



Telescope

May 2010

**2010
Annual Celebration
&
Boundary Crosser
Leadership Award**

Thursday, June 3, 2010
5:30 to 7:00pm
The Chelsea Center

RSVP
365-8751



What's Your Theory of Change?

Several years ago The American Prospect published an article about the Presidential campaign between McCain and Obama. The author believed that, "this is not a primary about ideological differences, or electability, but rather one about a difference in candidates' implicit assumptions about the current circumstance and how the levers of power can be used to get the country back on track. It's the first "theory of change" primary I can think of."

What does that mean, "theory of change?" Again from The American Prospect, "it refers to a fairly new way of evaluating the effectiveness of projects by drawing out the underlying assumptions about how they lead to social change. It's a useful innovation, because often differences that seem to be about ideology or effectiveness are really just different ideas about the process that will lead to change, though unspoken and unquestioned. (For example, a foundation dedicated to ending hunger might choose between giving \$100,000 to a food bank that feeds 100 people a day, or to a legal group that sues the state over Food Stamp eligibility rules, or to a national group that organizes poor people to push Congress for a total Food Stamp overhaul. At the end of a year, only the food bank would have results to show, but that doesn't mean it's the only effective approach -- the potential results from the other two approaches to change are much greater, if the legal and political strategies are sound.)"

So what is SCOPE's "theory of change?" The mission of SCOPE is to "connect and inspire citizens to create a better community." The desired change is a "better community." Though that is vague, it speaks to improved life across sectors and across scales. It means that improvement is palpable in the natural, built, economic and social environments. It means that each neighborhood, from Newtown to North Port experiences a "better community."

It also means that change is based upon people being engaged. When in relationship with one another, people have both the capacity and the desire to reduce suffering and to generate a thriving community. How that happens is based on a mountain of work that precedes us – I will get to that a little later. It is this assumption that helps explain why you might hear some people describe SCOPE as a community engagement organization.

What are the other "underlying assumptions?" For one, engagement is not just about some people. That is, our community can only realize its fullness when the capacities of everyone are engaged. This includes those who are traditionally at the margins, economically, socially or politically. In 1919 the company that became KitchenAid

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invented the home “stand mixer.” They ultimately concluded that they needed to redesign the mixer so that the paddles doing the mixing would bring the flavor that was at the edges into the middle – the batter was better because of it.

There is more. Relationships are the building blocks of community. But there is more to it than that. Sometimes we join together with others around common interests like bowling or reading books or faith or common suffering or race. These relationships are based upon commonalities. They are important since they contribute to identity and protection. One can think of them as the glue that helps make community.

There is another kind of relationship that is also essential to a complete and potentiate the capacities, skills and abilities of everyone are brought to bear. Strong, vibrant and powerful communities rely upon coming together around similarities and bridging differences; we need glue and lubricant. Change is most lasting when it happens from the inside.

What is your “theory of change” and what are the assumptions under it?

Spotlight on Pamela G. Truitt Boundary Crosser



What does being a boundary crosser mean to you?

Since we are talking about the civic context, the whole concept of a boundary has always been a little fuzzy to me. This is partly so due to my training in community planning—linking up parts to make a whole. I am fortunate to see connections in so many ways—from the civic, political, business, human and environmental systems to the block, neighborhood, section of town and regional level. OK, I admit it—I have a hard time drawing boundaries.

What comes to mind when you think about crossing boundaries in your experience?

That there might be an opportunity to resolve a problem or challenge. That the boundary is artificial. That you won't ever know unless you are willing to try.

In reflecting back, what were the big “takeaways” for you? What is most challenging about crossing boundaries?

Boundary crossing requires risk and trust – two attributes that aren't always in the same league. Not everyone appreciates what you are trying to achieve—even those in your own camp. In order for me to cross boundaries, I must be balanced in my heart and head and have a good team to help work things through. No one said it was easy work!

What inspires you?

Nature in its most simplistic form—sunrises, sunsets, a walk in the woods or the beach. Good people, who know that the world isn't perfect, but continue trying to make it better.

Do you have any words you live by?

I need to remember who I am, not who I'm not.

Pam Truitt will be honored as SCOPE's sixth Boundary Crosser on June 3, 2010.

SEE WATER - RIPPLES OF CHANGE

Kate Irwin



I've been staff support for the citizen-led committees stemming from the Summit for Environmental Action, a day-long event held in 2008 to identify and take action on local environmental priorities. One of the committees has a mission to work on the topic of alternative water sources and uses. My biggest takeaway from my two-year-long journey with the See Water Committee has been about the non-linear nature of community change. Community change does not adhere to an organization's carefully planned timeline!

During the first six months of committee meetings, discussion ran the gamut of topics related to water and which the group would choose as their focus. Among many other topics, we discussed cisterns, dual flush toilets, the water needs of firefighting, well water, salt intrusion, St. Augustine grass and rain gardens. At times I wondered what the point of all this discussion would be.

However, part of the citizen-centered process that SCOPE is dedicated to meant that the committee was not directed by SCOPE staff but instead self-determined its goals. This meant that my role in the committee was relegated mostly to listening and providing input about how SCOPE could help with a specific topic.

Now, two years after the committee formed, we are working on projects as diverse as well water metering, a campaign to promote installation of low-flow aerators, and a partnership with students from Ringling College of Art & Design and *GOOD Magazine* to communicate the value of water. The group has been amazingly successful at maintaining member interest around a variety of topics, creating partnerships with outside organizations, and strengthening professional connections between group members, many of whom work within the water field.

Had I been insistent that the committee come up with a plan and then move through it in a regimented series of steps, I know that we would not have the plethora of successful projects we do now. The See Water Committee has shown me concretely that change is not always linear and that sometimes we must have faith in a process that seems 'messy,' where there is no concrete end in sight.



SCOPE values.....CITIZEN-CENTERED PROCESSES

Neighborhoods: Finding “The Full Half” Part 1 of 2

April Doner



How can we act upon today’s issues so that what we build will last beyond tomorrow? SCOPE’s experience working to foster long-term community change from the neighborhood level suggests that to have a lasting effect, one important and often forgotten step is finding out how our community is already “full.”

Seeing Need

Every person, group and organization approaches an issue with a framework. In the area of community development and revitalization, the framework most commonly used by organizations, agencies, and sometimes citizen groups focuses on needs—the problems of individuals or of place.

When applied in the sphere of community change, this framework has limitations and consequences. It limits us from knowing what resources exist that can help us achieve our goals and can also result in an identity defined by our deficiencies. Second, when needs are the first focus, people who have been marginalized remain on the margins of the community. This includes people with disabilities, people living on welfare, youth labeled “at-risk,” and people who are elderly. When we start with needs, we see such groups as “needy” first and foremost and it becomes difficult to engage their talents, skills, and knowledge. Finally, a needs-focus can be disempowering to citizens and the civic sector in general by downplaying the expertise of citizens to solve community issues and assigning greater value to the expertise of professionals and institutions skilled at identifying and meeting needs. As a result, the majority of resources for addressing community issues are directed to professionals and programs which often exist outside of the community.

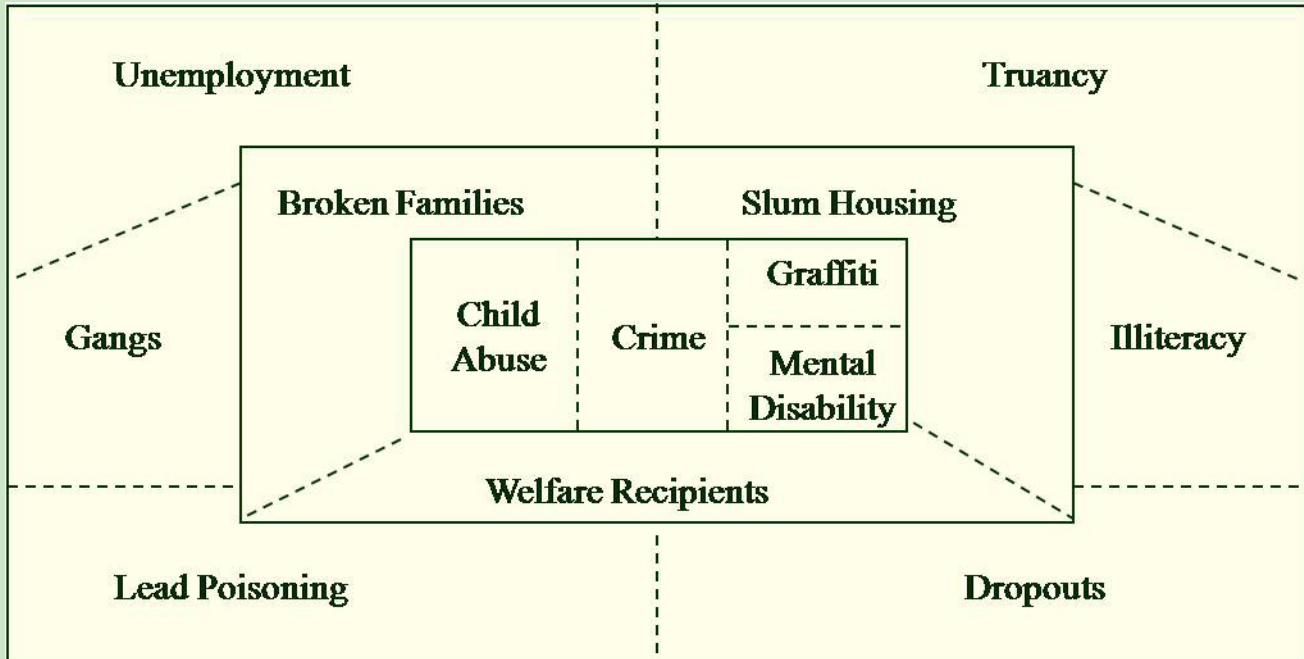
The Full Half

What is the alternative? SCOPE has come to appreciate the power and value of an asset-based approach to community change.

An asset-based approach recognizes that all communities and individuals are like a half-full glass of water. Each person and community has deficiencies and problems (emptiness). At the same time, we have valuable resources, skills, talents, knowledge, and positive qualities (fullness). A young woman with mental disabilities is a talented singer. A block struggling with violence and drug dealing is full of resourceful and caring neighbors willing to make it better. When taken together, the full half of a community—its citizens, citizen groups, institutions and geographic place—are its *assets*.



COMMUNITY ASSETS MAP



from *Building Communities From the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*, Kretzmann, John P. and McKnight, John L.

While this approach seems simple, it is not often easily applied because we have structured many community programs and sometimes our minds around needs and emptiness. Deficiencies in neighborhoods and citizens are well-researched and documented. For instance, we can easily find out how many people in a community have dropped out of high school, receive welfare, or have disabilities. But, what do we know about what these people can contribute toward the success of neighborhood children? Similarly, what do we know about which groups, clubs and associations exist in this neighborhood are already doing something around youth? Who would do something if asked? These kinds of questions reveal untapped assets as well as opportunities for partnership between individuals, groups, and organizations with common interests.

Large-scale efforts to address local issues are often led by institutions such as local government or service agencies. Asset-based thinking offers a pathway for citizens and institutions to partner more effectively together by filling in a knowledge gap about the resources that citizens and their voluntary associations bring to the table.

Stay tuned for Part 2 of this Article in the next issue of TeleSCOPE!

SCOPE values...ASSET ORIENTATION

Connecting and Building Relationships...one event at a time

Kim Weaver



SCOPE values **Convening** and the **Exchange of Ideas and Facts**. Therefore, SCOPE brings together residents, business owners, government officials and organizations to listen, learn, and discuss ways to impact issues that affect the quality of life in Sarasota County.

On February 26, 2010, SCOPE brought together over 200 people to join national experts Dr. Phyllis Moen, McKnight Presidential Chair in Sociology at University of Minnesota, and Dr. Michael Smyer, Provost and Professor of Psychology at Bucknell University. The forum focused on transition, both for individuals facing retirement and for our society with the current aging workforce. Overall, three main themes sum up the discussion at the forum: (1) Current employers must use this aging demographic as an opportunity to restructure the workplace to be more flexible, with workers more in control of their career paths. (2) Individuals need to plan for their retirement as a period of transition and as an opportunity to continue with sustainable meaningful engagement. (3) Intergenerationally, people need to recognize and act on social links to maintain support and workforces need to focus on both assets and challenges that age raises.

What was fascinating about this event was the excitement, passion and connections that came out of the day's discussion. The forum wasn't just about sitting and listening to 'experts', but it gave community members the opportunity to join in on the conversation. The value of meeting face to face and connecting over a 5 hour program cannot be matched over the internet or a conference call. Convening a group of citizens not only brings us together to examine a topic, but helps us to weave the connective fabric of our community.

Taking the face to face convening to the next level, a group of engaged citizens decided to meet to exchange information and explore topics that would keep the discussion moving between annual Winter Forums and formed the 'Continuing the Conversation' group. The purpose of the "Continuing the Conversation" group is to explore what the individual can do and what the community can do to address the demographic shift in Sarasota County. Those that join are partnering with citizens around topics that they are passionate about to explore topics that help to keep the dialogue of the shifting demographic alive in the community.

There are currently five workgroups meeting periodically to keep the topics related to the Winter Forum on the top of everyone's mind. **Healthcare, Arts and Vitality, Training and Workforce Development, Housing and Residential Regulations**" (which includes Universal Design, intergenerational living, and mobility) and a group focused on "**Intergenerational**".

I believe that convening and exchanging information adds value to the work that SCOPE does in community, in our lives, and in world. This is a place where relationships can begin, connections can be made, and passions can be activated.

To get involved with SCOPE's Continuing the Conversation group, please contact Kim Weaver at kweaver@scopexcel.org.

(To read the Winter Forum summary, visit www.scopexcel.org)

SCOPE Values...the EXCHANGE OF IDEAS

www.scopexcel.org

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