FEATURED INSIDE

What are our most critical community issues?
A national survey found that the general public ranks some of the most pressing problems facing their communities quite differently than do nonprofit executives. What to do? *See page 6.*

The *Solutions*™ Interview
ARC's Anne Pope talks about the keys to community and regional success. *See page 3.*

SOLUTIONS FOR AMERICA™

Fall 2005

News from the Pew Partnership for Civic Change

Looking Below the Surface

Using Community Assets to Build A Brighter Future

FIRST-TIME VISITORS TO PRIVATEER BAY NEAR Tortola might be underwhelmed. The shoreline is rough, even scraggly. But as they gaze into the distance they overlook a wonderland of beauty at their feet: swirls of colorful parrotfish and manta ray teem just beneath the surface of the water. Communities are like that. Not all communities are beautiful, many don't have abundant natural resources, but they all have hidden and unrecognized talents that can provide new opportunities for economic and community success.

This is the basic tenet of the asset-based community development theory advanced by John McKnight and John Kretzmann. It teaches us all to focus on what we have rather than what we don't have in our communities. They have illustrated time after time that communities—from low wealth to high wealth—have untapped resources that can be leveraged to the community's advantage. This is the good news; the bad news is that we know far too little about how to take those assets and actually do something with them.

The name of the game is asset mapping; that is, literally mapping-out the individual, associational, organizational, and physical strengths of a community. This is fine as far as it goes. But in most cases, knowing what we have is only the first step. If we focus too much on the details of mapping and charting we lose the essence of a powerful idea. Instead we must remain creative and entrepreneurial enough to use those maps to change the pictures in people's minds. It is not what we count, but how we think.

Let's look at the details of how asset-based development can strengthen economic and community development. Communities need living wage jobs, lucrative tourism, affordable

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IN BRIEF

Updated Version of LeadershipPlenty® Coming

Our nationally recognized leadership development program, *LeadershipPlenty,*® completed its two-year pilot phase in August 2005. With more than 100 local, regional, and national partners using the program in communities, agencies, and statewide, we have compiled program evaluation data that are guiding the revisions and expansion of the program. New versions include spanish language, youth, and a low literacy adaptation. For more information go to www.pew-partnership.org/lpinstitute.html

Cokie Roberts, Emmett Carson, and Marguerite Sallee Named as New Board Members

Top to bottom: Roberts, Carson, and Sallee

We are delighted to announce the addition of three new board members to the Pew Partnership's National Advisory Board. Cokie Roberts, a political commentator for ABC News and a senior news analyst for National Public Radio; Emmett Carson, president and CEO of The Minneapolis Foundation; and Marguerite Sallee, president and CEO of America's Promise. In making the announcement, Board chair Alma Powell said, "We are delighted that we will have the talents and experience of such an exceptional group of Americans as the Pew Partnership continues its work to build and sustain thriving communities."

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housing, first-rate schools, access to technology—a whole range of things that contribute to stronger, sustainable places for people to live, work, and raise a family. What is the most common approach to achieving these goals? All too often people look for the silver bullet, a single, simple idea that worked for some other community, such as an industrial park or a community center. Some places take a silo approach that attempts to lodge all responsibility and control with one organization or group. These approaches won't work—they never have and never will—because building strong communities does not begin or end with top-down "development" of any stripe. It happens when communities take charge of their own futures. Asset awareness and mapping draws in resources from all levels of the community, and encourages people to ask "Why don't we try this?" and "I bet we can do this if we work together."

For all its benefits, asset-based development should not be expected to accomplish everything. It cannot, for example, sugarcoat a comunity's long-standing negatives—communities have very real challenges that require smart public policy. Neither will this approach make up for years of disinvestment, isolation, or a lack of jobs.

But it can make it possible for interventions to work when they might not otherwise. It can bring more people into the civic process and give them leadership responsibilities. And it can position a community and its investors to think and see differently.

Not a bad payoff for simply looking for the valuable hidden assets "below the surface."

Getting Started with Asset-Based Development

One of the greatest barriers to successful asset-based development is not knowing where to look or what to do. Here are some ideas:

1. Learn what you can about the asset-based approach. Four very good resources are:
   - *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets* by John McKnight and John Kretzmann (Northwestern University, 1993).
   - *Smart Communities: How Citizens and Local Leaders Can Use Strategic Thinking to Build a Brighter Future* by Suzanne W. Morse (Jossey-Bass, 2004).
   - *Asset Building & Community Building* by Gary Paul Green and Anna Haines (Sage, 2002).
   - *Appalachia: Turning Assets Into Opportunities* by the HTC Group (Appalachian Regional Commission, 2004).
2. Decide what you and others want for your community. Your asset-based ideas and plan should get you where you want to go. Relate the targets and goals of the asset-based development plan to the larger dreams for your community.
3. Remember what your town, community, or region has done well. If timber has been a mainstay, think about how that industry might be expanded and how you might build "cluster industries" around it.
4. Think about the skills that exist in your community, city, or region. If a plant has closed, for example, what kinds of skills, work habits, etc., do those former employees have? If there are buildings left behind, what kind of "footprint" could fill that spot?
5. Get everybody involved. The process for changing the future of where people live and work should be a local and a region-wide discussion. Will everybody show up (and be supportive)? Probably not, but there needs to be a way for all voices and ideas to be heard.
6. Don't take no for an answer. Building on assets is common sense. If you start with what you have, rather than what you don't have, your chances of success go up dramatically. That's a guarantee.

A Conversation with

Anne Pope

In Appalachia, keys to community success are found in planning, identifying assets, developing leadership, and acting regionally.

Anne B. Pope was confirmed as the 10th Federal Co-Chair of the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) in November 2002. A lawyer, Pope has had a distinguished career in the public and private sectors. We sat down with Anne Pope in January 2005 to learn more about ARC and to get her perspective on the region she serves, as well as her insights on ways to improve outcomes for all communities.

Q: First of all, where is Appalachia and what is the Appalachian Regional Commission?

Appalachia is a 200,000-square-mile region that generally follows the spine of the Appalachian Mountains from southern New York to northern Mississippi. It includes parts of twelve states and all of West Virginia.

The ARC is a federal agency established by Congress in 1965 to support the economic and community development of the region in a unique federal-state partnership, with decision-making shared equally between the federal government and the governors of the thirteen Appalachian states. We were created first and foremost to address the persistent, widespread, and systemic economic distress of this region. Our job is to help Appalachians reach socioeconomic parity with the nation through a multifaceted approach to economic and community development.

Q: What does that mean in how the Commission approaches its work?

ARC helps communities create their own vision for growth and then works with them to create opportunities for achieving that vision. We help them identify, coordinate, and leverage a wide variety of outside

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Mingo County, West Virginia used water from abandoned coal mines to raise the popular restaurant fish Artic Char. www.freshwaterinstitute.org www.wcrda.org

resources, ranging from local dollars to assistance from nonprofit organizations to private and public sector investments.

What is a starting point for the process?
We look for projects where the community is invested in itself. There must be evidence of commitment from within the community for progress to be made. One of the fundamental things a government agency like ARC can do is be a partner and a catalyst. Ultimately the community has to buy-in and make it happen.

If you had to single out one factor that must be in place for a community to be successful, what would that be?
Local leadership that plans and acts regionally.

If a community needs assistance and doesn't know where to begin, what advice can you give them?
I come from a business background so my advice is from that perspective. In those terms, a community or region needs to evaluate what is needed to be most competitive, then develop a plan and work that plan. Look at your entire balance sheet—identify your assets and your liabilities—financially, socially, culturally—the whole gamut. Communities have to take stock of their civic inventory and decide what they need and what they have. For example, Appalachia has abundant natural resources and huge stores of artistic talent. Assets like these must be key components for future growth and development. Agencies like ARC can assist communities develop the tools and vision to overcome barriers and create opportunities based on their strengths.

Sometimes it takes more that just public will to change. Don't you need some basic things in place?
Absolutely. For rural communities in Appalachia or anywhere else to make progress they must have a physical and civic infrastructure in place. That is, they need roads, water, sewers and, increasingly, broadband access, strong leadership, an educated and healthy workforce, and an entrepreneurial spirit.

How does ARC help with this?
We provide different kinds and levels of support depending on local liabilities and assets, but generally we work with communities to expand job opportunities and enhance economic development. Our investments have served to increase access to childcare, education, enhanced skill training for the jobs of tomorrow, and healthcare. We invest in basic infrastructure needs and continue to build a highway system that decreases the isolation of the region. ARC works best when as a federal agency it can be a partner filling the gap. This may come from direct assistance, but we can also be a convener, catalyst, and advocate. We are only part of the equation.

In your list of basic infrastructure needs, you also mentioned the entrepreneurial spirit as a fundamental. What does that mean?
We need to prepare citizens in communities across the region to identify economic and civic opportunities that will create jobs but also build stronger places to live and raise families. In thinking about the assets of the region, we need to foster the notion of thinking broadly and inclusively about opportunities. Civic entrepreneurs are people from different professions and different backgrounds thinking together about new opportunities, about maximizing the assets they have, and about ways to use this beautiful land while also preserving it for the future.

Let me give you an example of what I mean. In West Virginia there are some untapped natural gas wells that are not currently active. That free energy source can and is being used to supply greenhouses for organic produce, flowers, and so forth. In another instance, abandoned coal mines—that have very cold and pristine water—are being used to raise the very popular restaurant fish, Artic Char. We need people in communities thinking not only about what they don't have but also about what they do have and asking the question—Why can't we do that?

From your observations of the thirteen-state Appalachian region, what would you say are the priorities for the citizens you represent?
As I have traveled and listened throughout the region, a recurring theme comes from every corner—the need for a balanced way of life. What people mean, I think, is that they want to match economic well-being with their quality of life. In other words, people in the ARC region

want to live where they do and have a livelihood. They want to take advantage of the world economy but also maintain their strong sense of place—their roots. Finally, they want to stop the brain drain—our best and brightest leaving Appalachia. The region has to create opportunities to keep young people at home and invested in the region. People are very concerned about the brain drain—that's why education and enhanced training is so important. The vast majority of the jobs being created today require some postsecondary education or advanced training.

Q:

What will it take to do this?

Unfortunately, there is not one easy answer. There are several answers. We must remove the barriers to economic and community development that are hampering a community's efforts to be competitive such as: having a good transportation system, including good roads and intermodal access; high speed broadband access; an educated and healthy workforce; and water and sewer infrastructure. We must encourage entrepreneurs and provide access to capital as well as civic leadership. In addition to overcoming barriers we must take advantage of the opportunities and assets of a community. Whether it is natural, structural, or cultural we must find ways to maximize every potential revenue stream.

Q:

At the end of the day, what do you think is the major ingredient for change?

Certainly infrastructure is critical to make the region more competitive. But right along with that is the need to work together. While individual communities should find and maximize their own niches, the collective futures of the 5,000 Appalachian communities must be tied together in some way. Multijurisdictional initiatives bring more to the table: they are more competitive; they can diversify and build a sustainable economy that makes sense for the region; they can draw on the assets of the individual communities and, acting together, can leverage more resources. This will require local leadership that thinks and acts regionally. To move forward, communities must work together, have a plan, and work that plan for the benefit of all in the region. We at ARC are committed to being a partner in that work.

www.arc.gov

IN BRIEF

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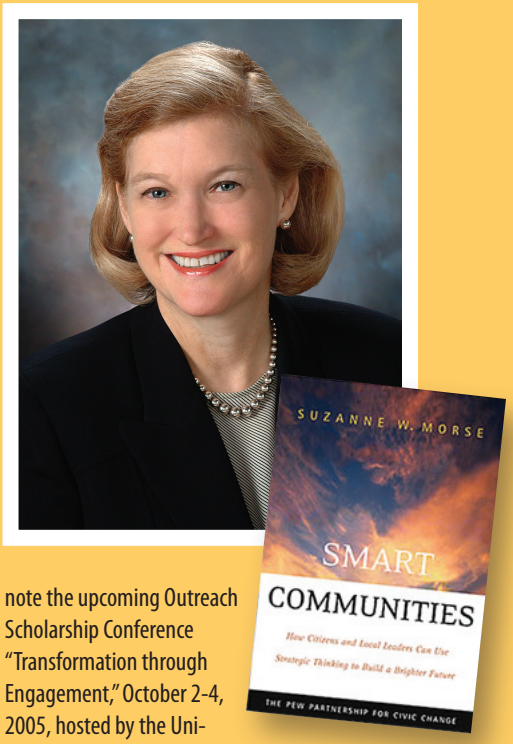
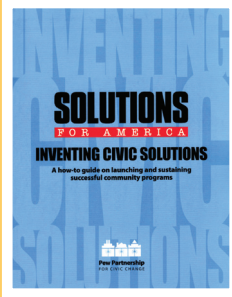
Morse Keynotes Conferences

Suzanne Morse was the closing keynote speaker at the 25th annual conference of the Community Leadership Association. Her speech "Leaders as Champions" is available for download on the Smart Communities blog (5/25/05) on our website (www.pew-partnership.org). Morse will also keynote the upcoming Outreach Scholarship Conference "Transformation through Engagement," October 2-4, 2005, hosted by the University of Georgia. Building on the Pew Partnership's work on higher education partnerships through its Solutions for America™ initiative, Morse will address the enormous potential that exists when higher education and community organizations join forces to address systemic issues. www.outreach-scholarship.org



How-to Guide, *Inventing Civic Solutions,* Published



Inventing Civic Solutions, a how-to guide for developing a range of tested programs from an innovative transportation system to a community credit union. *Inventing Civic Solutions* accelerates the civic change process by highlighting programs and strategies that are proven community solutions. Part of our Solutions for America™ initiative, the publication is available in print for $5.00 per copy, or as a free download at www.pew-partnership.org/resources.html

Reaching the

The answer to "What's important?" depends entirely on whom you ask

WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT problems facing our communities? It depends on whom you ask.

A national survey, ***What Will It Take: Making Headway on our Most Wrenching Problems****, conducted by Dwight L. Morris and Associates for the Pew Partnership for Civic Change in 2003, found that the general public ranks some of the most pressing problems facing their communities quite differently than do nonprofit executives.*

This disconnect raises a major problem for nonprofits—how do they get the public's attention on critical community problems to match the research, expertise, and local experience that nonprofits have at their disposal? Most promising about the survey results was a clear willingness by the public to help solve these problems and others if they felt they posed significant concerns. The survey results suggest that the public needs different and more compelling information. We asked two experts on nonprofit public relations for their ideas about the common barriers to better nonprofit communication and what might be done to overcome them.
–Tim Emmert

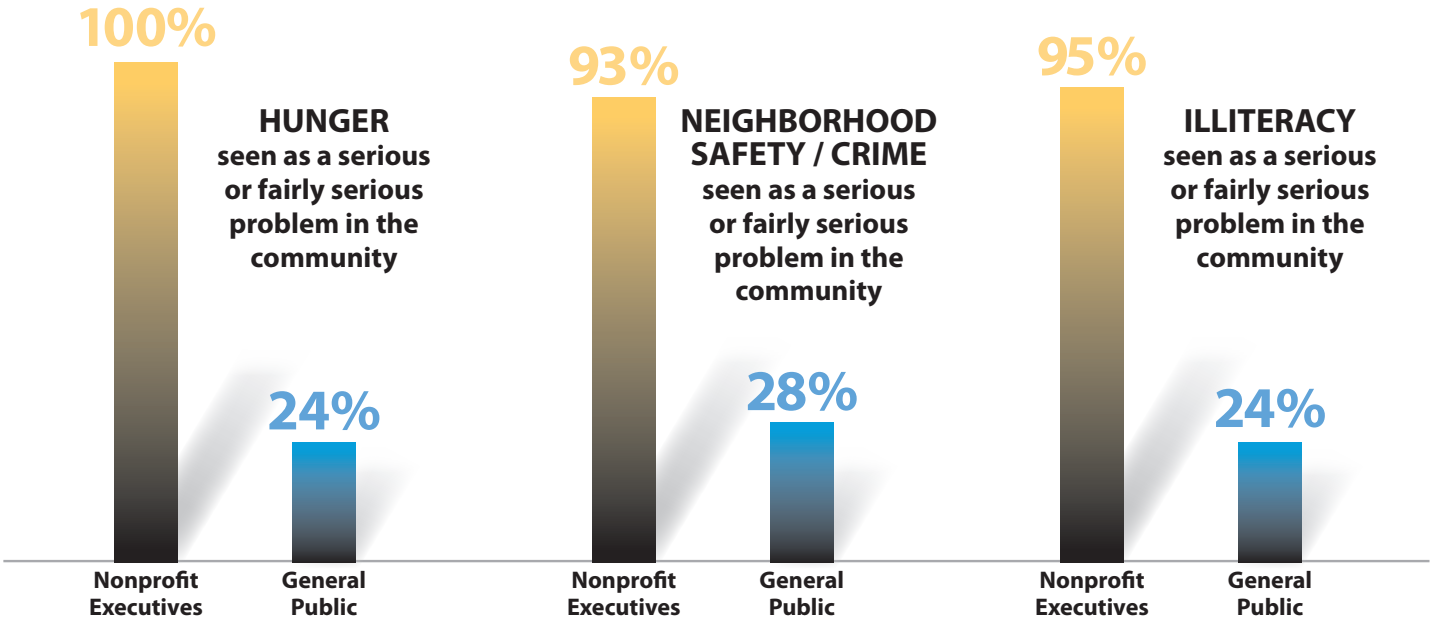
Use Mainstream Media to Forge a Connection with the General Public

Winnifred Levy, Communications Manager, The Aspen Institute, Nonprofit Sector and Philanthropy Program

NONPROFITS OFTEN SUFFER FROM two glaring deficiencies when it comes to public communications. The first is a communications strategy that is not directed at a public audience and the second is a lack of understanding regarding the priorities and motivations of the news media. Taken together, these deficiencies may widen the gap between the perceptions of an information-rich nonprofit organization and an often information-poor public.

One of the primary questions in any communications strategy is, "Who is my audience?" The logical follow-up is, "How do I reach them?" In my experience, nonprofits dedicate too much effort to developing and delivering their messages to other nonprofits rather than the general public. This often leads to a focus on communicating through publications like *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* or *Nonprofit Times* rather than through more mainstream media like *The New York Times,* CNN, or MSNBC. If nonprofits are interested in fulfilling a public mission, then they might make a greater effort to utilize public, or mainstream, media outlets.

When nonprofits do try to use mainstream media they often misunderstand the attitudes and motivations of reporters and editors. As a reporter I



What Will It Take: Making Headway on our Most Wrenching Problems, Dwight L. Morris and Associates, 2003

Public

The disconnect between the views of the public and those of nonprofit executives about the seriousness of community problems creates serious barriers to greater civic activism.

saw the glossy press kits produced by nonprofits and their public relations firms as a waste of money. Calls from members of an organization were almost always welcome and certainly gained my attention more than a press release or backgrounder ever could. Personal interaction gave me the opportunity to incorporate organizational information, ask vital questions which might determine the news-worthiness of the story, and get quotes for a potential article.

Even when reporters do express interest, nonprofit executives and practitioners frequently commit a cardinal media sin by getting between reporters and their stories. For some reason this is particularly prone to happen at meetings. Nonprofits will attempt to protect the participants at their meetings by insisting that reporters get permission from each individual speaker that they wish to quote. Unfortunately for the nonprofits, reporters on deadline typically don't have enough time to track down speakers and get their permission for individual quotes.

There are any number of ways that communication can break down. As a general rule, if a nonprofit is interested in reaching the general public it would be well-advised to pay careful attention to defining its intended audience, developing the correct approach to reaching them, and in cultivating the bearers of their message.

Public Relations for Nonprofits: A Local Solution

Art Feinglass, author of Public Relations for Nonprofits *and president of Access Communications, Inc.*

SOME ASPECTS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS are unique to the nonprofit world. The sad fact is that, all too often, nonprofits do not understand how to get into the news. People at nonprofits tend to be driven by their love for the organization and what it does. But that is not the concern of the news media. What the media wants, what it is hungry for, is a good story.

The irony is that nonprofits typically have a wealth of good stories to tell. The key to getting into the news is to provide those stories in ways the media can use. Doing that correctly can increase a nonprofit's coverage in newspapers and on radio and TV. One thing nonprofits can do to increase the effectiveness of their public relations efforts is to focus on the local angle.

Savvy public relations practitioners do not scorn the local media. The smaller dailies and neighborhood weeklies can be highly effective vehicles for nonprofit publicity. Local papers offer several advantages for nonprofits. First, they are read by people in that target market who may be exactly the audience you are trying to reach. Second, they are relatively easy to get into. If you provide a local story that affects local people, you have a good shot at getting it into print. Compared to placing a story in *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post*, getting into local papers is easy.

Local media have another advantage over the national outlets—credibility. People trust their local media more than the national media. A story aired on a local affiliate or a story in a local publication that is picked up by the Associated Press and run nationally seems more credible to many people than news that comes from the national media hubs in New York.

Nonprofits obviously cannot take placement in the media for granted. Neither should they despair of getting their stories in the media due to limited resources. By understanding what the media needs, and providing stories that meet those needs, nonprofits can greatly expand their media coverage. One vital first step is to concentrate on the local aspect of stories when engaging with media outlets. Add to the endeavor a measure of patience and perseverance and a wealth of publicity can be yours.

WANTED: Nominations for 2006 Civic Change Award

THE CIVIC CHANGE AWARD, established in 1995, honors individuals and organizations that by word and deed enrich the nation's civic life. Previous winners include:

- John Gardner, former HEW Secretary, founder of Common Cause, and co-founder of Independent Sector
- Paul Aicher, philanthropist and founder of the Study Circles Resource Center
- Alma Powell, chair of America's Promise and vice chair of the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
- William Winter, former governor of Mississippi
- The League of Women Voters of the United States

Nominations are due December 31, 2005. See www.pew-partnership.org/ for more information.

Kay Maxwell, president of the League of Women Voters, accepts the Civic Change Award from Alma Powell (far right), chair of the Pew Partnership's national board. Nancy Tate, executive director of the League, and Suzanne Morse, president of the Pew Partnership, look on.

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FOR CIVIC CHANGE

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