Tool Kit Training” to help with any problems that have come up throughout your time in Circles®.
- Bridges out of Poverty training #2

“Being an Ally is very hard work, but some of the most important work I have ever done. Before now, I just paid lip service to issues surrounding poverty. Now I’m in it with both feet.”

Understanding the structure

Who is the Circle Leader?

An individual or family in poverty who is interested in becoming self-sufficient. The Circle Leader has completed a 15 week workshop series and is responsible for leading, receiving and giving support within the partnership of the circle.

The Allies

Volunteers engage in an intentional, befriending relationship with the Circle Leader to help them become self sufficient. Allies work with the Circle Leader to help them establish and execute a set of goals.

The Coach

A case worker supports the Circle by setting up times to meet, mediating any problems that may arise within the Circle. Theresa Hagarman is the Circles® Coach for Empower Portage.



Circle Leaders and support staff from our first “Getting Ahead” class

The role of the community

Community Dinners

Every Tuesday night at 5:30 pm at the United Methodist Church of Kent our Circle Leaders, Getting Ahead participants and Allies get together to form a “community within a community”. People come together at these dinners to discuss and examine the barriers that hold people in poverty. Childcare is available through the Kent State University Honors College and dinner is always free.

“It’s time for individuals to stop blaming the community and for communities to stop blaming individuals”

-Francesca Fortson, *Getting Ahead* graduate and Circle Leader.