

Colleen's Contemplations – January 2012

“Perception is reality.”

I was told that recently. It had to do with something a friend of a friend overheard in the grocery store. It seems someone was waxing eloquently about the rise in immigrant families in Waunakee, all due to the work we do at WNC. We apparently make life so easy that people are moving here en masse.

Well, that person's perception is not my reality. From where I sit, I see increases in every category of people. I've seen a remarkable increase in the number of seniors who have chosen to use our services. Apparently, between the Sr. Center, the food pantry, and WNC; we've made life so good for seniors that they are moving here in droves just to take advantage of our programs. Of the new families I've registered in the last couple of months, there were single parents, unemployed people, a new widow, people who are disabled, families struggling with medical bills for the sick and dying, and a couple of families with adults in school. There are as many reasons for struggling in this economy as there are people in need. And those people in need are not all immigrants.

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It makes me sad to think that we're allowing this perception to persist. I'm proud of the work we do. I think it's honorable and Christian to help our neighbors. There is nothing easy about poverty. If we can lighten someone's load, we should be able to do so without being told we're enabling people. When I look around at the people in our community, I feel sorry for the people who label the faces they see as “immigrant” or “senior” or “single parent” or “medically challenged” or “unemployed”. I see the face of God in every soul that walks through our door. My perception: “WNC helps people through the rough times in their lives.” So if your friend of a friend overhears people spreading maliciousness, tell them what the reality really is.

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