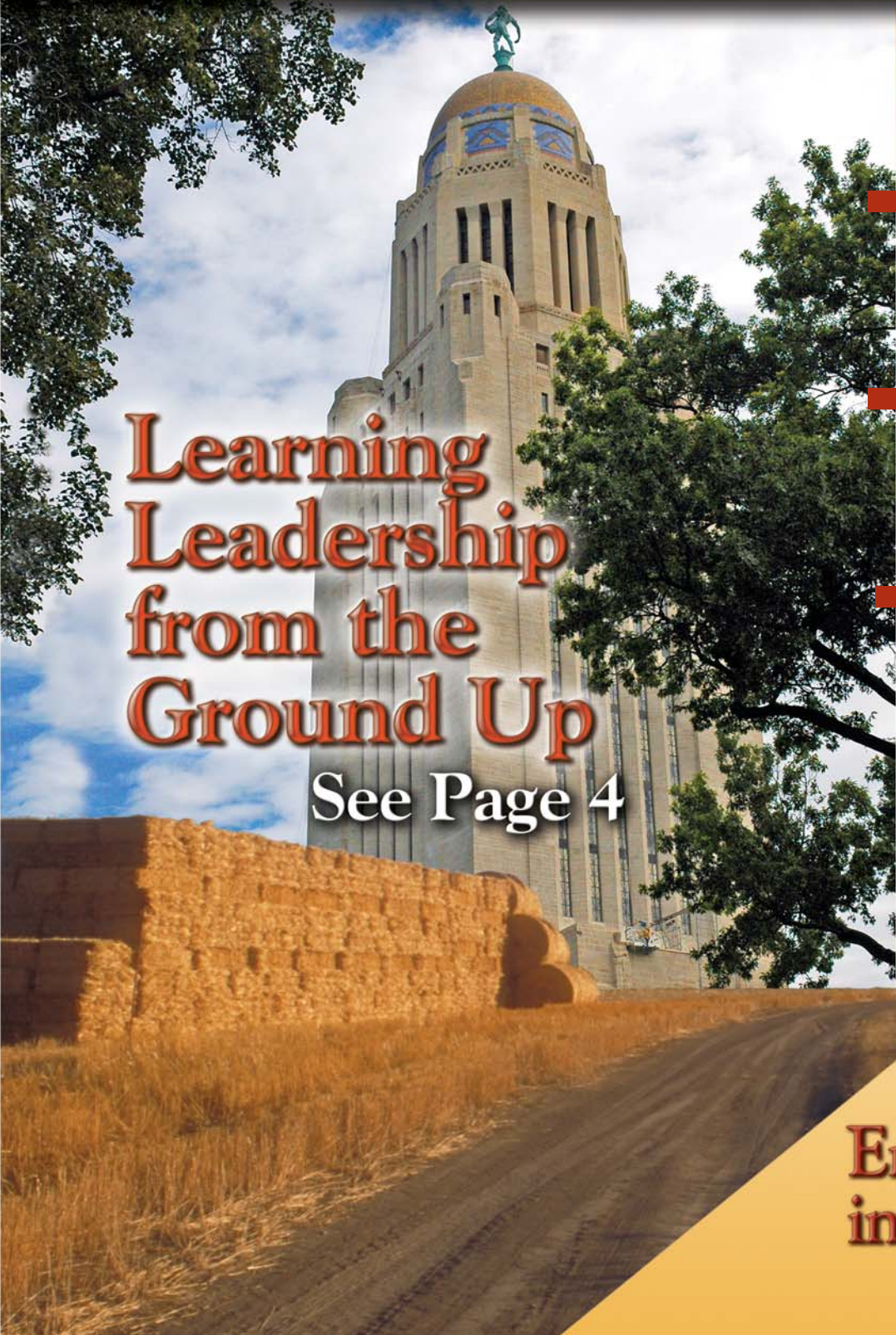


SPRING 2005

VISIONS



A publication of the
**Heartland Center for
Leadership Development**



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Entrepreneurship
in Rural America**

JUNE 7-10, 2005



VISIONS
from the
Heartland

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The Heartland Center is
an independent nonprofit
organization developing
local leadership that responds to
the challenges of the future.

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**E² Energizing
Entrepreneurship
in Rural America**



June 7-10, 2005 • Nebraska City, Nebraska

E² Energizing Entrepreneurship in Rural America—now in its third year—will be held in Nebraska City, Nebraska, June 7-10. This annual academy is a collaborative effort with the RUPRI Center for Rural Entrepreneurship. The program is designed for practitioners, educators and rural community leaders who are exploring entrepreneurship as an economic development strategy. Training teams of two or more persons are strongly encouraged.

What sets this program apart from other entrepreneurship courses is its focus on community. This is not a course about marketing, planning or financing. Rather, it teaches communities how to identify different entrepreneurial types and talents, how to match local entrepreneurs with local resources, or, if lacking how to access community resources that will support emerging or expanding entrepreneurs.

According to Heartland Center Co-Director, Milan Wall, there has been tremendous interest in the curriculum as rural communities move away from industrial recruitment toward a more sustainable, place-based strategy. With more and more manufacturing jobs moving outside of the country, and with more and better access to technology, successful rural communities are learning how to build on the human resources and local capacity that are already in place. The goal is to encourage communities to intentionally support local businesses that have the potential to grow and create new wealth.

For more information or to register for our next E² academy go to www.heartlandcenter.info/ee.htm or call us at **1-800-927-1115**.

Training for nonprofit board strengthens “Friends”

Our communities, large and small, are enriched through the generous work and contributions of “friends.” Friends support hospitals, animal shelters, youth programs and just about everything else that is worthwhile and valuable. In Lincoln, Nebraska, the Friends of the Mary Riepma Ross Media Arts Center helps to bring high quality independent films to a market that might otherwise be missed or skipped over. Like many small nonprofit groups, they must accomplish a lot on a little budget. Recently the Heartland Center’s Nicole Brittell worked with the Friends board of directors to develop a new vision, goals and strategic plan. Most importantly, she helped them to learn how to do this themselves.

“Nonprofit boards know that they need to have a strategic action plan in place and to update it regularly. But too often, they just don’t know the best way to get started. One of the first things we teach is how to collect data so that they’re making decisions based on reality, not just their own personal assumptions,” Nicole says.

Board members also learned techniques for interviewing and conducting focus groups to gather information. They created a vision statement and developed goals based on the information they had analyzed.

Nicole says that, “By teaching people these processes in addition to helping them do it the first time, the board will be able to revisit the plan they’ve created, and update it

Friends support hospitals, animal shelters, youth programs and just about everything else that is worthwhile and valuable.

more often, using the same tools and skills we taught them during the first time.”

If your organization is in need of strategic planning support, consider calling the Heartland Center. We can help you through the process, and build the capacity you’ll need to keep your plan relevant and up-to-date in the future.



Rural practitioners from 16 cutting edge entrepreneurship programs shared insights at a network gathering in February.

Entrepreneurship practitioners share field experience for new publication

The Heartland Center is co-authoring a new publication with the RUPRI Center for Rural Entrepreneurship to serve as a community guide for rural entrepreneurship. In February 2005, 20 entrepreneurship practitioners, facilitators and educators from 16 states gathered at the Kauffman Foundation conference center in Kansas City, Missouri, to share personal strategies and insights on the core elements that serve as a framework for our current work in progress. Together we explored ways that communities can support local entrepreneurs and the challenges that are involved in moving toward a new entrepreneurial culture in rural America.

The people who participated represented vastly different geographies from California to Georgia and Texas to Michigan. The invitees were selected in part based on the innovative strategies and programs in place in their regions. Two days of discussion netted dozens of lessons and several themes important to entrepreneurship advocates.

We discussed the tendency to sometimes bifurcate entrepreneurship into business and civic endeavors. As practitioners, and within community support systems, our work must be more than a transaction between a “provider” and a “client” for the purpose of creating more local jobs. Our work must result in a transformation through which entrepreneurs and communities nurture deeply rooted connections and commitment for the betterment of the whole community.

A second theme is one that addresses funding and policy making. People sometimes refer to



Brian Dabson of the RUPRI Center for Rural Entrepreneurship summarizes a small group discussion on community capacity for entrepreneurship.

the “culture of dependency” of rural economies, the tendency to develop strategies reliant on federal or state programs. To be effective, especially in an era in which traditional funding “silos” may collapse, we must rely much more on locally controlled factors. We must find ways to create a market that will encourage private investment in entrepreneurship growth potential.

Thirdly, we must help communities develop and defend measurements for long-term outcomes. Unlike industrial recruitment, where you win or lose numbers of jobs that can be counted in the short term, entrepreneurship is a long-term strategy for gradual wealth creation. It may require several years for a single business to report job creation numbers that cause a blip on the screen. But together, several growth entrepreneurs can create the collective outcomes a community needs to become sustainable.

Co-authors Vicki Luther, Don Macke and Deb Markley envision the publication as a practical guide featuring field tested tools, techniques and case stories for practitioners and leaders working at the ground level. Plans call for the publication to be available later this summer. Contact cperzinski@heartlandcenter.info or taina@ruraleship.org to be placed on a waiting list.

Our work must be more than a transaction between a “provider” and a “client” for the purpose of creating more local jobs.



Leslie Scott, June Holley, Don Betts, Mark Burdette and Craig Schroeder consider steps to building capacity in communities they work with.

From bales to bills: State Senator learned leadership from the ground up

In the 1980s, when young people or newcomers were introduced to community volunteerism in Wausa, Nebraska (pop. 636), one of the starting places was a Community Club sub-group known as the Bale Committee. What the Bale Committee did was borrow hay bales from area farmers to use as seating for the town's annual fall harvest festival parade. It was a simple assignment with a beginning and end. Contact the farmers, organize a team of sturdy backs, load up the bales, line them out along the parade route, and then haul everything away at the end of the daylong event. But it introduced its members to the value of teamwork and the satisfaction of doing something to benefit the entire community. In fact if you were good at it, you got to be chair of the Bale Committee next year!

Although the Bale Committee doesn't exist any longer, there are many other similar opportunities today in this northeast Nebraska small town: the Pancake Feed Committee, the Pork Chop Bar-B-Que Committee and the Labor Day Fair Committee, to name a few. And Doug Cunningham has been a member of all of them.

Now a state senator in Nebraska's unique one-house legislature, Cunningham says that in community leadership in his hometown, "Everyone starts at the bottom" and then works their way up, learning leadership skills along the way with the help of others who were there ahead of them.

What's the secret to getting involved? "Being asked," said Cunningham. "We're negligent—we don't always ask people to join." But that is how he got involved. Originally as one member of a Community Club subcommittee, eventually as a candidate for the Nebraska legislature. "Someone had to ask me," he said, "I am not the kind that would go ask to join." That's why he thinks part of the job of community leaders is asking others to join, and then coaching them along the way.

What's the secret to getting involved? "Being asked," said Cunningham.

Cunningham has owned the grocery store in his hometown since he was 25. He started working there as a high school senior for a job that was supposed to last till summer. And then through the summer. And then as a career.

It was his involvement in the Nebraska Grocery Industry Association, as chair of the Legislative Committee, that got him interested in politics. "I loved to go to Washington, D.C., and visiting with the Congress members and senators."

Eventually, his colleagues in the grocery industry asked him to run for a seat in the legislature. "I said no, and then, hell no! But they were very persistent," he said with a chuckle. As a state senator, he is chair of the Business and Labor Committee, and was formerly vice chair of the General Affairs Committee, along with other committee assignments.

Cunningham's resume contains a long list of his commitments as a community volunteer, from the Wausa Volunteer Fire Department to the State Advisory Committee for Area Health Education Centers. In 2000, the National Grocers Association honored him with its Spirit of America Award in recognition of his leadership on behalf of the independent grocers. Cunningham continues his advocacy for small town retailers as

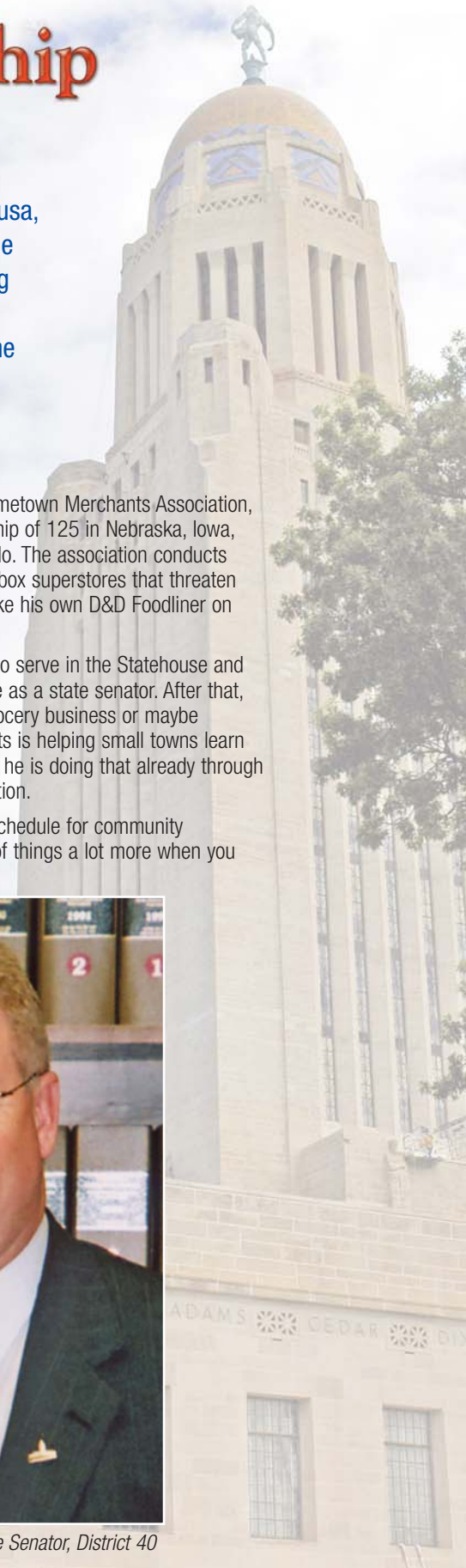
director of the recently formed Hometown Merchants Association, which boasts a growing membership of 125 in Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, South Dakota and Colorado. The association conducts research on the impact of the big box superstores that threaten the viability of small town stores like his own D&D Foodliner on Wausa's main street.

Cunningham has two more years to serve in the Statehouse and then term limits will end his tenure as a state senator. After that, he says, maybe it's back to the grocery business or maybe something else. One of his interests is helping small towns learn how to keep Main Street vital, and he is doing that already through the Hometown Merchants Association.

But there will also be time in his schedule for community involvement. "You just feel a part of things a lot more when you are involved," he said.



Doug Cunningham, Nebraska State Senator, District 40



HomeTown Competitiveness winning new advocates

In January, 50 additional people from 14 states and Ontario, Canada, joined the growing number of rural community builders who have completed an HTC academy and are exploring how the HTC approach can work in their community or region. Our second national academy was held in Omaha in collaboration with our partners at the RUPRI Center for Rural Entrepreneurship and the Nebraska Community Foundation. Over the past year nearly 200 community leaders and practitioners have completed the three-day course that provides tools for building leadership, entrepreneurship, youth engagement and charitable assets in rural communities.



The HTC model has now been adopted as a full-fledged community initiative in seven sites in Nebraska and continues to attract national attention for its ability to rally local support and generate place-based strategies that make sense in each different location.

At the heart of the HTC model is the ultimate goal of reversing out migration in rural areas. Valley County, Nebraska, the first HTC pilot site, must attract 27% of its average high school graduating class in order to stabilize population by 2010. "They need economic opportunity. That's what we've been struggling with," admits Bethanne Kunz, the county's economic development director. The struggle will continue, but leaders in Valley County are seeing steady progress. (See cover article in *USA Today*, February 9, 2005)

In addition to our national events, HTC academies are also delivered on a regional level. If your organization is interested in sponsoring an HTC academy in your area, contact Reggi Carlson at the Heartland Center for Leadership Development, 1-800-927-1115. More information about HomeTown Competitiveness is available at www.heartlandcenter.info/htc.htm.



Bethanne Kunz and Edgar Hicks discuss their respective work in Ord, Nebraska, and with the Kansas Black Farmers Association.



The January HTC training drew 50 participants from 14 states.



Heartland Center's Vicki Luther and Nicolle Brittell (center and far right) presented a Clues to Community Survival workshop for members of the Hometown Leadership Institute. The program is a collaboration between our HTC communities of Atkinson and Stuart, Nebraska. The nine-month program begins with focusing on personal and professional growth and awareness, then concludes with training and task force assignments in the four HTC areas of leadership, entrepreneurship, youth engagement and charitable assets.

**HomeTown
Competitiveness**
April 19-21, 2005
Holyoke, Colorado

Sponsored by
Ogallala Commons and its 14
partners in a five-state region
(CO, NE, WY, KS, SD)

Contact **Darryl Birkenfeld**
Director, Ogallala Commons

806-938-2529

darrylb@amaonline.com



Hold these dates!

October 18-22, 2005

Helping Small Towns II

Last fall's revised curriculum for Helping Small Towns II was a hit with the folks who took part in our annual institute in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. New topics include:

- Appreciative Inquiry
- Strengthening Social Capital
- Advanced Facilitation Skills
- Tools for Attracting Young People
- Measuring for Success
- Diversity as Opportunity

This year we will start on a Tuesday and end on Saturday for people who want to take advantage of a weekend in the beautiful Teton Mountains. For more information go to www.heartlandcenter.info/hst2.htm or call us at 1-800-927-1115!

Leadership training set for Nebraska communities

The Heartland Center is presenting several one-day workshops sponsored by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development through the USDA Rural Community Development Initiative. The series, "Discovering the Future of Your Home Town," uses an appreciative approach with materials and exercises organized around four themes:

- Learn from the Past to Plan for the Future
- Build the Group You Need
- Connect the Data to the Dream
- Create the Structure You Need to Guide the Work

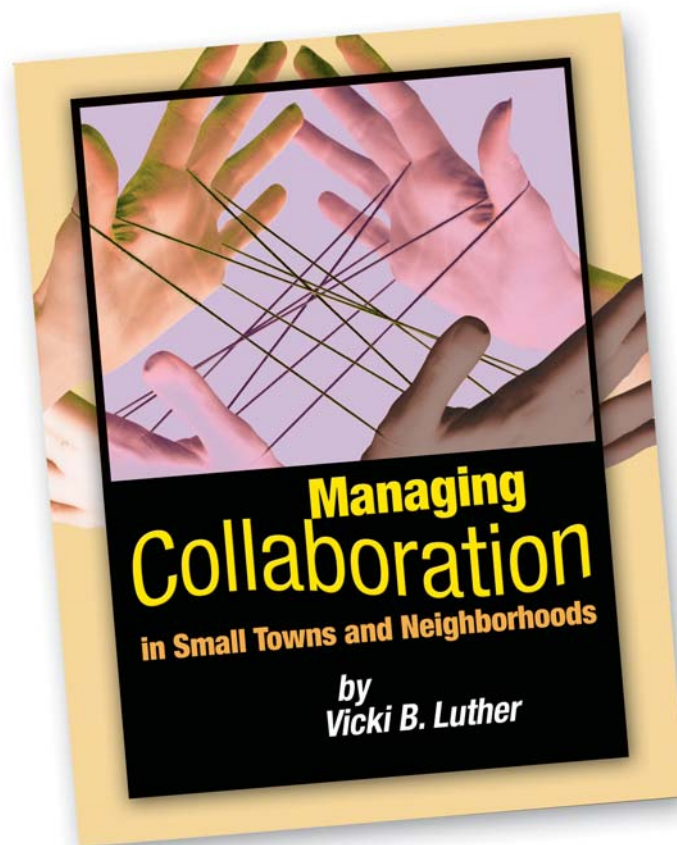
Kathy McKillip, Director of the Nebraska Community Improvement Program (NCIP) and a recent graduate of the Heartland Center's Helping Small Towns II, says the workshops are designed to help communities across Nebraska increase capacity to organize community teams, and to face the future with a positive and proactive attitude. These trainings will also cover the 2005 NCIP program year and entry guidelines. All communities interested in NCIP should plan on attending.

For information, registration, location and participating requirements, please contact Kathy McKillip at kmckillip@neded.org or 1-800-426-6505. Additional information regarding online registration and other points of interest are available at the NCIP website: <http://crd.neded.org/ncip/>.

Dates and locations for the workshops (programs run from 10 am to 4 pm):

- April 25 Sidney - Western Nebraska Community College**
- April 26 McCook - McCook Community College**
- April 27 Grand Island - Central Community College**
- May 9 Norfolk - Northeast Community College**
- May 10 Bassett - Location to be Announced**
- May 12 Beatrice - Southeast Community College**

The Heartland Center will also be providing community board development and training in July at two confirmed locations, Hastings and O'Neill, with the possibility of a third site in Ord.



Coming Soon!

Collaboration with another organization can increase our impact, enrich our experience and attract new funding. So why don't we do it more? This new publication takes the complication out of collaboration! Our step-by-step guide uses a simple approach: Alignment—finding a place to begin. Relationships—building ways to work together. And Communication—what keeps the collaboration going. This compact guide provides a short-cut to sure success when teaming up with new community partners.

Watch for it on our website, or call us at 1-800-927-1115 to be placed on our waiting list for another helpful community building tool from the Heartland Center.

www.heartlandcenter.info

Resources for Small Town Success Publications of the Heartland Center for Leadership Development

Publication Order Form

Postage and handling are included in the price of the publication for orders within the U.S. and Canada. Cost of publication to be paid in U.S. dollars.
(Prices subject to change without notice.)

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___ Five Strategies for Active Economic Development	\$ 5.00
___ Seven Secrets to Coping with Change in Small Towns	\$ 5.00
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___ The Entrepreneurial Community	\$35.00
___ Your Field Guide to Community Building	\$18.50
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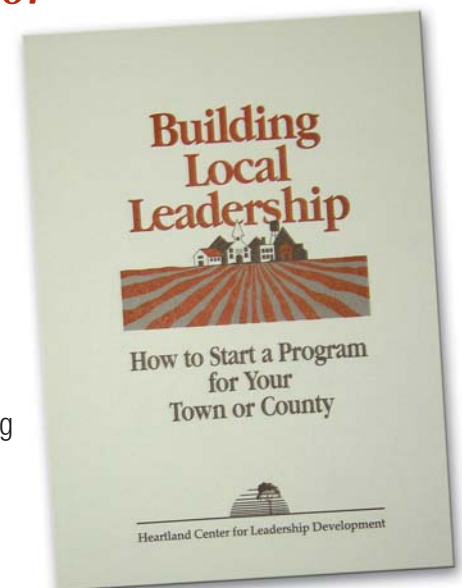
Meet Carmen Perzinski

Carmen Perzinski joined our staff in November 2004. Her responsibilities include assisting with research, customer service, office management and desktop publishing. Carmen is a graduate of the Southeast Community College medical laboratory technology program. She worked for a number of years at Midland Medical Supply as a laboratory support and customer service specialist. Off-duty Carmen enjoys her two grandchildren, making jewelry, reading and riding her Arabian mare, Dulcinea. Say "hello" to Carmen when she takes your call!

Building Local Leadership: How to Start a Program for Your Town or County

No matter what you are trying to accomplish in your community, it all begins with leadership. Building Local Leadership is a practical guide that draws from the Heartland Center's years of experience with small town and rural community leadership development programs and features ideas for creating a vital, challenging learning atmosphere; hands-on activities emphasizing teamwork and partnership; strategies for increasing local commitment and support; and a toolkit of reproducible materials for use in your program.

Priced at only \$20, this tool belongs in every community builder's workplace. Call the Heartland Center at 1-800-927-1115 to order your copy today. Or use the order form above!



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VISIONS from the Heartland

Ask The Heartland Center

Question: I found some books about collaboration at the library and have done a search on the Internet, too, but nowhere can I find any advice on how to make two service clubs in my small town actually work together! Any ideas for this kind of small town, small scale collaboration?

Vicki Luther
Co-Director

It's really important to make sure the two groups have a reason to collaborate. What do they have in common? Any goals or a mission that might be similar? For example, if two clubs both intend to serve youth, it's easier to build some collaboration. Do some research on the purpose and membership before you begin an effort to get them to work together.



Milan Wall
Co-Director

The manner in which organizational representatives communicate is vital to making this type of collaboration work. Are they describing the activities in the same way? Word choice can mean very different things to different people. Check out the communication pathways and make sure everything is really understandable. Keep it simple and clear.

Gordon Goodwin
Board Member

You have to build relationships in order to get folks to work together. Especially in small towns where everyone sort of thinks they already know everything about everyone! Being in a new role (like president of a service club, for example) could offer new behaviors, too, so trust and comfort levels still have to be built. Don't take those relationships for granted.



Nicole Brittell
Program Associate

Sometimes creating the time and place for people to get together is an important foundation for collaboration. Create the atmosphere (this may be a shared potluck for your two clubs) or set the agenda (all the clubs' officers will get together to share their plans for the next year) and then find a neutral, respected person to act as host or MC. Sharing time together is a great way for the sharing of ideas and projects to evolve.

