Local

Group touts benefits of community ID program

Says card would help individuals, community overall

By Aly Brown
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Representatives with the Center for Worker Justice of Eastern Iowa met with the public Sunday morning at the Faith United Church of Christ to discuss their proposal for a new community identification card program.

Misty Rebik, executive director of the Center for Worker Justice of Eastern Iowa, said Johnson County is the first community in the Midwest to discuss implementing the program, which she said would help underserved individuals more readily access public services.

A community ID is a locally issued form of photo identification available to all residents that is recognized by local law enforcement, public agencies and businesses.

"What I think is really good about the community identification card is it's diverse and adaptable to whatever the community needs," she said.

Rebik said the community ID could cost between $5 to $10 and could be used for a variety of services, including checking books out at the public library, renting an apartment, cashing a paycheck or using a debit card, purchasing medication, or showing to a police officer after reporting a crime.

Rebik said cities on the West and East Coasts, such as San Francisco and New Haven, Conn., have had success with their own programs.

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Sergio Irund A-Wan, a member of the Center for Worker Justice of Eastern Iowa’s board of directors and a longtime Iowa City resident who is originally from Congo, said the community ID card could benefit a large population of people who cannot access basic services without an ID.

“There are a lot of people that do not have an ID: immigrants, local Iowans, older people that do not drive anymore, natural disaster people who have lost everything, people who are victims of domestic abuse. And without an ID, we cannot have access to basic stuff,” A-Wan said.

A-Wan said the group has been working on a grassroots campaign for more than a year and has received a good response from the community in favor of the program.

“In the future, we hope to have IDs issued for everybody,” he said.

Bradar Djeugang, a local resident who emigrated from Cameroon, said the card could help authorities identify recent immigrants or those without a state-issued ID, which Rebik said has been a point of contention in the Iowa City area. Djeugand said the card also would give immigrants a sense of ownership and place in the community.

“So everyone feels like they are a member of a community so he can do something good to carry out the goals of the community,” he said.

Rebik said the card could have a multitude of benefits for the community as well as the individual, including lower crime rates as community ID cardholders are more likely to report crime, more money kept in the economy because it can be used as a form of identification when using a debit card, and helping parents provide ID to volunteer at school functions.

Rebik said the group is working to demonstrate a community interest to city and county officials through a pledge campaign, for which they’ve received 450 signatures in the past three weeks. Rebik said she also is putting together a packet to educate local business owners on the community ID program and how it could benefit the local economy.

“Our goal is to be able to show how many people are committed to a more inclusive, safer community,” she said.

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