Whether you are new to advocacy or a seasoned professional, we can all play a part in improving economic opportunity in our region. Use the information below to guide your conversations with your family, friends, neighbors, government officials, or the media. Be a thought leader and an agent of change in your community!

Educate and inform:

- Read the companion Discussion Guide and learn more about strategies to improve economic opportunity.
- Review and use the Talking Points provided on page three.
- Share what you learn with your family, friends, neighbors, and colleagues — both face-to-face and through social media.
- Host a book club or discussion session with family, friends, co-workers, or members of your religious, social, or civic organization about the For the Sake of All report, briefs, and Discussion Guide.

Donate:

Seek out organizations in your community that are making a difference by:

- Providing job training, mentoring, internships, apprenticeships, and other employment-related assistance
- Providing financial advising and financial resources for low-to-moderate income families
- Making higher education more accessible to low-income students
- Advocating on behalf of working families and addressing economic disparities

Learn more about these organizations and their work, and make a donation to support their efforts. A list of sample organizations is available at http://forthesakeofall.org/take-action/.
Volunteer:

Give your time to programs and organizations that are helping and empowering low-to-moderate income families. Examples include:

- **Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)**
  In 2014, 774 trained volunteers prepared 18,834 federal tax returns at free tax preparation sites located throughout the St. Louis Metro Area. With the help of these IRS trained volunteers, over $21 million in tax refunds were returned to low and moderate income families in the St. Louis Metro region. To volunteer, go to the Volunteer Center by the United Way of Greater St. Louis at: [http://www.stlvolunteer.org/VITA](http://www.stlvolunteer.org/VITA).

- **Volunteer** your time with programs that focus on mentoring, after school activities, and tutoring. By helping students from low-to-moderate income families succeed at school and graduate, you are helping these students and their families to create economic opportunities for their future.
  - Big Brothers Big Sisters of Eastern Missouri fosters an environment that encourages and supports the success of children and youth. They serve children in St. Louis County and the City of St. Louis. To volunteer, visit: [http://www.bbbsemo.org/volunteer](http://www.bbbsemo.org/volunteer).
  - Wyman’s Teen Leadership Program supports healthy teen development, leadership, and college access. Wyman needs volunteers to help prepare youth to live successful lives. To volunteer, go to: [http://wymancenter.org/volunteer/](http://wymancenter.org/volunteer/).
  - North Campus provides in-school and after-school tutoring to children in their service area. You can serve as a tutor or “student advocate” and help students practice math and science skills. To learn more, go to: [http://www.thenorthcampus.org/help/](http://www.thenorthcampus.org/help/).

Organize and advocate:

- **Write a letter** to the editor or op-ed in support of Child Development Accounts, job creation and training, or access to financial advising. Use the provided talking points and media tips.

- **Contact your elected officials** to ask them to support economic opportunities for low-to-moderate income families. Find out who your state legislators are at [http://www.house.mo.gov/legislatorlookup.aspx](http://www.house.mo.gov/legislatorlookup.aspx) and schedule a meeting or give them a call. You could also write them a letter or send them an email. Your state legislators are there to represent you, and the only way they know what is important to you is for you to communicate with them!
  - Use the provided talking points and let them know your thoughts on economic disparities in our region and what can be done to decrease these disparities.

- **Host a community forum, discussion, or roundtable on the topic.** Reach out to your networks, such as your school board or PTO, civic or service organizations, or religious groups. Bring in a speaker/moderator on the topic, or use the following format to guide your discussion:
  - Introductions
  - Topic summary
  - The business, health, and common sense case for improving economic opportunity
  - Discussion questions
  - Action steps
  - Wrap up
Talking points:

- The high number of deaths due to poverty and low levels of education takes a large economic toll on the St. Louis region, with the impact estimated at $7.8 billion. We all pay a price when people in our region lack economic and educational opportunities.

- In our region, areas with higher rates of poverty also have higher rates of death from chronic diseases like cancer and heart disease.

- Although poverty rates are disproportionately higher among African Americans, the health effects of poverty affect other races as well.

- In St. Louis, rates of unemployment among African Americans are almost four times that of whites.

- Good health and education often go hand-in-hand. Individuals with post-secondary education are more likely to live longer and stay in better health than those who do not go beyond high school — in part because well-educated individuals generally have higher incomes and can afford better health care.

- While education levels among African Americans have improved in recent decades, there remains a significant gap, with 57% of African Americans in St. Louis attaining some college education, compared with 74% for whites.

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Sample social media posts:

When using these sample posts, make sure to include a short link to the product.

- In 2012, the loss of life due to poverty & low education cost the STL community $7.8 billion.

- By 2018, 60% of all jobs in America will require a college education. Learn what you can do to improve access for all.

- Don’t think where you’re born makes a difference in your lifelong health? Watch the Two Lives of Jasmine.
Media Tips:

Writing an effective letter to the editor or op-ed

- **Keep it short.**
  A brief, well-written letter (200 words or less) or op-ed (700 words or less) is more likely to be published.

- **Make it relevant and timely.**
  Your letter, op-ed, or blog post should be in response to something that was recently featured in the news or a recent event and offer a unique perspective on the topic.

- **Respond quickly.**
  Ideally, you want to respond within hours so your letter or commentary is published online that day and possibly in the paper the next day.

- **Include your contact information.**
  News organizations often want to verify your full name, title, organization, address, phone number, and email. They may also have follow up questions for style or editing purposes.

- **Take advantage of the comments section.**
  Most people get their news online these days. Many are likely to express their views online as well. Posting your comments online is another vehicle for letting your voice be heard.

- **Use these resources to help.**
  Go to [http://forthesakeofall.org/take-action/](http://forthesakeofall.org/take-action/) to find sample letters to the editor and guidelines from local media.

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**Personal Commitment Statement**

What action will you take to create economic opportunities for all families in our region?

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