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*Action-  
Learning for  
the Rural  
Family  
Economic  
Success  
(RuFES)  
Action  
Network*

**July 7, 2011****Dear RuFES Action Network,****EARN IT, KEEP IT, GROW IT**

**"See" How *Much* Education Matters:  
Move Your County's Needle on Educational Attainment  
TODAY!**

*Sponsored by  
the Annie E.  
Casey  
Foundation*

Summer is here and students all over the country are enjoying the annual break from their studies. But summer vacation is more than a good time to soak up sunshine — it also offers a chance to reflect on the important role education plays in the health of our rural communities.

*Coordinated  
by the Aspen  
Institute  
Community  
Strategies  
Group*

We all know that "Education Makes a Difference." We have heard the well-documented economic arguments that more education leads working people to higher incomes and less unemployment. Moreover, we sense that education goes beyond just jobs and paychecks — educational attainment also affects health, community involvement and other social indicators.

But how can we convince ourselves and others in the community that this is so? This week's Alert offers a cool new tool — the [Common Good Forecaster](#) — that will help you *show* the many ways that improving educational attainment can help your rural families, community, region and state *Earn It, Keep It* and *Grow It*.

To demonstrate how education affects **all** aspects of community life, *United Way* and the *American Human Development Project* developed the interactive online [Common Good Forecaster](#) tool to forecast how things might change in communities if community members achieved more (or less) high school, college and graduate degree attainment. The Forecaster shows the direct effect of educational attainment on ten indicators: poverty, unemployment, income, life expectancy, low birthweight, murder, obesity, income, poverty, unemployment, children's reading proficiency, incarceration and voting.

**How do you use the tool?**

The [Common Good Forecaster](#) includes the percentage of current educational attainment — less than high school, high school graduates, college graduates and post-secondary education — for people in your county and state. It allows you to alter your county or state percentages on the webpage, and thus forecast how key economic and social conditions in your county or state would change if

you increased or decreased that educational attainment.

The tool is fun, easy to use and provides useful statistics — both current and projected. Simply select a state or specific county, change the level of education attained, and view the corresponding changes in community indicators associated with health, financial stability, kids' achievement, and community involvement!

### **What are the applications of the Common Good Forecaster?**

There are a variety of potential applications of this tool, including:

Use the current and projected statistics to advocate for education support on the basis of improving community and family outcomes.

Incorporate the data and possibilities revealed by the Forecaster in your community visioning process.

Identify your community's education priorities.

### **Where can you find the Common Good Forecaster?**

You can find the Common Good Forecaster at [www.liveunited.org/forecaster](http://www.liveunited.org/forecaster) or [www.measureofamerica.org/forecaster](http://www.measureofamerica.org/forecaster). Try it today!

For more information, check out the companion piece to the online Common Good Forecaster tool [HERE](#). This report, *Goals for the Common Good: Exploring the Impact of Education*, examines the ten indicators featured on the Forecaster and makes the case for why education is important to each of these issues.

We hope these Action Alerts energize your RuFES deeds and aspirations. Help us spark **more** RuFES action! How? Simply [contact us](#) with any news, ideas or opportunities that can help your RuFES colleagues across the nation.

Your RuFES Action Team,

John Molinaro, Janet Topolsky, Kelly Malone, Elsa Noterman  
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