

***Common Threads:
Reflecting on the Work of Caring in Porter County****

Sponsored by The Project on Civic Reflection at
Valparaiso University
with funding from Lilly Endowment, Inc.

In this seminar, a group of nonprofit and public social services professionals in Porter County, Indiana, gathered monthly for dinner and conversation about the challenges of their work.

Session I. The Work of Caring: How Do We Understand Our Work?

How do we define ourselves as caring professionals? How do others define us? Do those definitions ever come into conflict?

Reading: Henri Barbusse, "The Eleventh" (pp. 245-248)

Session II. Traditions of Service: What Are We Trying To Do?

What are some ways of describing the larger context of social services work? Whom do we serve and care for in this work and to what end?

Reading: Elizabeth Lynn and Susan Wisely, "Toward a Fourth Philanthropic Response" (pp. 102-110)

Session III. At the Front Lines: What's Love Got To Do With It?

What motivates us to do the work of community caring? What happens to our motivations as we do that work?

Readings: Gwendolyn Brooks, "The Lovers of the Poor" (pp. 200-202)
John Reed, "Another Case of Ingratitude" (pp. 197-199)

Session IV. Great Expectations: Do Outcomes Really Matter?

What do we expect of those we serve? What happens when expectations are not met?

Reading: Sylvia Townsend Warner, "A Work of Art" (pp. 191-196)

Session V. Everything Old is New Again: Who is Jane Addams and Who Cares?

What are the challenges of this work today? Have things changed?

Reading: Jane Addams, "Charitable Effort" (pp. 140-154)

Session VI. Caring in Porter County: Working Together Towards What?

With whom do we share walls in our work? How do we, for better or worse, "mend" these walls?

Reading: Robert Frost, "Mending Wall" (handout)

* Readings are taken primarily from *The Perfect Gift: The Philanthropic Imagination in Poetry and Prose*, ed., Amy Kass, Indiana University Press, 2002.