



VISIONS

FROM THE HEARTLAND

A Publication of the Heartland Center for Leadership Development

Spring 1999



Youth and adult leaders work together on a "technology map" of their community at a MIRA workshop for Nebraska and Colorado teams. (See project briefs Page 2)

Latino Leadership Study Concluded

For the past six months, the Heartland Center has undertaken a research project to help clarify leadership needs among Latinos throughout Nebraska. Ernesto Castillo, project associate with the Heartland Center for Leadership Development, proposed working with the Nebraska Mexican-American Commission after several Commission-sponsored strategic planning sessions identified leadership as a key issue. These planning sessions made clear the importance and necessity of cultivating leadership skills among Latinos in Nebraska.

With immigration and relocation patterns increasing the degree of cultural diversity and in some cases significantly changing the ethnic and cultural composition of communities, it is important to ensure that opportunity for involvement in community activities exists for all residents.

According to the 1990 Census, the number of Latinos in Nebraska grew 32%

from 1980-1990 to a total of 36,969. In 1997, estimates put the Latino population of Nebraska at 50,348, which is an increase of 36% from 1990. Perhaps more significant is the average age of Latinos in Nebraska. In 1990, the average age of the state's Latino population was approximately 23 years. The median age for the total population was approximately 33 years. Forty-two percent of Latinos were under the age of 19; 28% were under the age of 12.

There were two areas of focus for this project: 1) identifying the key elements of existing leadership and Latino leadership programs; and 2) identifying the perceived need and desired structure for a Latino leadership program in Nebraska. In order to involve a cross representation of Latinos in Nebraska several methods of data collection were used. Four focus groups provided the participants an op-

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Scholarships Available for Jackson Hole Workshop

The Heartland Center for Leadership Development is offering partial support for tuition, travel or other costs to its eighth annual Institute for Community Development Professionals and Practitioners: *Helping Small Towns Succeed*, October 14-18, 1999. The program is held at Snow King Resort, Jackson Hole, Wyoming. These scholarships are supported by foundation grants and gifts from friends of the Heartland Center. Scholarship assistance is offered to insure that the participant group is diverse in terms of gender, age, race, and geography.

If you wish to apply for scholarship assistance, contact the Heartland Center for Leadership Development at (402) 474-7667 or (800) 927-1115 for a Scholarship Application Form. Your application will be reviewed promptly. Scholarship funds are limited. ■

In This Issue

■ An excerpt from a forthcoming publication of the Heartland Center focusing on the challenges facing community leaders.

■ The Heartland Center continues to receive support for the Community Learning Initiative. The Initiative is available to communities to sponsor Heartland Center programs locally. Scholarships are also available for Heartland Center's annual training programs.

Heartland Center Project Briefs

Empowering Neighborhood People (ENP)

This program provides training to neighborhood leaders in the Washington D.C. area and results in two locally initiated projects for neighborhood betterment. This program has been offered since 1994 with the Johns Hopkins University.

Helping Small Towns Succeed

This annual Heartland Center five-day training program of shared learning, networking and professional development for community development professionals and practitioners. Drew 46 participants to Jackson Hole, Wyoming last fall. Program dates: October 14-18, 1999.

Latino Leadership in Nebraska

The Latino Leadership project was designed to help clarify leadership needs among Latinos statewide. With cooperation of the Nebraska Mexican-American Commission, the Heartland Center conducted a survey, a series of focus groups and interviews with regional and national leadership programs in the state. (See Page 1)

Managing Information with Rural America (MIRA)

Managing Information with Rural America is a new W.K. Kellogg Foundation initiative designed to help rural people to use information systems and technologies as a tool to meet current and future challenges. The Heartland Center is providing evaluation and technical assistance to the clusters of community teams at six sites nationally.

Mountain Empire Community College Leadership and Economic Development Program

The Heartland Center for Leadership Development has been contracted by Mountain Empire Community College to conduct two workshops for 30 community leaders from the Big Stone Gap, Virginia, area. The workshops will focus on community leadership and economic development strategies. The Mountain Empire Community College will be designing and implementing an annual leadership program projected to begin in 2000.

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8 Challenges Facing Community Leaders

Today's community leaders face a set of challenges that, in many ways, is quite different from the challenges that were common to previous generations. Here is a summary of eight challenges that we see in our work with small towns and rural communities throughout the U.S.

Challenge No. 1. Doing More with Less

Today's leaders often discover that community needs and expectations far exceed available financial resources. And for every taxpayer who clamors for tax cuts, another wants more tax-supported services. As a result, community leaders find themselves searching for innovative ways to squeeze more from each available dollar or to increase revenues through innovative financing schemes. Only through careful planning, with a realistic eye on future possibilities and a creative approach to fiscal management, will local leaders be able to walk the fine line that defines "doing more with less."

Challenge No. 2. Mandates from Above

Unfunded mandates from state or federal governments further complicate the fiscal challenges that community leaders face, as they are compelled to institute or continue programs for which no additional financing is forthcoming. Yet, refusing to accept such mandates may endanger support for other programs. The community may not object to the program rationale for a particular mandate, but without the accompanying financial support the result is another complication in the tasks that

community leaders must complete. To get their message back up the chain of bureaucratic control, community leaders must join with others in similar circumstances to increase the impact of the local perspective.

3. The Rapids of Change

Futurist Robert Theobald, who was among the founders of the Heartland Center, wrote that leaders today are like someone riding a boat through a rapids, where little is known about the dangers that lay ahead. The point is that change today comes at an increasingly faster pace and with unpredictable complications, and the patterns of the past are no longer reliable predictors of the future. As Theobald put it, today's leaders need to learn how to "avoid being surprised by unexpected events." Only through some locally driven "future forecasting" will the community leader keep on top of fundamental changes affecting the community and the region.

4. Complexity of Issues

Today, it seems like everything is related to everything else, in intricate and complicated ways, making difficult the task of breaking apart complex challenges into manageable pieces. Yet community leaders don't even control all of the key contingencies that may impact on the community's prospects for the future. That's why leaders are challenged today to help define the issues in ways that

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Heartland Center Wins State Rural Initiative Award

The Nebraska Rural Development Commission selects 100 rural initiatives for their annual award of *Outstanding 100 Rural Development Initiatives* from nominations received statewide. Award recipients were announced in their

May newsletter, *Nebraska Development News*. The Heartland Center for Leadership Development is a proud recipient of the 1998 award. The commission has honored the best rural development initiatives since 1993. ■

Latino Leadership

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portunity to verbally express their opinions, interact, network, and hear first-hand what others have to say on this topic. Participants represented Ecuadorian, Venezuelan, Honduran, Puerto Rican, Mexican, and Colombian ethnic groups within the Latino culture.

A mail survey was sent to 358 Latinos in Nebraska. The survey asked questions pertaining to the current status of leadership in the Latino community in Nebraska, community leadership programs, a willingness to invest/participate in a Latino leadership program, and the participants, outlook concerning the Latino community. Survey respondents were asked to rank leadership skills in terms of importance and to provide demographic information.

Two interviews were conducted with representatives from Latino leadership programs in Guymon, Oklahoma, and Garden City, Kansas. These interviews were important in collecting information concerning the emergence of these programs and such topics as funding, participant recruitment, challenges and successes.

Response to the research was very

Support Grows For Heartland Learning Initiative

The Community Learning Initiative has received support for leadership training from several foundations in recent months. The Union Pacific Foundation contributed \$2,500, which will benefit communities along Union Pacific Railroad lines. The Seacrest Fund has given \$1,000 in general support. The Community Foundation of Jackson Hole will provide one complete scholarship to the Heartland Center's "Helping Small Towns Succeed" institute held in October. And the Sowers Club of Lincoln, Inc., has contributed \$1,000 to support leadership training in rural Nebraska. ■



Ernesto Castillo

positive and reflected a genuine concern by Latinos in Nebraska. For example, less than five people out of 60 contacted during the recruitment phase for the four sessions held around the state indicated they were not interested in participating.

Overall response to a Latino leadership program was very positive. Over 60% of survey respondents indicated a willingness to participate in a Latino Leadership program, if one were available. The positive impact a Latino leadership program could have in supporting issues important to the Latino community was extensively discussed at the focus group sessions. And, 89% of the survey respondents said that there were certain issues important to Latinos that could be better addressed in such a program.

The data collected expressed support in the Latino community to begin a series of discussions concerning the design and implementation of a Latino leadership program for Nebraska. The enthusiasm and talent of participants in the focus groups and survey respondents who identified themselves felt that such a program could become reality.

The study was undertaken with support of the Cooper Foundation of Lincoln, Nebraska, and the Nebraska Mexican-American Commission. ■

Heartland Center Project Briefs

National Rural Development Partnership

The Heartland Center has been selected to provide staff support and technical assistance to the National Rural Development Partnership. The role of the Heartland Center will focus on delivering workshops at a Conference in Springfield, Massachusetts, August 22-24; development of various publications; retreats for state Rural Development Councils; and several evaluation projects.

North 27th Street Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan

The Heartland Center's approach to capacity building and leadership development will be used to sustain and improve the diverse and growing neighborhood along the 27th Street corridor in Lincoln, Nebraska. This is one phase of the overall redevelopment plan coordinated by the City's Department of Urban Development.

Skill-Building for Stronger Communities

An annual Heartland Center four-day training program offered to the graduates of *Helping Small Towns Succeed* or for those with five or more years experience in the community development profession. Next program dates in Jackson Hole, Wyoming: May 17-21, 2000.

Standing Bear Lake

The Heartland Center, in partnership with Olsson Environmental Sciences, Inc., is beginning a strategic planning process with the City of Omaha Parks, Recreation & Public Property to develop a community-based watershed management plan for Standing Bear Lake.

Strengthening the Rural-Urban Connection

This initiative addresses the need for exploration of more cross-overs in both model development and service delivery among rural and urban communities. Funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, partners include the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development and the Southern Rural Development Center, along with several urban partners.

W.K. Kellogg Collection: Rural Community Development Resources

The purpose of the Collection is primarily to gather in one place all types of resources used in rural community development projects. Developed in partnership with the University of Nebraska. See www.unl.edu/kellogg/index.html.



Challenges Facing Community Leaders

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many people can understand and then get lots of citizens involved in finding new and creative answers to vexing questions.

5. Economic Realities

Today's economic realities can, understandably, cause community leaders to throw up their hands in frustration, as they try to help their communities chart a path toward a more profitable future. Economic ups and downs are oftentimes a given. And when they are not -- when economies are stable -- communities risk the peril of apathy about the future. Community leaders are, therefore, challenged to help citizens understand both current conditions and future possibilities, with a strategic outlook that searches for new and realistic opportunities.

6. Social and Cultural Unrest

Migration from the coasts, urban flight from the cities, or an influx of new residents from quite different cultures can cause social and cultural unrest, even in the best of situations. The clash of cultures that results will challenge leaders who have been accustomed to working with homogeneous populations whose shared history and values are obvious,

even if unspoken. The clash of cultures may pit developers and environmentalists, or it may divide communities into longtime residents vs. those whose color or language brands them as new and different. Seeking help from other communities with similar experiences may help leaders find creative answers.

7. Loss of Confidence in Institutions

The lack of respect for authority is pervasive in our society not just, as conventional wisdom might have it, among the younger generations. Increasingly, citizens of all ages mistrust institutions of government, office holders, corporate leaders, schools and the news media. The challenge to leaders is to learn to use authentic processes for citizen participation in those issues that are critical to the community's sense of self and to the willingness of people -- at the grassroots -- to take seriously their individual and collective responsibilities for community health and well being.

8. Fear of "Assassination"

Ronald A. Heifetz, the sometimes controversial teacher of leadership at Harvard University, says that anyone who volun-

teers for leadership assumes the "risk of assassination." By that, he means that leaders risk the reality that someone, some day, will try to take them down a notch or two if not, in extreme cases, attempt to remove them from office. Today's leaders, unfortunately, must learn to live without constant approval. At the same time, citizens should recognize that they have a responsibility to provide support and encouragement to the people who assume the public leadership roles, even if they do not always agree.

The implications of these challenges is that today's leaders often need to expand their knowledge about how to lead and increase their skills to become more and more effective in the leadership role. That's why we encourage all communities, of whatever size, to sponsor formal programs of leadership development for both current and emerging leaders. ■

This article is excerpted from a forthcoming publication of the Heartland Center for Leadership Development. For more information, write to the Heartland Center at 941 "O" Street, Suite 920, Lincoln, NE 68508, or phone 800-927-1115. See our website at <http://www.4w.com/heartland>.

Address Correction Requested

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