

**Pew Partnership:
A Spotlight on
Solutions**

The Pew Partnership is a civic research organization. Our mission is to identify and document promising solutions in five areas crucial to strong communities:

Healthy children and families

Thriving neighborhoods

Living-wage jobs

Viable economies

Collaborative leadership

We test problem-solving strategies in communities across the nation through three initiatives: *Wanted: Solutions for America*, the *Pew Civic Entrepreneur Initiative (PCEI)*, and the *Civic Change Project*.

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Wanted: Solutions for America

The Search for Solutions

In our anxious search for solutions to complex community challenges, people tend either to doubt everything or believe everything. On one hand, people distrust institutions and doubt that any program or strategy really works. On the other hand, people who are isolated from reliable information about effective approaches sometimes believe—and try—everything. Both these tendencies, while perhaps convenient, offer little hope for bringing healthy communities into the new millennium.

The search for solutions to America's tough challenges demands that we identify successful strategies and use what works—not in a handful of pilot sites, but in every community in the nation. This issue of *Civic Partners* charts the territory between believing nothing and believing everything by exploring how to document successful strategies and disseminate reliable information to communities struggling to educate children, improve neighborhoods, create living-wage jobs, and engage citizens in public life.

Not simply a companion for reflection, *Civic Partners* is a tool for action. In the search for solutions, each one of us needs to turn over a few rocks and travel unfamiliar byways to seek out new insights. This is not a solo trip but a group journey. As citizens, neighbors, and communities join together to share what they have found that works, we'll help each other avoid blind alleys and walk with sure footing into the new century.

Pew Partnership

We want to know what is working to solve tough problems in your community. Share your solutions with us at mail@pew-partnership.org

“To doubt everything or to believe everything are two equally convenient solutions; both dispense with the necessity of reflection.”

—Jules Henri Poincaré

Solutions Will Take More than the Usual Suspects

By Suzanne W. Morse

"I paid the grandchildren five dollars to speak up," chuckled my husband's ninety-something Great Aunt Bessie as she divulged how she dealt with her hearing problem. Long frustrated with the buzz of her hearing aid, Aunt Bessie figured she had uncovered the perfect solution to her hearing loss. While any ENT specialist would cringe at this approach, Aunt Bessie had something important to say to us. Sometimes simple works. Sometimes collaborating with other people improves the circumstance at hand. Sometimes we know how to fix things ourselves. And sometimes it is the unusual suspects who have the most compelling answers.

We are entering the new millennium, Y2K and all. Amid the hype and the fanfare, a very sobering reality should be with us: The year 2000—the beginning of our third millennium—may have a striking similarity to the end of the second millennium.

In fact, our future may be worse than our past.

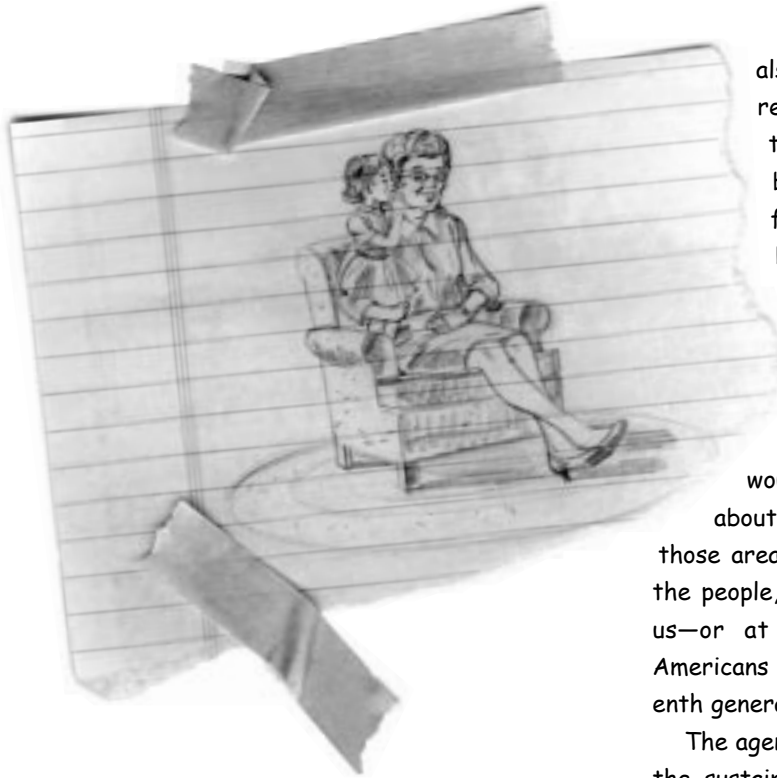
Dear Aunt Bessie notwithstanding, solutions to our current civic problems will not happen just by speaking up. Speaking up will help, of course, as citizens find their collective voices and yell loudly, "We aren't going to take it anymore." But speaking up will not be enough. No, the new millennium needs ideas and solutions that are not only strategic and action-oriented but that also include the thinking and experience of more people and organizations, perhaps unusual suspects.

The civic landscape is filled with approaches for changing things—long-term vision as well as short-term action steps. With all these bright people thinking about our critical issues, we have to ask why things are not improving as rapidly and as sustainably as they should. Primarily, the answer lies in four areas: first, in the inability of communities to frame issues so that citizens can consider the choices that

must be made and then work together to implement them; second, in the exclusion of the unusual suspects, those people and organizations needed in the search for solutions and who haven't participated before; third, in the unwillingness of a community's leaders at all levels to join together on critical community issues; and finally, in the

"Ain't nothin' to it but to do it."

- Maya Angelou



inability to make up our collective minds to actually do something. As a boomer favorite, The Lovin' Spoonful, once reminded us, "Did You Ever Have to Make Up Your Mind?" We must finally decide if we are going to solve the problems or not. And if so, what will it take? Here we are sitting at the precipice of the new millennium with far too few solutions to those issues that matter most and that will have the greatest impact on human beings and their prospects for livelihood. Forget about the champagne and the party hats and think about what we want the new century to be and how we can reach our goals.

Deciding on the Issues

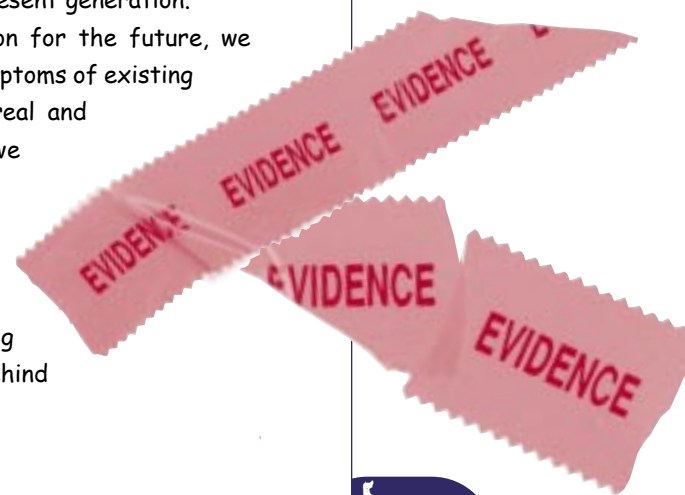
There *are* answers to the questions that have tormented too many in this century. But there are

also realities to be faced. We have limited resources no matter how many zeroes there are in the federal, state, and local budgets. There is not enough money to fix our human challenges; there will never be, no matter how well the stock market does. Furthermore, it is not just about money. Other factors are in play. So where should we put our time, energy, and money in the next century to see a permanent return on our investments? I would argue that the issues we need to think about most are "Next Generation Issues"—those areas that will have the greatest impact on the people, places, and things that will come after us—or at least will mature after us. Native Americans have long thought in terms of "the seventh generation," and so must we all.

The agenda for the next century should focus on the sustainability and health of our future. The emphasis should not be just on what is, but also on what will be. Issues such as the health and welfare of our children and their families, the quality of public education at all levels, and the state of our physical and natural environment must be resolved so that the seventh generation will have more promising expectations than the present generation.

To realize a new vision for the future, we must look beyond the symptoms of existing problems and find the real and underlying culprits; we must force ourselves to go far beyond the circumstantial evidence and examine what Charles Kettering called "the problem behind

“Forget about the champagne and the party hats and think about what we want the new century to be and how we can reach our goals.”



NEW SUSPECTS

“We begin by giving human concerns the same thought and consideration that we give technology and science.”

the problems.” Ah, now that presents a different scenario altogether. So it is not just jobs, it is the education and training of the people to fill those jobs. It is not just school dropout rates, it is the interrelated issues that lead young people to that decision. It is not just about one thing; it is about a lot of things at once. We must come to grips with the complexity. What are the problems behind the problems?

Finding New Suspects

We begin by giving human concerns the same thought and consideration that we give technology and science. We begin to hothouse solutions to human dilemmas in the same way we do computer networking capability or a laboratory experiment. We stay with ideas until sustainable solutions are known; we find out by experiment and research what works or doesn't work under similar situations; and then we find ways to sustain, market, and distribute working ideas for broad use. We take the time and energy and resources to do research and development in the social service and civic worlds. In short, we begin to look around us for the unusual suspects, circumstances, and partners who may have answers.

All our perceptions about communication and access to information are changing because of the incredible speed at which biomedical, scientific, and technological advances are being made. What seemed like science fiction only a few years ago is now commonplace. New-century thinking for communities must be out of the box as well. We need to tinker with existing circumstances and processes as Peter

Senge suggests in *The Fifth Discipline*, but we must also call on ourselves to think of the unusual suspects in terms of people, organizations, and approaches that will make the hallmark of the new century not technology or science but the improvement of the human condition. This out-of-the-box thinking for civic solutions will build on connections, possibilities, and action.

Connecting the Dots

New thinking will include innovative ways to connect community players who can bring resources of all sorts to bear on an issue in their communities and their regions. There will be people and organizations within communities that serve as the “networker” with other people and organizations to identify and connect existing efforts. These connectors will result in new civic organizations and new leadership initiatives that have moved away from service delivery or single-issue causes to civic entities that think all day, everyday, about the welfare of the community.

In successful communities there will be a new prototype of organizational and personal civic leadership that thinks

about the future and acts to make things happen. Think of this emergence of new civic leaders and the new civic organizations as the microchip for communities.



Looking for Possibilities Not Percentages

Ask any successful technology entrepreneur or laboratory scientist about his or her process and at least one of the answers will be that the researcher is not limited by what is. No, most researchers, while methodically uncovering bits of data and information, are ultimately looking for something more than an evolutionary improvement. They are looking for something big, a breakthrough that will make a significant difference. The same will be true with successful solution efforts in communities. You will not hear things like "the crime rate is down 25 percent over the last decade." Instead, the unusual suspects will be looking at the root causes of crime and how to eradicate crime, not just reduce it. "Impossible," many will scoff; difficult, yes, but possible if the goal is to do more than just lower the percentages. People must start thinking in possibilities, not percentages.

Finally Deciding to Do Something

Not unlike the teenager faced with cleaning a very messy room, when it comes to civic work, we often don't know where to begin. The enormity of the task paralyzes us. So there are two choices: Start or don't start. In every big task, the first step is the hardest; from there we begin to peel off layers of uncertainty until we eventually realize that perhaps it wasn't as hard as we thought. If you think of communities as inventing a new and more prosperous future, it is logical that the first task is to define the work—as large and as impossible as that may seem—and then to pick up that first broom or dustcloth for the task at hand. The challenge for the new century

is to have an idea of what you want to get done and then get started.

Well, Aunt Bessie may have thought that I was making too much out of her hearing issue and not enough about what it will take to find the solutions to our country's most intractable problems. I don't think so. We know that our country has always prided itself on its inventiveness and its know-how, but who in their wildest dreams in the sixties would have thought that surfing the net would be something done indoors? Or that car phones would be available to anyone other than the most powerful or the wealthy? Or that encyclopedias could be found on discs a fraction of the size of now old-fashioned LP records? Or that surgery would be done by lasers or computers? Oh yes, those unusual suspects we call Americans in every corner of our country can do almost anything—together. Let's put ourselves to work on the technology of human solutions so that the twenty-first century will have a bright horizon for this generation and those to come.

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the Pew Partnership.
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comments with her at
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The Case for New Relationships: Process Means Progress

By Juan Sepulveda

There's an old joke about a cynical politician who bumps into one of his constituents on the street and snidely asks, "Do you know the difference between ignorance and apathy?"

In blasé form, the citizen responds, "I don't know and I don't care."

That's the way many government leaders see the general public—lazy, uninterested, uninformed couch potatoes. For them, citizen engagement is a waste of time, energy, and resources that could be better spent on doing the public's business *for* the people, not *by* the people.

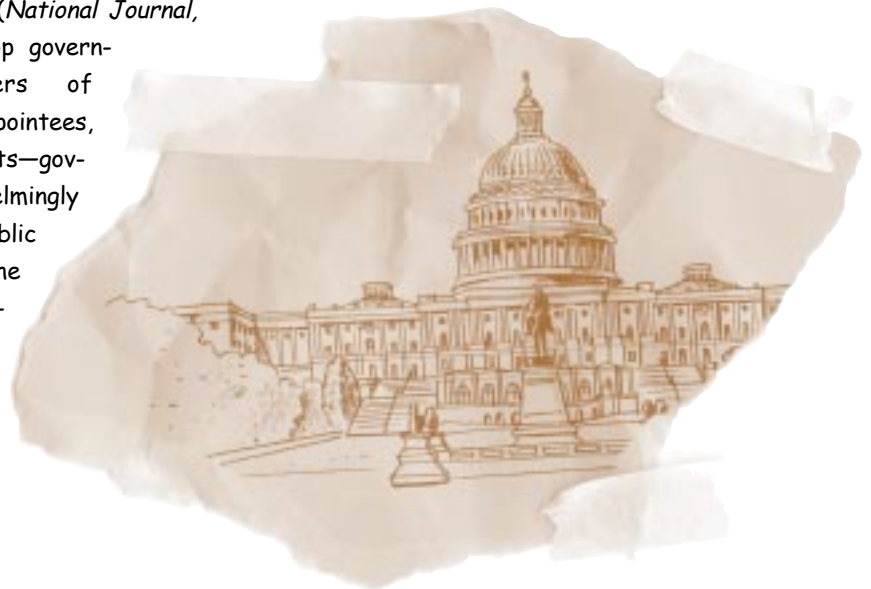
According to a Pew Research Center for the People & the Press (*National Journal*, 1998) survey of 330 top government officials—members of Congress, presidential appointees, and senior-level bureaucrats—government officials overwhelmingly believe that the general public did not know enough about the issues they faced in government to be able to form opinions on what should be done. Only 31 percent of the members of Congress surveyed

believed the public knew enough, while merely 14 percent of career bureaucrats and 13 percent of presidential appointees had enough faith in the public.

In short, the idea that citizens can make an important contribution to the public work of our nation's neighborhoods and communities is not a widely accepted notion by our top officials. This sentiment is also held by other community leaders, who publicly endorse citizen participation but privately question the effectiveness of having the public involved in major decision-making processes. For many of these leaders, letting the general public stand in line for hours to speak into a microphone at a public hearing—where very little hearing takes place—is fine, but bringing citizens into other public

**"Complacency
is a far more
dangerous
attitude
than
outrage."**

-Naomi Littlebear



deliberations is, at best, a public relations tool to show there was "community input" and, at worst, a counterproductive way of tackling community issues.

Our experience in San Antonio, Texas, has been different. We have witnessed the power of everyday citizens influencing crucial public policy decisions, shaping the future of our city, and most important, building personal and working relationships across lines they have never before, or rarely, crossed. This is not to say that everything has run smoothly or worked the way it was intended, but it has shown our community that citizens can play a more meaningful role than they have in the past if given the chance.

Through this article, we hope to start a conversation with other communities that have been struggling with their own strategies and approaches on how best to engage citizens in public work by focusing on three broad lessons we have learned.

Lesson 1: Citizen Engagement for the Long Run: The importance of building relationships, particularly with unlikely partners

For citizen engagement to be meaningful, productive, and sustained over time, citizens need the opportunity to build relationships with one another, not merely work together.

Just dumping them in a room together and asking them to solve public problems is rarely successful, no matter how impressive the mix of people. Many attempts at involving citizens in public work fail because they are so preoccupied with tackling a particular community issue that they do not invest adequate amounts of time in building relationships among citizens. A short-term, "we have to fix this problem now," mentality takes over and turns the citizens' public work into a project.

To succeed in the long term, communities need to adopt a perspective that understands the value of building relationships between citizens. While there is always a specific community project to be addressed, the true value lies in recognizing that citizens are helping to create an atmosphere where getting to know one another and working together to tackle the community's toughest issues become a way of life. It's ongoing. It takes time. It's person-to-person. It recognizes that the only way we can build community is by having everyone share his or her strengths, and the only way we can know what strengths we have is to build relationships with one another.

This is especially true of building relationships among citizens who normally would have no reason to come into contact with one another. Unlikely or "surprise" partners shake up the process. Many times, our public work takes place with people we know, people who



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are similar to us, or people whose type we recognize. When we walk into a room with people who do not seem familiar at all, we are pushed out of our comfort zone and are forced to see, hear, and consider ideas, experiences, and feelings that we may have never encountered.

One specific example highlighting the importance of building relationships across lines can be seen in The Common Enterprise's work with the Mind Science Foundation on a symposium entitled "Mental Fitness for the 21st Century."

The Mind Science Foundation is a not-for-profit operating foundation in San Antonio that is dedicated to the study of the mind. A philanthropic oilman named Tom Slick organized it in 1958. For nearly four decades, the Mind Science Foundation had offered cutting-edge programs related to the mind to a fairly select audience in San Antonio, consisting of primarily Anglo, well-educated, and well-to-do doctors, lawyers, academics, and professionals.

In November 1995, the Mind Science Foundation brought together eight nationally known "problem solvers"—leading thinkers and doers from fields such as philanthropy, technology, film, education, youth, spirituality, and medicine—to talk about the new mindsets and the paradigm shifts that would be necessary for the next century. Traditionally, the Foundation would have brought the guests in for a dinner and lecture with its members.

This time they decided to do something different by inviting community members who had absolutely nothing to do with the Foundation (most of them did not even know the group existed), but who had lots to do with their neighborhoods. They were asked to come together in a San Antonio community think tank that would dream of the city's future, inspired by the intriguing comments of our out-of-town guests. At small tables, ambassadors and businesspeople sat across from community organizers and public school teachers; Anglos sat with Mexican-Americans and African-Americans. For many, this was the first time in their lives they had experienced such an event. They were breaking bread, listening to stories that were foreign to them, and exchanging ideas and comments that came from perspectives they had never considered.

The results were powerful. While the wisdom of the guest problem solvers was stimulating, the interaction among the citizens from all parts of San Antonio created the largest buzz. More than 100 citizens of all ages and from all walks of life spent the day listening, talking, and building a vision for the future. More important, they began to build relationships with one another.

At the end of this day-long process, they wanted more. The citizen participants now more fully understood that San Antonio was a segregated city. While the participants sensed that there were many people interested in working on solving the city's toughest challenges, these citizens were not talking or working together because they were spending most of their time within their own neighborhoods, in cities within the city. The participants believed that this division, left unchecked, would grow.

The result: To counter the trend, *San Antonio Talks* was born. *San Antonio Talks* brings together

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diverse voices from across San Antonio to meet for a series of five dinners. The purpose of the program is to build relationships among people from different neighborhoods and from different age, gender, racial, ethnic, religious, and ideological groups. It also serves as a forum for San Antonians from all sides of town to engage in conversation on those issues that they feel are most pressing to the community.

Lesson 2: **Citizen Engagement:** **How do you do it? The** **importance of process**

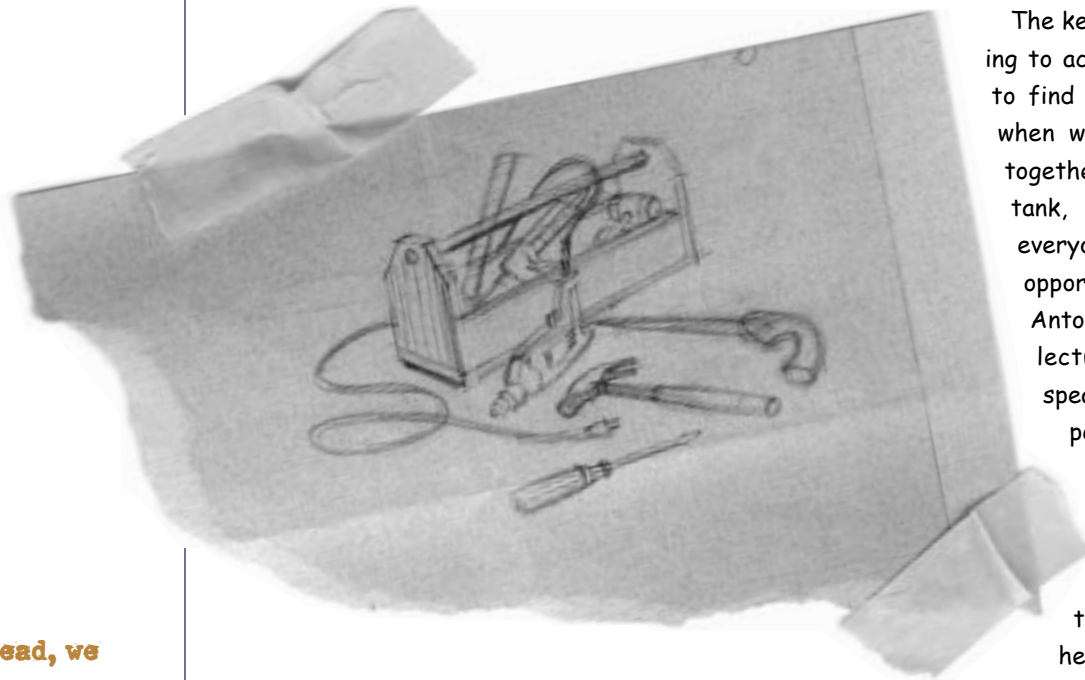
How we engage citizens in public work is just as critical as making sure the general public is involved in solving community problems. Process matters. Often, we spend an inordinate amount of energy battling to



get citizens included in important public activities, but we then forget to spend any time thinking strategically about how to best tap their talents, expertise, and passion.

For many of us who started in community politics, thinking about how you set up a room, create an agenda, hold a conversation, set ground rules, and other process issues was a waste of time. We had real work to do, enemies to fight, and we weren't going to be sidetracked by non-issues. But, for some reason, when we did convene the citizenry to work together on public ventures, they could never get it right. They wouldn't listen to each other. Some folks dominated the conversation while others never uttered a sound. Meetings lasted forever and never seemed to accomplish anything. What was wrong with these people anyway? Absolutely nothing. They were very well-intentioned people lost in a sea of con-

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“Instead, we used a kiva process—a tool borrowed from American Indians, who historically used certain practices to help them discuss important issues for the tribe.”

fusion. No one was helping them steer the course of how to work together or learn together effectively.

The answer? We need to add facilitation and process skills to our arsenal of weapons. Without these tools, we are not getting all that we can from our fellow citizens. More important, they are not getting all they can from the experience, which means they are less likely to come back.

To make sure citizens stay engaged over time, we must think creatively about how we conduct our public business. We cannot settle for staid versions of *Roberts Rules of Order* or condone public hearings that lack meaningful give-and-take and more closely resemble a battle of prepared statements. We need to develop menus of process options that work for the public, that lead to productive conversations, that help them create visions and strategic plans, and that help them solve their problems.

The key is to determine what we’re trying to achieve with our process and then to find a set of options. For example, when we brought San Antonio citizens together for a community-wide think tank, we knew that we had to give everyone a chance to be heard and an opportunity to dialogue with other San Antonians. We wanted to avoid long lectures, a handful of dominant speakers, short question-and-answer periods, and people who refuse to listen.

Instead, we used a kiva process—a tool borrowed from American Indians, who historically used certain practices to help them discuss important issues

for the tribe. This process allowed large numbers of citizens to participate fully and have their voices heard. It focused on small group dialogues as opposed to lectures by experts. It encouraged participants to listen actively rather than automatically critique or analyze. It produced written documents that captured the group’s knowledge and perspective on the issues discussed. In short, it worked because we knew up front what type of atmosphere we were trying to create and what we wanted to accomplish.

Our work in getting more citizens involved in local San Antonio school board elections provides another example. While education topped the list of concerns for most San Antonians, there was an appallingly small number of citizens who voted in school board elections. For example, in the San Antonio Independent School District, the largest inner-city district in San Antonio, an incumbent who

had 40,000 registered voters in his district was able to win reelection with just 311 votes. Parents, students, and community members wanted to devise a plan to get more citizens involved in the electoral process. As the conversation about a plan began, it became apparent that the initiating group knew very little about school boards and school board members, and that they disliked the way the candidates debated through sound bites. But they also had strong opinions about education in general.

With this in mind, day-long community forums were held where 125 citizens, including students, learned about the rights and responsibilities of a school board member, listened to former school board members tell them what it was really like to hold the position, participated in a visioning exercise where they created the ideal school board and school board member, struggled through real-life scenarios where they had to place themselves in the shoes of a board member, discussed the major issues they wanted school board members to address, and formulated questions for the school board candidates. After these pieces were completed, the community members met with each school board candidate, one at a time, for 45 minutes. No sound bites. No stump speeches. No pat answers. Each candidate had to have a real give-and-take conversation with the public.

The result: A large increase in the number of voters and a strong contingent of community members who learned about school boards aired their opinions on education and talked to a group of political candidates in a way they had never thought possible.



Lesson 3: Citizen Engagement beyond Public Hearings: How to involve citizens in important decision-making processes

Citizen engagement should not be limited to those arenas that are seen as "safe" or "not really important." We have to push the envelope and get citizens involved in major policy decision-making processes that impact our communities.

In July 1997, the city of San Antonio changed the way it sets its budget priorities and how it builds a vision for the community's future by including citizens directly in the process. Prior to this time, the public's input was generally limited to three public hearings that took place a month before the budget was to be passed by the City Council. There was little-to-no input by citizens in the shaping of the

The kiva process allows people to have their personal views heard and their collective judgment aired.

city's budget priorities and vision for the future. Their comments were relegated to reacting to proposals that were well on their way to being accepted by the council.

For the first time in San Antonio's history, citizens worked side by side with elected officials and the city staff's executive team at a two-and-a-half-day Community Future Search Conference. This was a carefully planned and designed event during which the community planned its own future, agreed upon a set of achievable goals, developed concrete action plans, and took responsibility for turning vision into a reality. This highly participative approach to planned change engaged the collective learning and creativity of large groups, inspiring people to find common ground around new strategies, future directions, and joint actions.

Each council member and the mayor selected two community advisors to be part of the Community Future Search Conference. The citizens' group included an impressive range of people from across the city and from many different points of view—community organizers, neighborhood association leaders, professionals, small-business people, nonprofit heads, a community college professor, retirees, and community activists. Prior to the work sessions, the community participants, along with the elected officials and city staff,

attended pre-conference sessions that explained the city's budget process, the format for the conference and budget priority sessions, and allowed them to ask questions and start sharing their perspective on what type of San Antonio they wanted to create. During the two-and-a-half-day work sessions, this group of citizens, elected officials, and city staff leaders revisited the past—their own personal stories, San Antonio's history, and the world's past—and began to build connections, relationships, and trust. They examined many of the global trends that were affecting San Antonio and created collectively a vision for a better San Antonio. They then helped shape a new and unique set of budget priorities for the city.

These were not easy conversations. Moving back and forth from small groups to full group discussions, the participants struggled through personal attacks, lack of trust, conspiracy theories, accusations of racism, frustration with the politicians and bureaucrats, and a healthy dose of skepticism for the entire operation of local government. At the same time, fellow San Antonio citizens came together and asked tough, common-sense questions that the elected officials and city staffers could not. Citizens brought their own life experiences and stories into the picture and demanded that the city do business differently. They asked the elected officials to stop looking at issues as district issues alone and start viewing them as San Antonio problems. They asked the politicians and city staff to stop blaming each other for problems and find better ways to communicate and work together. And they asked the elected officials to look to the long term and stop trying to cram projects into their short two-year terms in office.

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“Citizens brought their own life experiences and stories into the picture and demanded that the city do business differently.”

The result: At the end of the process, after the elected officials had cast their votes, a new set of budget priorities emerged that would not have occurred without the input of citizens from across the city. The mayor, several council members, and key city staff leaders all agreed that the comments and ideas put forth by the citizens changed the type of conversations, direction, and priorities the city would have set. The city's priorities were now more proactive, long term, and focused on investment in citizens and neighborhoods. Although public safety was still considered an important issue, it dropped behind education, youth and human development, and economic development. Planning for the future, which had ranked seventy-seventh in 1996, skyrocketed

to the top of the list. Youth services, which had started low on the list of priorities, were moved to the top when several participants complained that a low ranking would send the wrong message to the community.

Engaging citizens in public work is tough. How we do it, what arenas we do it in, and with whom we do it are questions we have tried to answer in San Antonio. Of these, the vital importance of building relationships is what guarantees long-term, ongoing participation. But it can get crazy along the way. At the end of the film *Annie Hall*, Woody Allen offers his take on relationships by saying, "There's the old joke where this guy goes to a psychiatrist and says, 'Doc, my brother's crazy. He thinks he's a chicken.' The doctor says, 'Well, why don't you turn him in?' The guy says, 'I would, but I need the eggs.'"

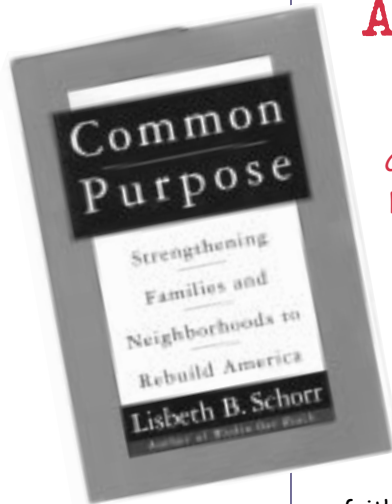
As we struggle through challenges in our public work and in relationships that may at times seem totally irrational, ridiculous, absurd, and frustrating, we have to persevere because, in the end, most of us need the eggs.

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Tracking the Attributes of Success:

An Interview with Lisbeth B. Schorr



Pew Partnership: You wrote in *Common Purpose* that the collapse of people's confidence in public institutions poses perhaps the greatest barrier to developing strategies that will bring all children and families into the American Dream. What is working to restore people's faith that institutions can improve the lives of children and families?

Lisbeth Schorr: To begin to restore faith in our public and civic institutions, we not only need to shine a spotlight on what is working but also on why it's working. People tend to think that programs that work are flukes or a flash in the pan. They attribute success to the talents of a charismatic leader, somebody who is a combination of a Mother Teresa and a Machiavelli and a certified public

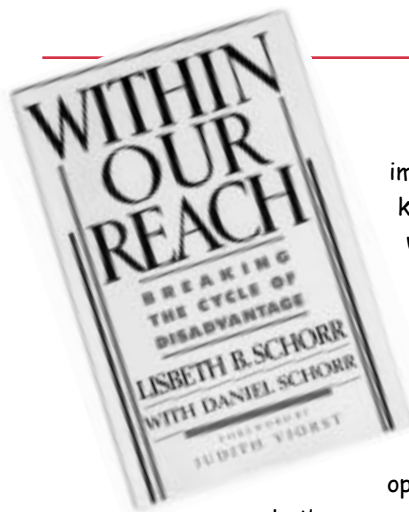
accountant. Then they think that when that leader is no longer involved, the program goes "poof."

The fact that we have ample evidence of programs disappearing once they pass the pilot stage gives credence to the notion that everything that works is an aberration. The media have also contributed to that notion because they are most likely to report on a strategy that works as the result of a charismatic personality or a series of once-in-a-lifetime events. In *Common Purpose*, I have tried to show that there are common attributes in programs that work. If you can extract these attributes of successful programs, then you are no longer dependent on a one-in-a-million wizard. I'm not saying that it doesn't take a lot of talent to run a successful program or put together a community-building or civic-engagement initiative. It takes a lot of talent. But the question is: Is it a one-in-a-million person, or can it be a one-in-ten-thousand person? That's why

it's important to modify the systems that fund and regulate and hold programs accountable, so that they support, rather than undermine, what works.

"You can't depend on your eyes when your imagination is out of focus." -Mark Twain

PP: You have written extensively about the challenge of taking solutions to scale. What is it going to take to move effective strategies from isolated events to national successes?



LS: The most important thing to keep in mind is that what makes for success is not just the program itself but whether the current context in which the program must operate will sustain it.

Let's say you find a school that is really turning things around for kids who come from disadvantaged neighborhoods and families that have not achieved a high level of education. If you want to spread that success, you have to understand not only what made that school work, but you also have to understand how the school system can support, rather than undermine, what works.

So you find, for example, that in effective programs a lot of decisions are made at the front lines—that is, questions of what the home visitor does or what the classroom teacher does are not decided at the central office but by the school itself, or even the front-line worker. That kind of thing is very difficult to do in most systems, which like to standardize and regulate centrally. So one of the things we've learned is that we have to find ways of holding institutions and programs and front-line workers accountable—not for complying with miniscule rules that are set by some central authority, but for achieving results that are understood and agreed upon.

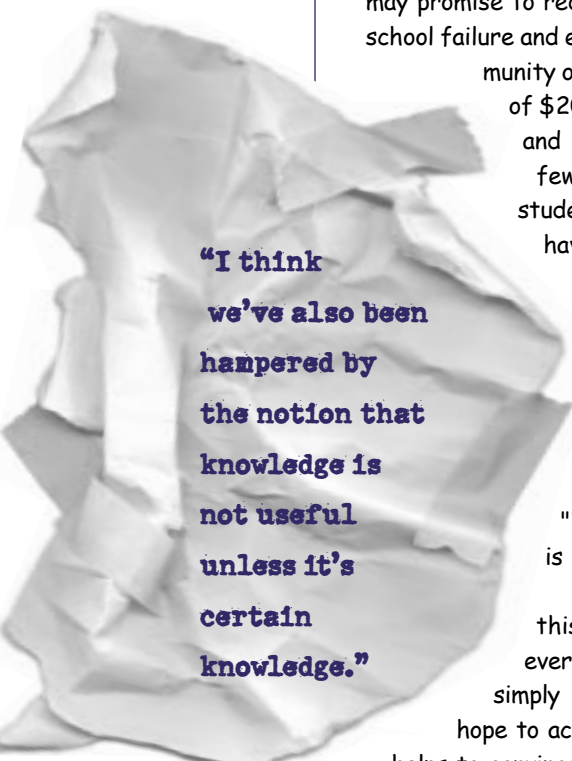
Another example of how systems tend to undermine what works is that most of what works is not a circumscribed, isolated intervention. Rather, effective interventions usually put together a number of different components. If you want to rebuild a neighborhood, you shouldn't be forced by funding restrictions to start with housing if what residents are most concerned about is public safety. Or maybe

in an early childhood intervention, you want to use your home visitors to provide information about job training as well as parenting skills. However, funding tends to be very circumscribed, so that it can be hard to provide a comprehensive array of responses to people's untidy sets of troubles.

PP: How do you measure results? A friend of mine who runs a social service agency said, "Statistically, our results are minimal. But if you happen to be one of those whose lives were turned around, you'd think our results were pretty impressive." What sorts of evaluations will increase our understanding of what works in a comprehensive strategy?

LS: I agree with you that the measurement question is a very difficult one. I think we have to start by being very clear about what we're after and whether that's realistic. What we see is a lot of overpromising as people compete for scarce funding. For example, a community agency





“I think we’ve also been hampered by the notion that knowledge is not useful unless it’s certain knowledge.”

may promise to reduce teen pregnancy and eliminate school failure and eliminate juvenile violence in a community of 50,000 families to obtain a grant of \$20,000. Then evaluators come along and say, “Okay, let’s count how many fewer teen pregnancies and failing students and juvenile offenders you have.” And the program people say, “Nobody can expect \$20,000 really to reduce rotten outcomes of that sort in a community of 50,000.” The evaluators end up agreeing to count how many people come to the project meetings so, as they say, “We can document that something is happening.”

A clear focus on results can end this conspiracy of silence—where everybody knows that the funding is simply not going to accomplish what you hope to accomplish. A clear focus on results helps to convince people to work together, as they realize that most individual agencies and organizations are not able to accomplish alone what needs to be done.

I think we’ve also been hampered by the notion that knowledge is not useful unless it’s certain knowledge. This assumption leads to the belief that the only kind of evaluation that is useful is one that depends on the experimental method with randomized controls and experimental subjects. And with the most promising community-building interventions, the idea of having randomized controls just doesn’t work. So the answer to me is not, “Okay, then we can’t find out about what results we’re achieving.” We can. We simply have to be content with putting together information about probabilities. When you hear the same response from five communities—that intervention X seems to be related to result A, B, or C, for example—then you can

begin to have some confidence that intervention X indeed has those results, even without having certainty produced by randomized clinical trials.

We have to be much more imaginative and generous in our approach to obtaining knowledge in order to put together those pieces of information that add up to a sturdy knowledge base about what works.

PP: The complex challenges communities are facing can be overwhelming. As a local community leader, or a practitioner, or a citizen volunteer, what can I do back in my community "on Monday" to help more children and families have access to the American Dream?

LS: We must recognize that individuals can contribute a great deal—but not in isolation. For example, let’s say that you have decided you want to contribute by becoming a mentor or a tutor. We’ve learned that mentoring is most successful when the mentor is working in a context of support and connection. That way, when you run into trouble, you have the guidance of somebody who can help you figure out why it is that after everything was going so beautifully, all of a sudden the student stopped showing up. Maybe some of the techniques you were using weren’t effective. Maybe this pairing was not a good match. Maybe other events are happening in the student’s life that are interfering with his or her participation. You may need to be in touch with the student’s teacher or family. Being part of a larger structure increases the chances that yours will be a valuable contribution.

PP: At the local level, what do you think are the biggest obstacles to fixing, rather than just patching up, the system? Is government always to blame, or are there other players that form part of the obstacles and also part of the potential to bring about change?

LS: In analyzing how problems we encounter at the local level have come about, we have to understand that there have been some very, very powerful economic forces at play. When manufacturing moved out of our major cities, it took with it living-wage jobs for people with a willingness to work but without special skills. That put much more importance on education and acquiring the skills that you would need to get a decent-paying job in today's and tomorrow's economy. Racism has also played a large part in concentrating poverty in the inner city.

As we understand these powerful forces, the ways we can turn things around become much clearer. We've found out that you can't craft solutions from outside and then just parachute them into local communities. But the other side of that coin is that there are some things that can be brought from outside the community that will help the community solve its problems. It's not only resources that have to come from outside of very depleted neighborhoods and communities, it's also knowledge about what works. The idea that every neighborhood and every community has to start at square one to figure out what will solve its school problems and its public-safety problems or its housing problems is ridiculous. Outsiders should not be deciding for local communities what is best, but outsiders can give local communities some of the tools they need in order to make good decisions.

PP: It's been a little over a decade since you published *Within Our Reach*, a seminal work about breaking the cycle of disadvantage. On the eve of a new century, are these solutions within our reach?

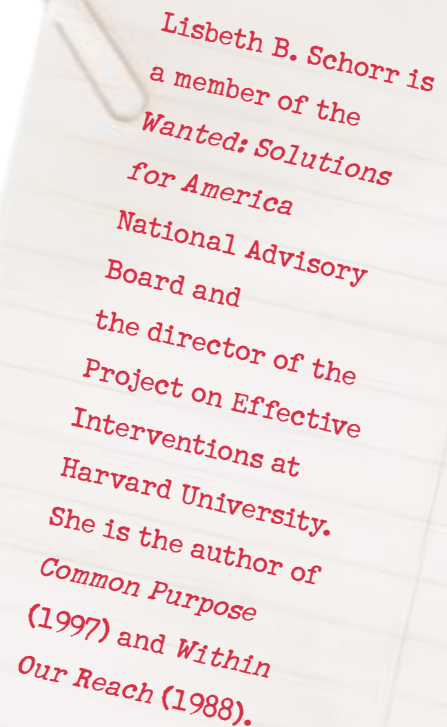
LS: I think solutions are within our reach and, in some ways, more so than when the book originally came out. In many ways, however, I was more optimistic when that book was first published because I

didn't realize how short-lived some of these programs were going to be. It was five years after the publication of *Within Our Reach* that I found out that of the two dozen programs I had documented as successfully changing life outcomes for disadvantaged children and families, only half of those programs were still in existence.

On the other hand, I've also found since then that there are places that have solved the problems of scale and sustaining what works. That's the story I tried to tell in *Common Purpose*. I have become convinced that what can look like meanness among the most fortunate in society to the least fortunate is rather a sense that really nothing works. But I think we now have evidence that once we agree on our common purposes, we can solve the problems of bureaucracy and of holding programs accountable for the wrong things.

We can spread and sustain effective interventions, and we can scale up from small successes. But we have to be better—not only at figuring out what works best and is most effective—but also at letting people know that we know how to do it better. We must work individually and collectively. When people go out and do things on a one-on-one basis—whether it's tutoring children or helping at the soup kitchen—that's an important part of the solution. However, there are some things you can't do as an individual, like providing people with education, medical care, and affordable housing. By working more strategically in both the public and private sectors, we can restore the public's sense of the efficacy of our institutions.

“But we have to be better—not only at figuring out what works best and is most effective—but also at letting people know that we know how to do it better.”



Lisbeth B. Schorr is a member of the *Wanted: Solutions for America* National Advisory Board and the director of the Project on Effective Interventions at Harvard University. She is the author of *Common Purpose* (1997) and *Within Our Reach* (1988).

TV Fans Leave Clues to New-Century Citizenship

By Carole J. Hamner

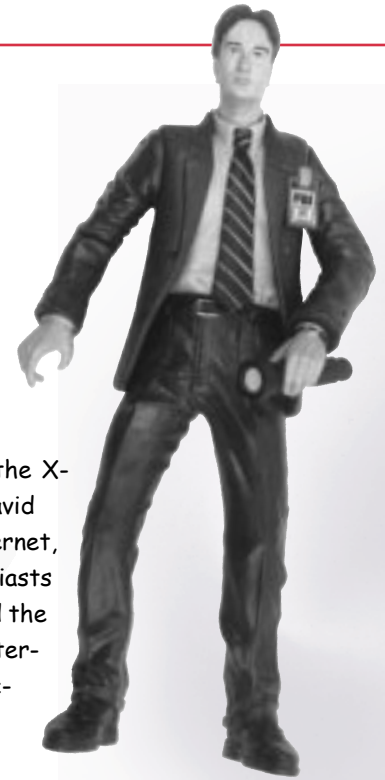
In six years, a small group of *Generation Xers* has blossomed into a global community. What began as haphazard discussions between twenty-somethings across the nation has grown into an international conversation engaging people from all ages, races, and income levels. Connections have sprung up between thousands of people who participate in daily online discussions, weekly local convenings, and periodic regional conventions. The fluidity of the community demonstrates inclusion in action.

"Well, put an end to our suspense," you say. "What is this mystery organization, and why wasn't it slotted a panel discussion at recent community-building conferences?" Perhaps because its founders are the folks most often cited for the decline of community—those *Generation Xers* who watch a lot of television. Members of the burgeoning community I've described above are devoted viewers of the television show *The X-Files*—or, as members like to

call themselves, the *X-philis*. Through avid use of the Internet, these TV enthusiasts have transformed the fan clubs of yesteryear into interactive global communities.

"Whoa," you say. "This phenomenon you're celebrating is a souped-up fan club over a TV show! What are you going to assert next? That the denizens of daytime soap operas are on the cutting edge of social change? That *Star Trekkies* are social activists?"

OK—I admit that the jury is still out on what the *civic dividends* of this burgeoning online community will be. However, before we dismiss the *X-philis* and other online fans as another example of isolated, unengaged individuals in an era of community decline, we might do well to examine what we can learn from them. Though Robert Putnam, one of the leading voices of civic health in the nation, has asserted that folks born after 1950 are less civically engaged *because* they watch increasing amounts of television, what seems more convincing is that patterns of association change. After all, our fathers and grandfathers were not running with the Elks and the Lions and the Moose, first



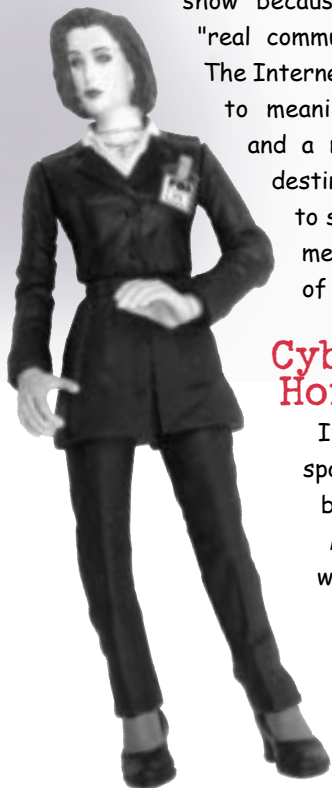
"The Truth Is Out There."™

-*The X-Files*

and foremost, as civic activists. They were heading out the door to meet other individuals who shared common interests. Those who celebrate the associational patterns of our parents while lamenting their contemporary demise would do well to stay alert to emerging, if baffling, forms of social connection.

While the X-philes and other television enthusiasts may not yet be civically engaged, through the Internet they are positively engaged with other people, and this is an important first step. The question is how to tap the enormous talents demonstrated by these supposed couch potatoes and transfer their urges for association from the passing shadow on the small screen to the surround-sound stage otherwise known as real life.

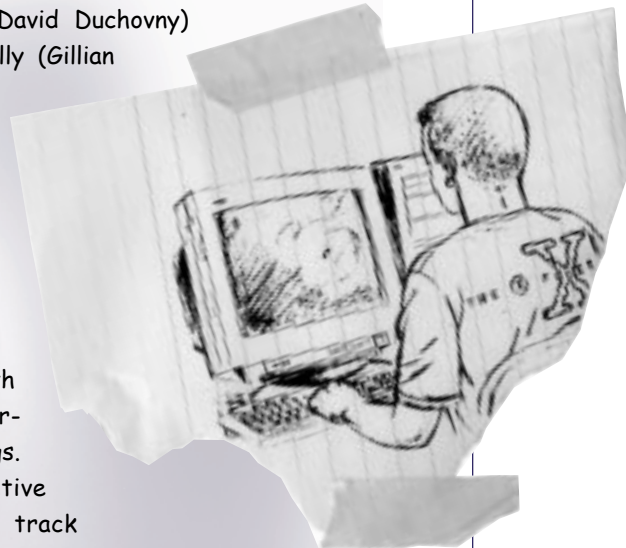
Of course, the fact that some of the nation's brightest and best are lavishing such energy on television programs gives one pause. One wonders if people are embracing the fictional intrigue of a TV show because their experience of "real community" is so diminished. The Internet provides both a bridge to meaningful civic connections and a magic carpet to virtual destinations. The challenge is to sound the call to engagement over the sirens' song of escapism.



Cyberspace Homesteaders

It is ironic that such spontaneous community has burgeoned around *The X-Files*, a television show whose guiding principle is "Trust No One"™ and whose obsession is conspiracy theories.

The show features two FBI agents, Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson), committed to ferreting out not just global but galaxy-wide conspiracies between evil forces on earth and extra-terrestrial beings. These attractive TV sleuths track down outlandish leads about UFO landings and alien abductions.



Still with Me?

But the story of how such an unlikely candidate for media success becomes a cultural phenomenon might inform us about how fledgling social-change efforts can ignite the interest of the nation. Those tuned-in, turned-off TV zombies lamented by civic-engagement gurus have actually transformed television viewing into an interactive activity. Admittedly, it can be alarming to realize that Internet-gateway sites such as Yahoo and GeoCities are exploding with chat rooms where people debate and discuss television shows, from *NYPD Blue* to *Friends*. Don't these people have something better to do? On the other hand, the sheer volume of participation, especially among young people, makes it a force to be reckoned with, whether or not it registers as a civic activity. These online enthusiasts are invigorating cyberspace neighborhoods as engaged citizens renew geographical ones. An exploration of how virtual community builders can contribute to terrestri-

"The Internet provides both a bridge to meaningful civic connections and a magic carpet to virtual destinations."

al community building should look at such examples of thriving online communities.

A healthy skepticism about the attributes of the online communities of X-philes and other television shows is warranted. Critics would assert that the X-philes are not a community but rather a collection of consumers. Admittedly, the language of consumerism readily lends itself to the behavior of these ardent television viewers. They consume an entertainment product and its collateral commodities—*X-Files* videos, coffee mugs, T-shirts, even action-adventure toys. They constitute an attractive demographic segment for marketers. (The Fox Network earns \$5 million in advertising every time the series airs.) Powerful corporate entities are invested in cashing in on this so-called "community." In an era of sophisticated marketing, it is difficult to distinguish "community" from "brand loyalty." Some might argue that the fans of *The X-Files* share nothing but their preference for a particular brand of entertainment commodity.

However, though marketing savvy and network budgets drum up a certain amount of interest in the X-philes online and off, we all know that top-down strategies and money alone do not create and sustain change—whether in communities, in organizations, or in the television-viewing preferences of millions of people. Dozens of well-financed television shows and movies have flopped. The story of how the X-philes online and other virtual communities have flourished lies in the multiplying archives of cyberspace. The "official," Fox-sponsored Web site is only one of thousands devoted to discussions of the television show. A net surfer can as easily access the home page of a fan in Finland who has shared his thoughts about recent episodes as she can peruse the well-financed corporate-network site. It is this level of accessibility that creates the chaos and the promise of online community

building for terrestrial citizens.

Though powerful market forces are at play in pandering to Net surfers as consumers, other aspects of their association more closely resemble a community than a market niche. The yearning of these surfers for community is apparent in the civic trappings of the gateway sites to cyberspace hangouts, such as *GeoCities*. *GeoCities* is one of a number of "community sites" that seek to be gathering places for people to meet and mingle on the Web—like a popular café is a home away from home. Among numerous other categories, *GeoCities* has established a "neighborhood" where enthusiasts of *The X-Files* can "reside." A recent search of the *GeoCities* "neighborhood" where fans of *The X-Files* settle yields more than 10,000 such "neighbors" from around the globe, including, to name just a few, fans from Singapore, Russia, Italy, and Argentina.

What is the cyberspace equivalent of borrowing a cup of sugar from your neighbor? Clearly these sites are playing to a nostalgia for community among Net surfers. After all, people participate in online conversations about a television show (or countless other topics) for the same reason they hang out at the backyard gossip post: because they enjoy connecting with others who share common interests and they want to have a say in how the story develops. The X-philes and other online "homesteaders" exhibit the qualities needed by good neighbors and engaged citizens in their yearning for connection, their enthusiasm for information, and their desire to have a voice in what happens.

If these Generation Xers can transform the ultimate no-brainer pastime—couch-potato TV-viewing—into a dynamic, global information exchange, just think what they stand ready to bring to their communities: an enthusiasm for inclusive dialogue, a formidable technical expertise, and an aptitude for creating connections between disparate people and places.

“The yearning of these surfers for community is apparent in the civic trappings of the gateway sites to cyberspace hangouts, such as *GeoCities*.”

Reality Check

The challenge is not to shift the attention of computer whiz-kids from the digital world to the real world. The digital world is very real and an inextricable part of daily life. The task for community builders is to ensure that the digital world offers opportunities for activism and not just escapism to people of all ages.

Numerous efforts are underway to enlist Generation Xers in building bridges between cyberspace and Main Street. The major daily and Sunday newspapers in Portland, Maine, for example, are working with teens to publish news and features online in a teen-centered Web site linking to the papers' home pages. The *Portland Press Herald* and the *Maine Sunday Telegram* will furnish young people with KOZ software, developed by the company of Frank Daniels III, an entrepreneur whose family owned *The News & Observer (Raleigh)* until 1996. Through a grant from the Pew Center for Civic Journalism, these Maine newspapers will encourage young people's interest in emerging technology while engaging them in news coverage.

Already, experiments are underway to demonstrate the potential of new technology for improving dialogue among citizens. During the Clinton impeachment controversy, NPR reported on "Reality Check," an online, ongoing discussion of the issues surrounding the impeachment proceedings. Participants did not randomly post messages in a chat room. Rather they committed to four weeks of online discussions. Reality Check's executive producer, Mark Weiss, commented:

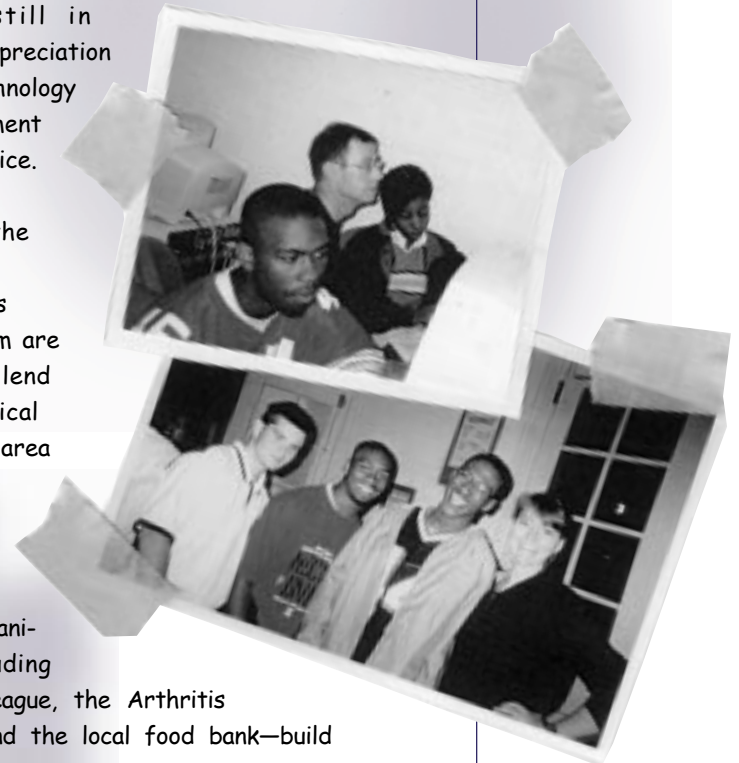
I think there are a lot of people who really yearn for a different way of talking about this stuff. Some of them have found their way to Reality Check, and they're creating a model of a different way of talking about public issues that does not have to be about just one side winning and one side losing, but can also be about people really exploring their differences in an honest and respectful way.

Rather than dismiss the denizens of seemingly trivial online discussion forums, such as those about *The X-Files*, it might be helpful to recruit these interactive enthusiasts to participate in an online experiment, adding to our knowledge about what sustains constructive discussions, online and off.

Far from alienating Generation Xers from their communities, new technologies are demonstrating the potential to connect young citizens with the larger world and its opportunities. An innovative program at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, aspires to teach students not only marketable job skills, but also to instill in them an appreciation for new technology and a commitment to public service. All students enrolled in the Interactive Media Studies (IMS) program are required to lend their technical expertise to area nonprofits. Students have helped an array of community organizations—including the Urban League, the Arthritis Foundation, and the local food bank—build



Cincinnati youth build a Web site for the Underground Railroad Freedom Center.



“The current hum of a million keyboards echoing as many diverse voices is today’s soundtrack of democracy.”

Web sites to increase their communications capacity. Dennis Walsh and Linda Crider, professors who spearheaded the new curriculum, assert that “a positive digital future requires good citizenship.”

One of the service projects Miami University students are volunteering for is a program to teach inner-city youth the technical skills an online era demands. With support from Cincinnati Bell, Professors Walsh and Crider are helping high school students research and create the Web site for the new Underground Railroad Freedom Center, being built in Cincinnati. Technical skills and Internet access can help these young people shape a more promising future for themselves and their community. Professor Walsh predicts that the Internet will transform society in powerful ways, as the printing press changed the world. The Internet, he observed, “is color blind, without racial, religious, or gender bias. It’s a new frontier where you can instill new values in individuals and communities.”

These are just a few examples of the growing

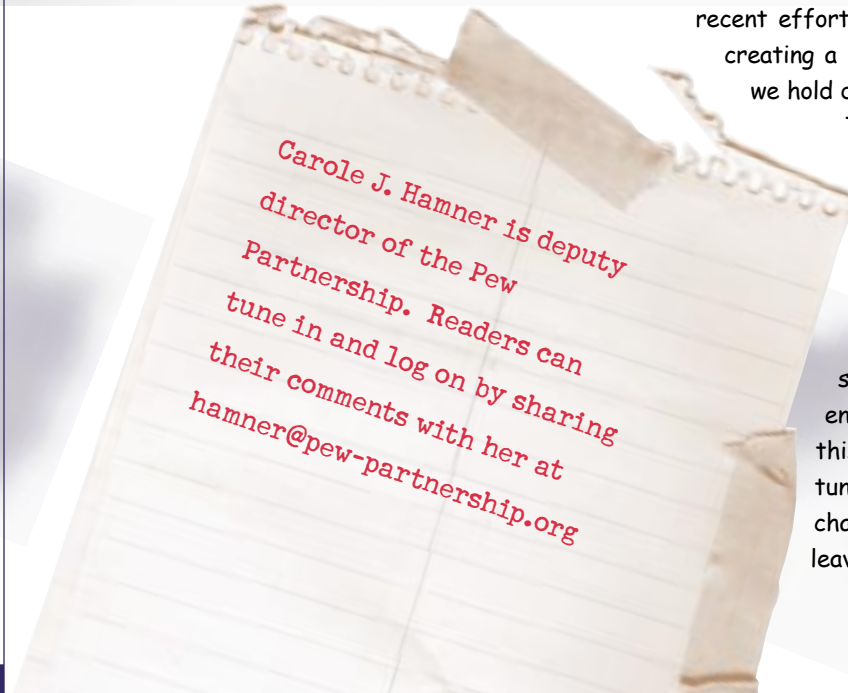
number of initiatives that are tapping the talents of Generation Xers and transferring them to meaningful community building.

The New Soundtrack of Democracy

On the eve of the new millennium, speculation is rife with what future historians will say about the introduction of the PC and the Internet into the world of the late twentieth century. The contemporary observer discerns only a bewildering and burgeoning array of uses and abuses of new communications technology with mercantile, educational, and recreational forces competing for prominence. Online and off, the line between community and consumerism, between neighborhood and market niche, is often blurred.

New technology, however, has always emerged in a tussle of market forces and popular intrigue—whether with the printing press in the fifteenth century, the steam engine in the eighteenth, or the Internet in the new millennium at hand. Contemporary anxieties about the Internet simply reflect the most recent efforts to put technology in the service of creating a better era instead of destroying what we hold dear in the one that is passing.

The current hum of a million keyboards echoing as many diverse voices is today’s soundtrack of democracy. Rather than lamenting the decline of community dialogue, we would do well to experiment with its new and bewildering forms. “Join the conversation!” is the rallying cry of civic-engagement advocates. It’s time to try this time-honored remedy by turning up, tuning in, and logging on to the tumultuous chatter of the new century before it leaves us behind.



Carole J. Hamner is deputy
director of the Pew
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tune in and log on by sharing
their comments with her at
hamner@pew-partnership.org

The Shifting Sands of Evaluation

By Jacqueline C. Dugery

For centuries, individuals and groups have searched for clues to assess, describe, and improve the human condition in various ways. The earliest efforts, launched as potential remedies to fatal disease and early mortality, were the precursors of our modern programs. However, along with the need to develop programs came important questions: Is the program working? Is it working as intended? How could it be improved?

The process used to untangle the effective and ineffective programs evolved with the birth of modern science in the 1600s and the concept of the social experiment. One of the earliest of such tests occurred in the 1700s when a British sea captain, James Lind, noticed the lack of scurvy among sailors who traveled

in the Mediterranean area. Noting the amount of citrus fruit in the diet of the sailors, he ordered half of his crew to eat limes while the other half stuck to their regular ship diet.

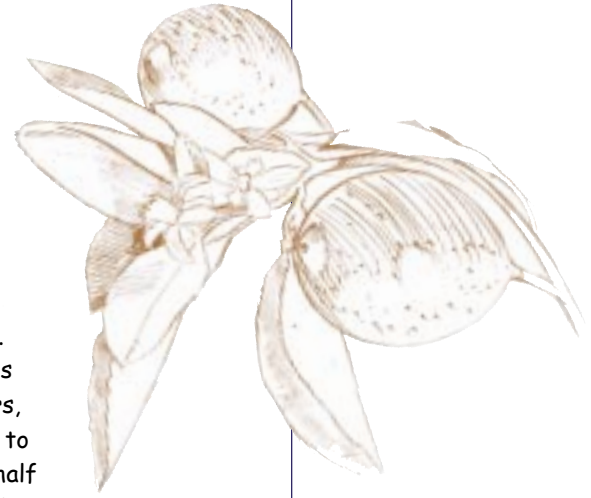
Despite complaints by the sailors forced to consume the limes, the experiment was invaluable: It proved that consumption of foods rich in what we now know is vitamin C could prevent scurvy. The notion of a control group and cause and effect was born!

From an evaluation standpoint, Captain Lind was fortunate. His tasks

were fairly cut-and-dried. He was easily able to construct his control and comparison

groups; the ship provided an ideal test environment for implementing and monitoring the treatment; and the outcome of interest, scurvy, was relatively easy to measure. Simply put, his experiment was an

anomaly, for rarely in the real world does evaluation research resemble setting up a prefabricated home or following a recipe.



Captain James Lind
(1716-1794)

“Not everything that can be counted counts and not everything that counts can be counted.”

- Albert Einstein

Instead, evaluators, like the best detectives, must know the right questions to ask, beware of false leads, and constantly be on the lookout for clues. While by no means comprehensive, several key clues are discussed below.

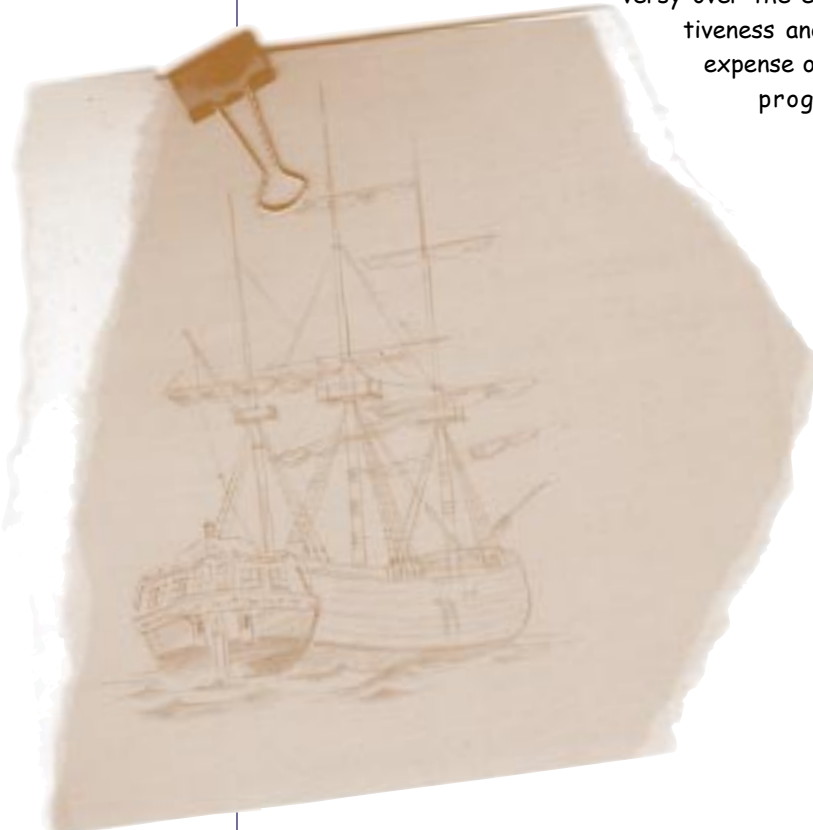
Clue 1: There are (at least) two different opinions on the best method to assess social programs.

The boom period of evaluation began in the mid-1960s as a response to the development of the Great Society programs sponsored by the federal government. The programs' goals—targeting unemployment, poverty, urban deterioration, crime, access to medical care, and mental health treatment—were ambitious, quite hopeful, and expensive. As controversy over the effectiveness and the expense of the programs

persisted, policymakers and citizens became pragmatic and began to demand evidence of results before deciding how to allocate public funds. Thus evaluation research emerged primarily as a tool for proving whether or not a program worked.

Evaluation methods reflected this "burden of proof." Researchers adopted the tried-and-true scientific method, relying on experiments and statistical analysis of quantitative data to determine whether or not the program in question caused the desired change. (After all, it worked for the sea captain.) While such a rigorous scientific emphasis hones in on important questions about causality, it has limitations. Primarily, it requires one specific "treatment" in a controlled environment with separate control and experiment groups. However, in the case of social programs, this translates not into beakers and chemicals in a laboratory, but rather into human beings and complex programs in a constantly changing society. Nonetheless, it can provide useful information about the impact of certain treatments, and many research scientists consider this approach the "gold standard."

As the field developed, other researchers began to argue that the experimental design was both impractical and inappropriate. For example, as social programs started to tailor their activities to address community issues comprehensively, the requirement of a single, uniform program became impossible. Furthermore, with its emphasis on collecting quantitative data, the experimental approach often failed to capture the more intimate and complex details of a program's workings, such as its history, false starts, and unintended consequences. But perhaps most important, some researchers asserted that program evaluation differs from purely scientific research in both its purpose and intent. While acknowledging that evaluation research should strive for legitimacy within the research community, they charged that the needs of the various stakeholders



and their program and policy questions should have the highest priority. Evaluation research presents an invaluable opportunity for programs to consider systematically how best to improve their work. Therefore, evaluation research cannot be a one-size-fits-all process, but requires flexible methods tailored to each program's individual situation.

What all this boils down to is this: How do you balance the tension between the need to prove, with a "capital P," that a program is effective while also assuring that the evaluation "pushes the envelope" and provides practical, useful information to the program's stakeholders?

Clue 2: Beware of the sudden storms that cover up tracks.

Evaluation research by definition is *the systematic application of social research methods for assessing the conceptualization, design, implementation, and utility of social intervention programs* (Rossi and Freeman, 1993). Such a definition implies that evaluation research involves simply following a well-ordered, standardized set of procedures. What it fails to mention is that the targets of evaluation—the programs—do not operate in a petri dish. Instead, social programs are volatile by nature. They may change due to a variety of factors. Resources may change. New stakeholders may come to the table. Staff may decide to modify the components of the actual program. Like a sudden storm, these factors can gust up at any moment; are usually unforeseeable, making it difficult for evaluators to address them in advance; and may cloud evaluators' efforts to focus on the program in question. For example, programmatic shifts may require revision or modification of the basic research design, changes in the types and amounts of data collected, and adaptations due to changes in the interests of the stakeholders. Simply put, a constantly changing environ-

ment that often results in programmatic shifts creates a domino effect on the evaluation.

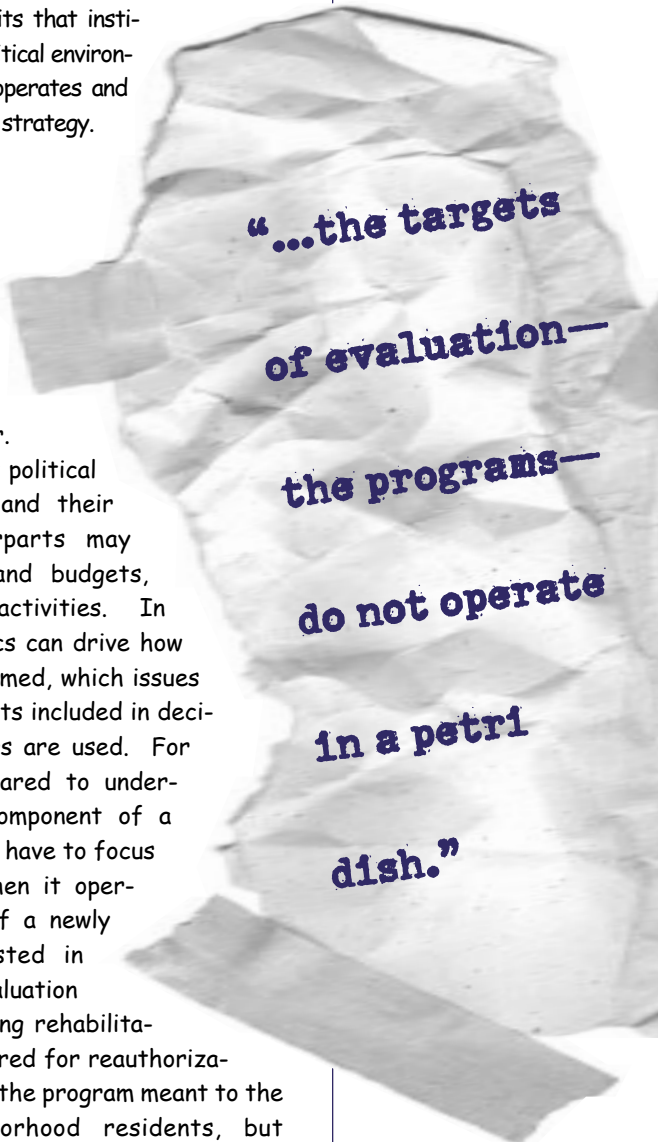
Two of the primary culprits that instigate such effects are the political environment in which the program operates and the program's implementation strategy.

The Political Environment

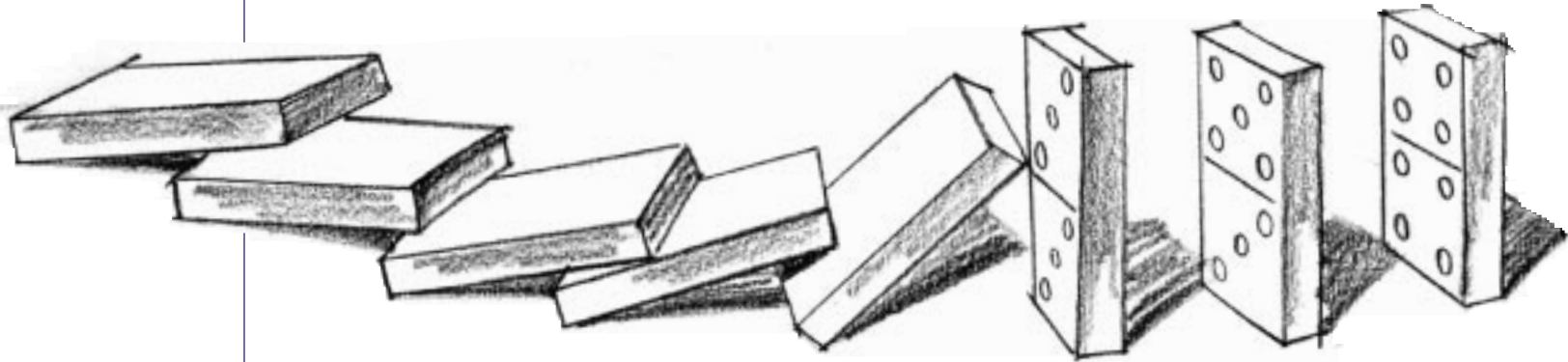
Political shifts have an impact on social programs. Federal elections, particularly presidential ones, often result in a complete realignment of power. Depending on the dominant political party, federal programs and their state and local counterparts may change their priorities and budgets, thereby altering program activities. In terms of evaluation, politics can drive how research questions are framed, which issues command attention, who gets included in decisions, and how the findings are used. For example, an evaluation geared to understanding the education component of a state welfare program may have to focus on different questions when it operates under the purview of a newly elected governor interested in workfare. Likewise, an evaluation of a HUD-sponsored housing rehabilitation program being considered for reauthorization may focus not on what the program meant to the homeowners and neighborhood residents, but instead concentrate on a cost-benefit analysis.

Implementation Strategies

Programs are apt to experience modifications and changes mid-stream. In fact, a program's blue-



“...the targets
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**“Past
experience
has suggested
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utilized.”**

prints may differ significantly from what was actually "built." Variations in the planned versus the actual program may stem from changes in local conditions, organizational dynamics, and programmatic issues. For example, consider an after-school youth tutoring program that finds itself unsuccessful in recruiting the targeted students to participate in activities. After operating for a year as a tutoring program, staff decide to add recreation activities to the program, extend its operating hours, and open the program to include children as well as youth.

While such variation in program delivery may reflect a program that is more responsive to the needs of the community, it demonstrates the importance of sorting out what was actually done in the course of carrying out the program. Without describing the program and measuring the degree to which the service was actually delivered, evaluators run the risk of aiming at the wrong target in terms of the activities to be measured.

Clue 3: What happens after "the case is cracked"?

Program evaluation is undertaken for a number of different reasons, such as providing feedback on program results, contributing information about a program in order to debate alternatives, and assess-

ing the implementation and operation of program activities. Furthermore, it often consumes significant financial resources and time of all involved. Consequently, the evaluation itself is judged by its impact on the actions and thinking of the various stakeholders. In other words, is the research used as an essential and valuable piece of information for decision making? Or does it ultimately languish as a bookend on a bureaucrat's shelf?

Past experience has suggested that evaluation research is underutilized. A study of evaluation research suggests that five variables consistently play key roles in determining the fate of an evaluation (Rossi and Freeman, 1993):

Relevance. The question of an evaluation's relevance is essentially whether or not the evaluation provides information that directly addresses the questions and interests of the stakeholders.

Communication. The degree of two-way communication, particularly during the planning and design phases, between researchers and the end users is key to useful evaluations.

Information processing by users. Individual stakeholders respond to information in a variety of ways. An additional challenge to information processing is simply the burgeoning amount of information that competes for stakeholders' attention.

Plausibility of research results. The degree to which the evaluation findings challenge or support stakeholders' preconceptions and hypotheses about the program will determine how actively the findings are used.

User involvement or advocacy. Correlated to the issue of relevance is how actively the end users of the evaluation engage in following up on the findings.

Following the Clues— *Wanted: Solutions for America*

All three of the above clues—which involve research design choices, acknowledging the context that programs operate in, and assuring that the findings are useful—arose in the course of designing and planning the Pew Partnership's newest initiative, *Wanted: Solutions for America* (see page 32). Over the next two years, *Wanted* will identify, document, and disseminate the most promising solutions to a variety of issues challenging the country. Here are some strategies the initiative is pursuing:

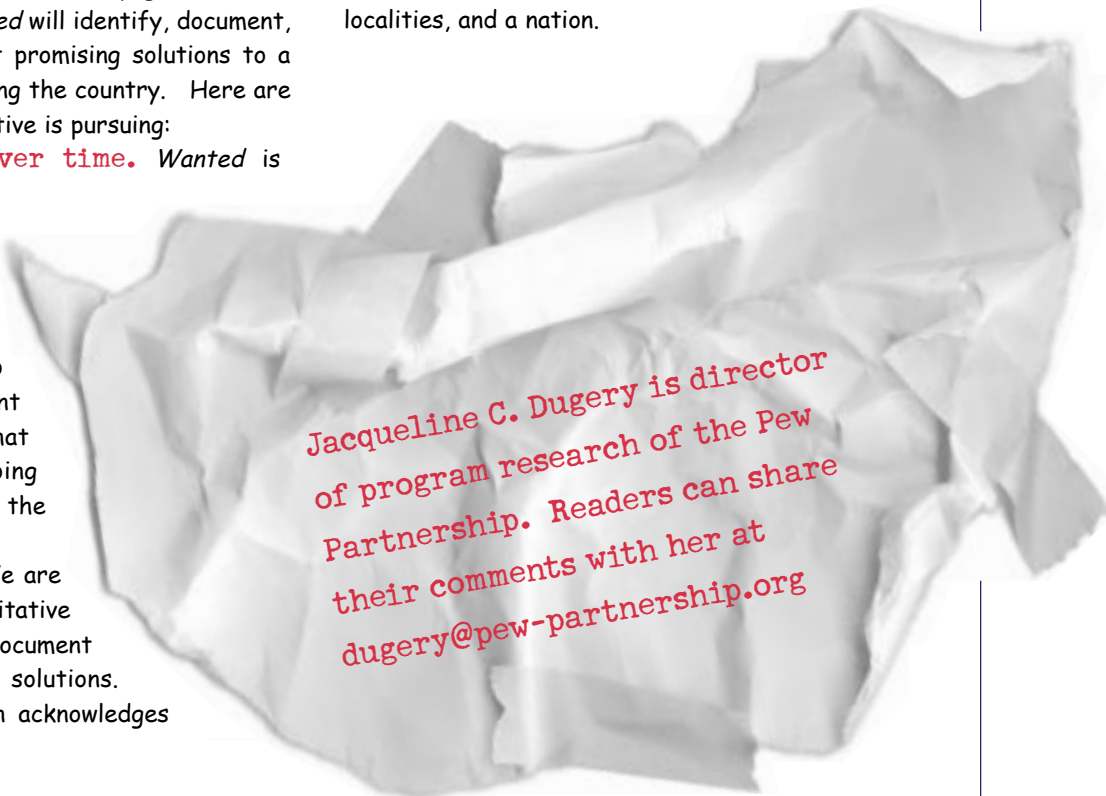
Track programs over time. *Wanted* is examining programs over a period of time as opposed to taking a snapshot. By partnering with communities over the course of two years, we will document their work in a way that acknowledges the ongoing changes and still captures the results of the program.

Create a hybrid. We are relying on a mix of quantitative and qualitative data to document the results of *Wanted* solutions. *Wanted's* research design acknowledges

that using both types of data enhances its credibility with the research community and the participating programs' stakeholders. The *Wanted* communities are collaboratively developing the documentation plan with the research team.

Plan for dissemination. The lessons learned from *Wanted* will be valuable to communities everywhere. We will disseminate practical information about promising solutions to policymakers, practitioners, and citizens throughout the nation.

Finally, there is a need to pioneer research methods that document what works—not in a petri dish, but in the rough and tumble world of complex problems and constant change. Across America, citizens are countering challenges with energy, innovation, and effectiveness. By capturing and disseminating these solutions, we will increase our knowledge of what works and raise the bar on our expectations of what we can accomplish, as individuals, localities, and a nation.



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Book 'Em

Resources for Civic Participation

Catalytic Leadership: Strategies for an Interconnected World, by Jeffrey Luke; Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998

This book challenges our notions of leadership by focusing on the public role of leadership and how it differs from the requirements in other sectors. The interrelationship among public problems demands that they be addressed in fundamentally different ways. Public or civic leaders must be able to focus attention on an issue, convene a diverse set of people to address the issue, stimulate multiple action strategies, and sustain action. This is an excellent resource for a community that wants to understand how to take action on difficult issues.

“The best way to have a good idea is to have lots of ideas.”

-Linus Pauling

The Good Citizen: A History of American Civic Life, by Michael Schudson; The Free Press, 1998

Michael Schudson reassures us that American citizenship is not dead. This very readable book traces the development of citizenship from colonial time to the present, giving road markers along the way as thinking and practice changed. He concludes with a discussion on how we might begin to measure or assess public life in the nation with current benchmarks, not historical ones. This is a very interesting and encouraging discussion of how our civic life has evolved and the possibilities that lie ahead.

Organizing Genius: The Secrets of Creative Collaboration, by Warren Bennis and Patricia Ward Biederman; Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc., 1997

Mr. Bennis and Ms. Biederman make a powerful case for the fact that "none of us is as smart as all of us." Using vignettes of great examples of collaboration from all sectors, the authors prove over and over why great groups are, in fact, great. Using a spectrum from the Walt Disney Studio to the Manhattan Project, they illustrate how the efforts of groups of people can be greater than the sum of their parts. The authors give insight into how these particular groups were built and the common elements of their success.

Resources for Program Evaluation

The Evaluation Exchange, Harvard Family Research Project; A periodical of the Harvard Graduate School of Education

A quarterly newsletter of the Harvard Family Research Project, *The Evaluation Exchange* highlights emerging strategies in evaluating child and family services. Particularly useful are the columns on "Promising Practices" and "Evaluations to Watch." The publication is available on their website, <http://hugse1.harvard.edu/~hfrp>

***W.K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook*, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 1998**

This handbook is a must-have for any organization considering undertaking an evaluation. Part One outlines the history of evaluation, key issues, and presents an overview of different levels of evaluation. Part Two provides a blueprint for planning, implementing, and using evaluation results. The handbook also includes helpful charts, diagrams, and examples. To order a free copy of the handbook, contact Collateral Management Company (616-964-0700), and ask for item #1203.

***Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation*, edited by Joseph S. Wholey, Harry P. Hatry, and Kathryn E. Newcomer; Jossey-Bass, 1994**

This is a good tool for organizations looking for low-cost, useful, and credible evaluations. Experts walk the reader through the pros and cons of various evaluation strategies, while including several chapters on practical data-collection procedures. The final section addresses issues such as managing an evaluation project and the effective reporting of evaluation results.

Resources about Building Communities — Actual and Virtual

***Common Purpose: Strengthening Families and Neighborhoods to Rebuild America*, by Lisbeth B. Schorr; Anchor Books Doubleday, 1997**

This comprehensive examination of how to replicate effective initiatives and reform systems is a must-read for community builders. Ms. Schorr outlines the attributes of successful programs and analyzes why systems too often undermine, rather than support, what works. This study sketches the broad context of American social-change efforts while also addressing how successful programs weather the challenges of changing political and economic climates. *Common Purpose* makes a compelling case for

mobilizing institutions and individuals to strengthen families and rebuild communities.

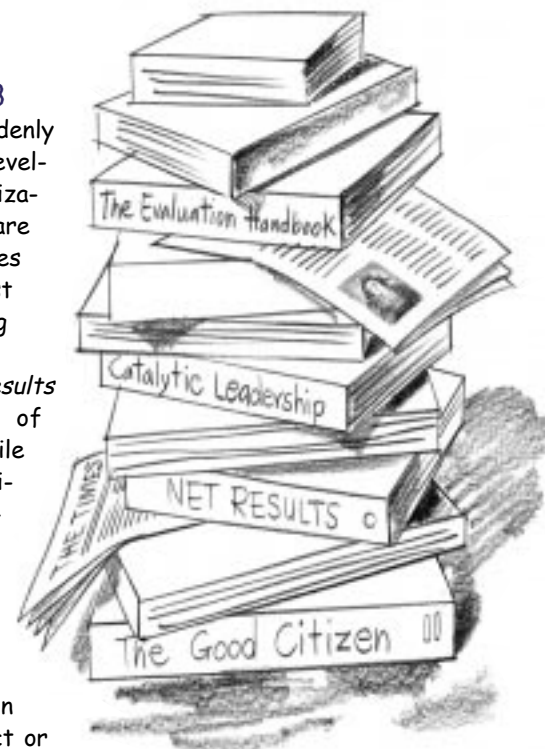
***Net Results: Web Marketing That Works*, by USWeb and Rick E. Bruner; Hayden Books, 1998**

***Hosting Web Communities*, by Cliff Figallo; Wiley Computer Publishing, 1998**

By default, you may have suddenly found yourself charged with developing a Web site for your organization. No need to panic. There are a number of helpful resources aimed at bringing the generalist up to speed on the fast-changing world of cyberspace. *Hosting Web Communities* and *Net Results* are excellent handbooks full of practical, accessible advice. While both of these books target a private-sector audience, their guidance is appropriate for non-profit organizations seeking to capitalize on new technologies.

Net Results is a soup-to-nuts guide for exploring how to use the Web to attract and retain loyal consumers for your product or service. Topics include the development of Web sites, the intricacies of search engines, the possibilities of online public relations, and the venues for paid Web advertising. A lengthy appendix cataloguing useful Web sites for communications and marketing professionals is a plus.

Hosting Web Communities offers practical tips about how to develop a Web site and facilitate online communications so that your organization builds trust with its constituents. It also suggests ways that "hosting sites" can generate revenue to sustain their operations. These are especially helpful insights for nonprofit organizations as they seek to develop online entrepreneurial strategies.





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WANTED: SOLUTIONS FOR AMERICA COMMUNITIES



Wanted: Solutions for America is a national initiative funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts to identify, document, and disseminate promising solutions to the nation's complex problems. The following nineteen *Wanted* communities are working with a research team to track their results over two years, beginning in 1999.

Aiken, SC
Growing into Life—A Healthy Community Collaborative
(infant mortality)

Arlington, TX
Dental Health for Arlington
(access to dental services)

Boston, MA
Boston Main Streets
(commercial revitalization)

Brockton, MA
Massachusetts Youth Teenage Unemployment Reduction Network
(school-to-work)

Burlington, VT
Burlington Ecumenical Action Ministry
(microenterprise development)

Cedar Rapids, IA
Neighborhood Transportation Services
(job linkages)

Charlottesville, VA
Downtown Revitalization Project
(commercial revitalization)

Cincinnati, OH
Cincinnati Youth Collaborative
(youth mentoring)

Harts, WV
Step by Step, Inc.
(education)

Jacksonville, FL
The Bridge of Northeast Florida
(teen pregnancy)

Jacksonville, FL
Jacksonville Community Council, Inc.
(issue analysis)

Los Angeles, CA
Beyond Shelter
(homelessness)

Mankato, MN
Region Nine Healthy Communities Network
(teen drug and alcohol use)

New York, NY
Children's Aid Society
(comprehensive neighborhood revitalization)

Richmond, KY
Kentucky River Foothills Development
(job training)

Santa Ana, CA
Taller San Jose
(job training)

Shreveport, LA
Shreveport Community Renewal
(neighborhood revitalization)

St. Louis, MO
Focus St. Louis
(community dialogue)

Western North Carolina
HandMade in America
(small-town revitalization)

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CIVIC PARTNERS READER SURVEY

Since the establishment of the Pew Partnership in 1992, *Civic Partners* has been a forum for practitioners, citizens, and policymakers to disseminate strategies about changing communities. As our readership grows, we are seeking your input into making *Civic Partners* an important resource for your work. Please let us know your thoughts by completing this survey. Thank you for your assistance.

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- 1) Organization type:
- Nonprofit
 - Foundation
 - Business
 - Local Government
 - State Government
 - Federal Government
 - Academic/Research/Think Tank
 - School/School District
 - Media

2) How have you used information from *Civic Partners* in your work?

3) Please rate *Civic Partners* on the following qualities:

	Somewhat Yes	Somewhat No
Informative	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Readable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Thought-provoking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4) What topics or issues would you like to see addressed in future issues of *Civic Partners*?

- 5) Your areas of interest: (check as many as apply)
- Healthy children and families
 - Thriving neighborhoods
 - Living-wage jobs
 - Viable economies
 - Collaborative leadership
 - Citizen engagement
 - Organizational capacity building
 - Evaluation methods
 - Other: _____

6) Additional comments:

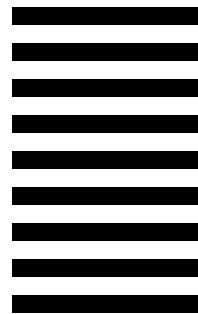
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