

2009 West Central Illinois Volunteerism Conference

Session and Presenter Information

Cheryl Lefler
Community Organizer
Property Manager,
Knox County Housing Authority

Presenter Biography:

Cheryl Lefler is currently employed by the Knox County Housing Authority as a Property Manager. From May 1996 to August of 2009 Cheryl was a Community Organizer for the Illinois Coalition for Community Services (ICCS). Prior to joining ICCS, Cheryl served as Director of the Volunteer Center of Knox County in Galesburg, IL. Her community organizing work at ICCS was in 7 counties in West Central Illinois. Cheryl is a nationally certified trainer of the BEST Advancing Youth Development (AYD) curriculum. She served as Project sponsor and site supervisor for AmeriCorps*National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) teams in 2004, 2005 and 2007. A native of rural Henderson County, Cheryl is a Cum Laude with Honors graduate of Knox College with a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science and Women's Studies. Cheryl lives in Galesburg and enjoys spending time with family, walking, reading and being a Parrothead and a Disney fan.

Session 2C: Legislative Advocacy

Many steadfast and eager advocates climb the steps at the State House trying to influence elected and appointed officials. Dozens of legislators and staffers kindly accept their materials and listen to their issues. As advocates, how do we transform this exchange into tangible policy outcomes and real change? This interactive workshop will cover the who, what, when, where, why and HOW of legislative, policy, and advocacy issues. Beyond the basics, we will talk about concrete strategies to engage in effective advocacy to communicate your message and sustain a foundation of support.

Additionally, Cheryl is a trained facilitator in the Advancing Youth Development curriculum through the National Training Institute for Community Youth Work and has led numerous trainings with her work on a variety of topics.

Objectives

- Understand key terms;
- Understand the elements, approaches and dynamics of legislative advocacy;
- Learn how to translate specific issues into a compelling message;
- Get hands on tips on how to connect with your legislators about issues;
- Work with others in your community to fight for change;
- Learn how to influence and be engaged in the state legislative process;
- Develop strategies to target legislators and policy-makers and maximize the impact of your message; and
- Have fun!!!

The workshop will engage participants in several learning styles including lecture, audience participation and small group work. Resources in the form of handouts will also be provided.

Outline

- I. Welcome and Introductions—including energizer or icebreaker activity
- II. Overview of workshop
- III. Key Terms and Definitions
 - Legislative terms
 - Advocacy
 - Policy

- Message
- Strategies
- IV. Illinois General Assembly—what do I need to know?
- V. Background information on Legislative Advocacy
 - What are the benefits of advocacy?
 - Why engage in advocacy?
- VI. From Idea to Bill to Law
 - Where in the process can we affect policy?
 - How can we affect policy?
- VII. Doing Legislative Advocacy
 - What you need to know
 - Whom should I lobby?
 - Finding out about legislation
 - Why should I “track” legislation
- VIII. Advocacy Tips & Tools
- IX. Making Legislative Visits—what do I need to know?
- X. Scenario work—using real community scenarios, participants will apply new knowledge to organize around the issue presented. Specific questions to be addressed include: What would you do? Who would you talk to? Who would you involve? What is the problem/issue? What is your strategy? What action would you take?
- XI. Advocacy—utilizing relationships with elected officials, how to write letters, how to utilize the media, getting your message out to the community
- XII. Community web—an activity designed to serve as a visual illustration of community and the impact that community organizing can have in a community.
- XIII. Resources (w/ handouts)

Throughout the workshop, we will engage in lecture, audience participation and small group work each enhancing the learning experience of participants.

This workshop best fits the professional experience level checked below. Check all that apply.

Basic

Intermediate

Advanced