

# TRI-CITY FORUM.com

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## Plan's goal is high quality of life

The Tri-City Herald 2020 Vision asks the question, "What do we want for our community by the year 2020?" This is something that more than 200 leaders representing all sectors of the community have done a lot of thinking about in the past few years through an effort called Community Solutions. United Way has facilitated this process. Simply said, the group envisions a community that creates opportunities for a better life for all.

We believe there are four building blocks that we all need for a good life: health, education, self-sufficiency and safety. By 2020, we want residents in our community to be in good health, with a quality education that leads to a stable job, with income that can support a family through retirement, and living conditions that are free from abuse, neglect, violence and crime.

We have developed the first-of-its-

kind Community Solutions Plan for our region that will help us reach these goals. The plan is designed to create long-lasting changes by addressing the underlying causes of problems.



**Traci Parrish**

In Focus

We know that we cannot do this by ourselves. This cannot be our vision alone; it must be our community's vision. To have success, we need many individuals and organizations working in tandem, including health and human service agencies, schools, law enforcement, health

care, local government, the faith community, etc.

This already has started to take place with the first initiative stemming from Community Solutions called Our

Babies Can't Wait, launched in January.

With around 3,900 babies born in Benton and Franklin counties every year, we have a huge opportunity and a lot at stake. The vision of Our Babies Can't Wait is that by the time today's babies are 20, they will be successful in school and in life because of the foundation we built to enable them to make the most of their physical, social-emotional and cognitive potential.

Our goal is that in 20 years, these young adults will all have excellent physical and mental health, have at least a high school education, have good skills and be gainfully employed, or be pursuing advanced education. They also will be living in an environment free from crime, physical neglect and abuse. They will have the foundation for a good life.

This is what we envision for our community in 2020. If we can enable our residents to have the basic things

they need for a good life, then we will have accomplished a lot in making our community a better place for all of us. Our goals may seem lofty and we know that our work will not be complete in 2020, but we believe that if any community can carry this plan to fruition, ours can.

Together, as a community, we can accomplish what no individual or family can do alone. Together, we can create a brighter future and a better life for the residents of our community.

For more information or to find out how you can get involved with Community Solutions and Our Babies Can't Wait, visit [www.communitysolutions-bfco.com](http://www.communitysolutions-bfco.com).

▀ *Traci Parrish is president and chief operating officer for Ringers Inc. She is chair of the Community Solutions Committee and is a member of the board of directors for United Way of Benton and Franklin Counties.*