

# Vitality

  
**Ford Institute FOR  
COMMUNITY BUILDING**

## Leadership Program: Making a difference?

Evaluation explores  
how program  
affects rural  
communities

By **Joyce Akse**  
Director, Ford Institute  
for Community Building



The Ford Institute for Community Building has been conducting leadership classes in rural communities throughout Oregon and northern California for the last nine years. The anecdotal evidence that we've heard strongly suggests it works — that the program develops community leaders, increases civic engagement and helps build strong organizations.

**“Does the Leadership Program contribute to increased civic engagement?” was just one of the questions in a study of the Ford Institute Leadership Program conducted by Oregon State University. In Independence, it did just that. See story, page 6.**

But thinking we know what works is different than knowing, and that's why we continually evaluate the program. This issue of *Community Vitality* is devoted to the

results of the comprehensive evaluation recently completed by the Oregon State University Extension Family and Community Health program.

The evaluation was conducted in segments over the past several years and included participant surveys, focus groups and interviews with past participants and community residents.

We wanted to know not just if the Leadership Program made a difference, but how. We explore the answers in the pages that follow.

### Why evaluate?

There are a lot of good reasons to conduct program

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Spray painting. See page 7.

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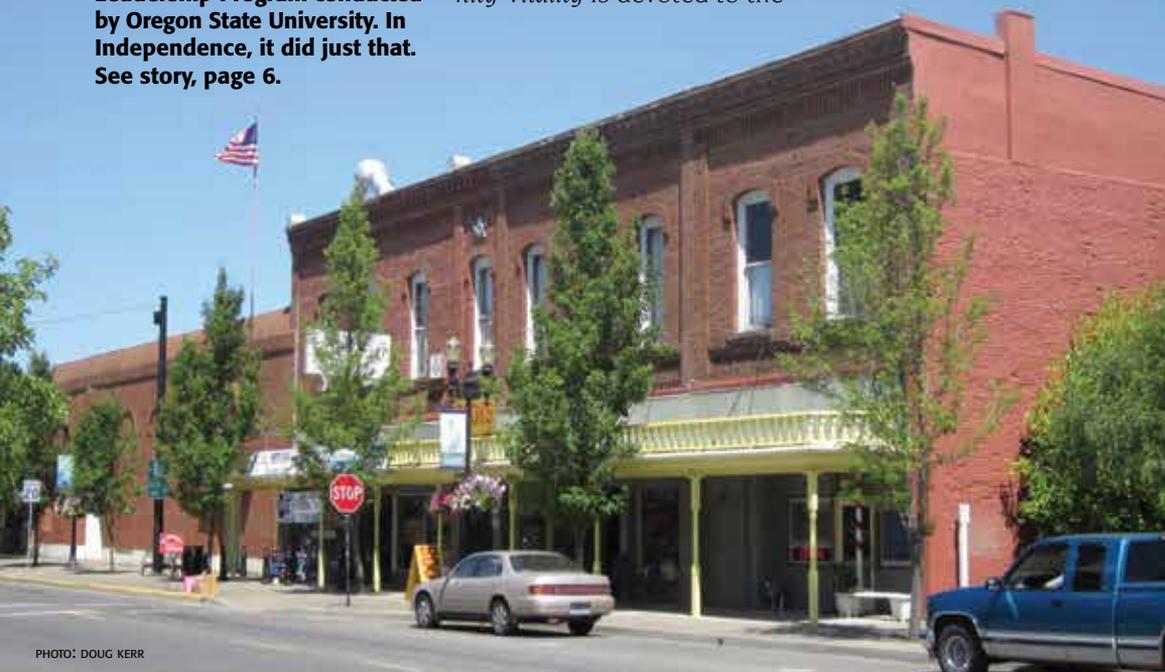
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## Tupelo, Mississippi: A model for the Leadership Program

Moving a rural community toward vitality is not easy. It takes commitment, dedicated leaders, training and, most importantly, time. We have learned a lot from the Oregon State University evaluation of the Ford Institute Leadership Program,



and it has reinforced our belief that economic development must come from within the community.

The Ford Institute's approach to building healthy communities reflects this slow and careful approach. Some economic development strategies depend on attracting outside resources—the idea that if you build an industrial park, companies bearing jobs will come. The Ford Institute strategy is much more in line with the Tupelo Model, which builds a base of human, leadership, organizational and community “capital.”

The Tupelo Model, conceived in the 1950s in Tupelo, Miss., is famous in development circles for its success in building a strategy that rests on the belief that before a community can build or attract economic development, it must develop its people. The Ford Institute has followed many of the precepts of the model: local people must address local problems; each person should be treated as a resource; the goal of community development is to help people help themselves; and it cannot be achieved without organizations and collaboration.

The town of Tupelo reinvented itself as a thriving economic center, but it took more than 30 years to get there. We believe that our rural communities hold the same promise for vitality, but we aren't expecting it to happen overnight.

—Joyce Akse

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# Experience

After nine years of sponsoring the Leadership Program, organizers share their experience

When Ford Institute Leadership Program organizers began studying different ways of delivering leadership classes, they tried a number of formats: one weeknight every week; a seven-hour class module; a three-hour session.

After settling on a model where participants get together on Friday nights and all day on Saturdays, the Institute discovered that when or where the classes were held weren't the most important factors in achieving success. What was? Food.

“Although the leadership knowledge and skill was important,” says Tom Gallagher, former director of the Ford Institute for Community Building, “it was the positive acquaintances that came with people sitting together and eating that correlated highly with motivation. It's nice to have time together, but sitting down and eating together is even better.”

Today, meals are an essential part of the leadership class structure, and that serves as one of the lessons learned along the way as more than 4,000 people in more than 70 areas have participated in the program. Here are a few more.

### The power of talk

Chatting with your neighbors around a spaghetti dinner is just one of the opportunities the classes provide for people to really get to know each other. Talking in the halls on break, late nights planning class projects, comparing re-

# reveals what works best

sults on the Meyer-Briggs personality assessments — those minutes all add up to new and deeper relationships.

One of the most talked-about topics in interviews done as part of the program evaluation was the networking — the opportunity to get to know people in their region.

“We knew networking would be important, but we didn’t think it would be as big of a deal as it turned out to be,” says Joyce Akse, director of the Ford Institute for Community Building. “The classes helped get people from neighboring communities together. They realized they have people nearby to call on, even if they aren’t from the same town. It’s a powerful outcome.”

## Keeping it local

From the beginning of the program in spring of 2003, classes have been held in local communities, unlike many programs that bring participants together in a central location more convenient for trainers. In retrospect, that was a choice that has done much to assure the success of the program.

“That was a signature decision, one of the most important ones that was made,” Gallagher says.

Besides making it easier for people to participate, it also kept the focus on the local areas. Having local classes also paid an unexpected dividend for the Institute: knowledge. Although the cost of having class trainers drive thousands of miles a year is large, it pays off in the intimate knowledge



BOONIE LOFTON

◀ **Young people lend a hand in Mitchell for the Wheeler County class project. Having youth in the Leadership Program is one of the best components of the program, say program organizers.**

across the country focus on the 25-45 age group, often requiring a proven leadership track record. Not the Ford Institute Leadership Program. Cohorts are comprised of participants as young as 14 and as old as 89, and while some are experienced leaders, others are just interested.

“The older participants bring the history of the community to the program and are great at mentoring the younger ones,” Gallagher says. Plus, he points out, in order to build capacity, a community must call on new, often inexperienced members.

## Keeping it small

Each Leadership Program cohort undertakes a project that benefits the community. In the early years of the program, the projects were big — too big. “We learned quickly that if they tackled a big project they got discouraged and gave up,” Akse says. Now, projects are limited to no more than a \$12,000 total budget (including a \$5,000 matching grant) and a realistic timeline of up to a year.

“We want them to practice skills, work together, and use their network to create something of value to their community. We found they did that

gained by the Institute of the towns it serves. “When we go to our communities, we get to know our communities well,” Gallagher says.

## The truth of youth

Although the involvement of youth is now a hallmark of the Leadership Program, it wasn’t always so. In the beginning, Institute planners discussed whether or not to include students, and the outlook wasn’t good. Scheduling, liability and other issues

appeared to outweigh the benefits. Despite that, youth were included on a trial basis.

“We found out pretty quickly that having young people in the class was one of the best things we do,” Gallagher says. Besides bringing a fresh, new perspective, “other class members loved it. And we’ve had no problem with youth, and no special challenges.”

Many leadership programs

*Continued on page 9*

# Growth in skills changes

## Participants motivated to new leadership positions

As an elected official, Faye Stewart must listen to voters, understand their perspective and find a way to navigate contentious issues. Stewart, of Cottage Grove, says those skills are integral to his job as a Lane



Faye Stewart

▼ Lane County Commissioner Faye Stewart used his leadership skills to help residents of the Dorena and Culp Creek areas create a water district to tap water from the Row River.

County commissioner. He says he learned those skills in the Ford Institute Leadership Program, which he attended before running for election in 2004.

“I really believe I wouldn’t be as an effective commis-

sioner without the skills I was taught in that course. I may not even have been elected,” he said. “[The Leadership Program] helped me with running, speaking, preparing my thoughts, organizing — a lot of skills that I didn’t have before the class.”

An Oregon State University evaluation found the program motivates participants to become leaders, achieve educational goals, apply for new jobs and run for elected office.

The county commissioner post is the first elected position Stewart has held; he just completed his seventh year.

Stewart says the skills he learned in the Leadership Program helped him with conflict

resolution, understanding how people think and learn, assessing situations, collaborative planning and implementation and listening.

Those skills have been especially helpful during emotionally charged meetings in Lane County, and he says they helped him assist people outside Cottage Grove develop a new water district. The community was at odds with the city after it announced it would discontinue service to rural users.

“When I arrived, I had a community that was really upset and spending most of their time in turmoil with the city,” he says. “I was able to set the turmoil aside and say, ‘This is where we are and here are the options.’”

Aided by the county, community members formed the Row River Valley Water District and received a grant to build the treatment facility that began operating and serving people in the Dorena and Culp Creek areas in October 2010.

### Pursuit of education

Sutherlin resident Jacinda Sullivan joined the Leadership Program in 2006 and also attributes some of her personal achievements to it. Sullivan says it helped her make connections in the community and, through the Meyers Briggs Type Indicators, she learned about different personalities and learning styles.

Though the Leadership Program never addressed it specifically, she says her expe-



DOROTHY DELINA PORTER

# lives

rience motivated her to pursue her own education. "I've always been a highly motivated person with lots of drive. But as a single mother for most of my life, college goals took a backseat."

In 2005, while working full time as director of information technology for the Sutherlin School District, she began studying for her associate's degree at Umpqua Community College. She then earned a bachelor's degree in business, with a minor in leadership, organization and management at Eastern Oregon University online, followed by a master's in business administration, which she completed in August 2011.

Today, she works in her "dream job" at a high-tech company. "So it changed my life from a very personal perspective. My momentum just started building really quickly," she says. ■

## '...trained people ready to build communities and move forward'

**N**early two decades ago, Patty Scott was working on her dissertation at Oregon State University, focusing on leadership and community college employees' role in the community.

Scott, now president of Southwestern Oregon Community College in Coos Bay, says at that time there was very little research on the topic.

"Then 10 years later, Ford comes out with [the Ford Institute Leadership Program]," she says. "It was very difficult in 1995. Now, there's a lot of good stuff out there."

### Jumped in

When the Leadership Program came to the southwest coast area, Scott jumped at the opportunity to be a participant.

Scott now serves as a Community Ambassador Team member for the Ford Institute. She helps present the Leadership Program curriculum, and coordinates and advocates for programs.

"It was kind of selfish. It was an interest of mine, and I saw what it could do in the community. I wanted to do what I could to make that continue," she says.

Scott says the networks that participants build are invaluable. "I've met so many people in the



**Patty Scott, president of Southwestern Oregon Community College, greets a well-wisher at the opening of the Curry Campus in Brookings.**

other communities, it's like I have this ready army of trained people who are ready to build communities and move forward." ■

### Changes in Competence



Source: Evaluation of the Ford Institute Leadership Program 2010 Report

**Participants in the Ford Institute Leadership Program noted significant positive changes in their competency levels for five leadership skills, according to the Oregon State University evaluation.**

**In sum, the leadership classes taught community residents how to be more involved in their communities, how to network, how to work effectively in groups, and gave some participants the necessary confidence to take on leadership roles.**

—Evaluation of the Ford Institute Leadership Program 2010 Report

# Two cities, one community

**Independence and Monmouth residents find more reasons to cross the street and work together**

**I**ndependence and Monmouth are sister cities in the heart of the Willamette Valley. Despite their proximity, they are very different towns. Independence grew up as an agricultural and commercial hub, and today it has a large Hispanic population. Missionaries from Illinois founded Monmouth as a college and separatist community; today the town has a large educator and student population.

Those differences are still present, but now some residents are finding more reasons to cross the street, meet neighbors and work together. Ford Institute Leadership Program graduates credit the program with bringing them together.

“The Leadership Program gave everyone the permission to say ‘collaboration is okay and in fact it’s better,’” says Independence resident and city councilwoman Marilyn Morton.

Supporting the perception of graduates are the conclusions of an evaluation of the program done by Oregon State University Extension Family and Community Health. Researchers found that program



participants across Oregon and Northern California gained a greater awareness of others in neighboring communities. Projects allowed individuals to “strengthen their ties to other cohort members by interacting multiple times and developing trust and solidarity through the process.”

Despite sharing a school district, fire department and chamber of commerce, collaboration between Independence and Monmouth did not come naturally because of the two cities’ differing roots.

“Monmouth had its celebrations and Independence had its celebrations. Many of the town’s people were pretty well separated,” Morton says. “We’re just two miles apart. But there is a diversity of philosophy.”

Community events in Monmouth, home to Western Oregon University, center largely around university functions.

In contrast, neighboring Independence, once touted as the “Hop Capital of the World,” has a lot of agriculture-related activities.

Morton was a member of the area’s first Leadership Program cohort in 2005-06, which brought Independence and Monmouth leaders together. Monmouth resident Cec Koontz says those old divisions were an issue the first cohort wanted to address.

## **Bridging differences**

The group is slowly erasing old lines while honoring each community’s pride in their roots. Morton says there is a long history of competition and difference between the two cities, yet there are elements ripe for collaboration. The cohort aimed to make those connections.

Koontz says the name for their cohort, “Two Cities, One Community,” highlights “unity.” Members of the community



POLK COUNTY HERALD-OBSERVER

◀ **The annual Hop Fest attracts as many people from Monmouth as it does from Independence, which hosts the celebration.**

would not have been a common sight at all. Now we talk about how interesting it was that we've multiplied our connections through that class," she says. "We definitely rely on that, on each other."

**'Cross-pollination'**

Morton calls this community-bridging "cross-pollination" and says the increased collaboration has branched out among the community's subsequent Leadership Program cohorts and beyond.

Her biggest barometer for the collaboration is the annual "Ghost Walk" held in Independence. At the end of summer, residents and tourists gather downtown for a free walk through what is purported to be a haunted area of town.

Morton says she's always recruiting guides to take history buffs and thrill seekers around town. Prior to the Leadership Program, about 90 percent of the guides came from Independence. Last year, guides were drawn evenly from Monmouth and Independence. Attendance has tripled since 2002.

"The collaboration opened the gate so wide. The folks from Monmouth are just as eager to be engaged as the people in Independence," she says. ■

would often direct inquiries to "someone from 2CIC."

Koontz, a Monmouth city councilor, says now it's not unusual for people to see her out at lunch with the economic developer of Independence or other leaders from both towns.

"Eight or 10 years ago it

**“About half of participants reported that since the leadership class, their level of civic engagement has increased, and the majority of participants attribute their ability to engage effectively in civic life to the leadership class.”**

*—Evaluation of the Ford Institute Leadership Program 2010 Report*

# Wheeler County makes it a trifecta perfecta

**F**ossil, Spray and Mitchell are the three largest towns in the wide-open spaces of Central Oregon's Wheeler County. The small county is home to about 1,400 souls. Because of its size, the area struggles to attract businesses and host events.

"It was like the three towns were in competition. If one town got something, everyone felt like 'How come they got something—we didn't get that!,'" says Mitchell resident Bob Mair. Mair, a member of the recent Wheeler County Ford Institute Leadership Program cohort, says he thinks the training went a long way to smoothing some of those tensions.

Marjorie Sharp works for the county and lives in Fossil. She was also a member of the county's first cohort. She says the program allowed participants to sit down, get to know each other and learn that their differences were not as big as they thought.

"It was an eye-opener for all of us," she says.

The cohort did a project in each town. In Spray, participants painted the museum and helped write grants for other museum renovations. In Fossil, the group painted the park play structures. In Mitchell, they redid the public restrooms and "painted everything that wasn't growing," Mair says.

Pitching in to help the program participants were civic leaders as well as other townsmen. Since the Leadership Program started, Sharp says she's beginning to see more people join other countywide groups.

Mair agrees that the program is changing things in Wheeler County.

"It's the best I've seen since I've been here for cooperation between all the towns," he says. "People are taking part, things are happening and it's good. Anything that brings more people to the area and makes people welcome and makes them want to come back helps all of us." ■



DEBBIE STARKEY

**Jim and Linda Glawe help paint the museum in Spray, just one of three projects completed by the Wheeler County Ford Institute Leadership Program cohort.**

# Economy and ecology

Leadership skills put to work helping farms, forests and fish on the Oregon Coast

Not too long ago, Bandon Dunes Resort developer Mike Keiser saw an opportunity to enhance both the economy and ecology of his beloved southern Oregon Coast.

To that end, Keiser asked Chicago-based Arabella Advisors to help him develop a group called the Wild Rivers Coast Alliance, to be funded through profits from a new golf course, Bandon Preserve. The alliance's work would be aimed at improving tourism and conditions for farms, forests and fish, from Bandon to Brookings.

Arabella, a firm that aids philanthropists, sought local leaders to develop the alliance's mission and get the program off the ground. Ford Institute Leadership Program graduate Harry Hoogesteger was quickly nominated to the committee.

"It didn't take us very long to get to Harry because he's an acknowledged leader on conservation issues on the South

“Overall, participants are applying leadership skills, participating in community building and project management tasks, and engaging with their communities...”  
—Evaluation of the Ford Institute Leadership Program 2010 Report

Coast. He, in short order, became one of our go-to people and the chair of the steering committee,” says Bruce Boyd, principal and managing director at Arabella Advisors.

Tom Gallagher, former director of the Ford Institute, worked with Arabella during the start-up phase. “The 300-plus graduates of the Institute's leadership classes in the region have helped make sure the alliance fits local needs and engages local people. Further, many class graduates are involved in local businesses that

can grow with support from the alliance,” Gallagher says.

An evaluation of the Ford Institute Leadership Program prepared by Oregon State University suggests more organizations are becoming more effective, community-oriented and collaborative because of program alumni.

Participants told researchers they have become more effective members of their organizations by implementing new skills learned from the program.

## A natural fit

Take Hoogesteger. As the South Coast Watershed Council coordinator, Hoogesteger was a natural fit for the WRCA. The 62-year-old Gold Beach man credits the Leadership Program with helping him work more effectively. He and two other graduates are working on two additional projects for the coastal region.

Hoogesteger says Keiser's investment in the Wild Rivers Coast Alliance is significant and will go a long way toward

Profits from a new golf course in Bandon fund the Wild Rivers Coast Alliance. A Leadership Program graduate helped get the program off the ground.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BANDON DUNES RESORT



**The golf course offers fertile ground for the silvery phacelia, a coastal sand dune plant threatened by non-native beach grass.**

generations,” Hoogesteger says.

Boyd says WRCA committee members experienced in leadership, like Hoogesteger, are helping make the alliance a success. “One of the reasons that WRCA has been able to move ahead as quickly as it has is because of the strong alliances and leadership already there,” he says.

### **Significant impact**

Jim Seeley, the new executive director of WRCA, says Hoogesteger makes a significant impact in the group. “He understands what’s going on and understands the people, and he will be a great resource for the Wild Rivers Coast Alliance,” Seeley says.

The 13-hole, par-3 Bandon Preserve is set to open by early summer. The course, which overlooks the ocean, offers fertile ground for the silvery phacelia, a coastal sand dune plant threatened by the encroachment of non-native beach grass.

“It’s drop-dead gorgeous. When you first see it, your jaw drops,” Seeley says. “We’re anxious to see how our players react to it.” ■

building the program’s sustainability. “Having a generous funder who’s committed for the long term is remarkable,” Hoogesteger says. “Mike Keiser absolutely loves the coast. It’s a wonderful, magic place, and he wants to invest in it.”

Hoogesteger and others on the steering committee have worked with Arabella for the last 18 months, already awarding seed money to a few ventures, including specialty wood craftsmen and community-supported agriculture.

“Start-up investments are hard to come by to help local businesses get up and get going, so we’re trying to hit that sweet spot to use our resources wisely and pass businesses down through the



BENJAMIN BRINK

**In Vernonia, residents gather for a community dinner after the floods of 2007. Sharing food fosters a sense of community. Leadership Program organizers learned this early; meals are an essential part of the class structure.**

## **Lessons learned**

*Continued from page 3*

most effectively at a smaller level. This allowed them to achieve the outcome quickly, and then they can go on to bigger and better projects,” Akse says.

### **Leadership is not enough**

The original vision for the Leadership Program, following the best practices of other programs around the nation, was to teach potential community leaders the skills and tools they needed to lead. Although that is still the program’s goal, input from participants has caused the program to expand greatly in the last five years.

Today, three fully developed training courses — the Leadership Program (repeated twice), Effective Organizations and Community Collaborations— are offered in each area.

“Leadership was not enough for participants,” Gallagher says. “They wanted to know about organizational development and col-

laboration. It was comments from participants that led to the new classes.”

### **Sharing the journey**

One of the topics brought out in the evaluation interviews was the value people placed on working with others from nearby communities. “When we work in communities, people almost always comment about working with others from adjoining areas,” Akse says. “The evaluation told us that people want to look to those who share their problems.”

### **The long road ahead**

“I thought we’d see change faster,” Gallagher says. “I am heartened by the variety and depth and change we’ve seen, but it’s not the 10-year project I thought it was.”

That conclusion has been bolstered by the example of other projects, like in Tupelo, Miss., (see page 2) where an economically viable community was created, but on a longer timeline—about 30 years. ■

# Strategic planning helps mentoring network blossom

The Rose Circle Mentoring Network opened its doors in 2005. At the time, organizers didn't realize how fast it would take off. The group, which offers mentoring opportunities for youth in southern Oregon, began by providing community circles for girls. The circle is a place where the skills of listening, witnessing, sharing and supporting each other are modeled and taught.



Since 2005, the organization has expanded its activities to include mentor trainings for 60 or more people each year and individual mentorship matches for both boys and girls. Last year, a grant from the Carpenter Foundation enabled the group to provide mentoring for pregnant and parenting teens.

After two members of the board attended the Ford Institute's Effective Organizations training, the board decided it needed to examine its policies and chart a path for the future. In 2010, Rose Circle received a technical assistance grant from The Ford Family Foundation to develop a strategic plan.

### Expectations exceeded

"We not only created this document, but have exceeded our expectations in implementing it," says Karsten Peterson, co-executive director of the group. "With an updated mission and value statement we have reassessed our goals as an organization."

Today, the Rose Circle has expanded its programs into schools, incorporated more at-risk youth in various programs, and increased the numbers of talking circles offered. The group has also expanded its geographic scope, providing services to new parts of Rogue Valley, with plans for more expansion. Two part-time directors were hired, and new office space was procured.

"Our goals are well ahead of schedule," Peterson says. "We are also in collaboration with partnering organizations to create new programs such as working more with public schools and providing mentorship opportunities to pregnant teens and new mothers."

Oregon Mentors recently selected the Rose Circle to participate in its Quality-Based Mentoring initiative, which will help the group increase the quality of the services it offers. "By the end of 2012, we will hold national ranking in quality mentorship," Peterson says. "We are well on our way to establishing a sustained structure to reach more youth needing mentoring support. ■"

► Rip City Riders, a motorcycle club, raises money to benefit the children of Klamath Falls. Effective Organizations training from the Ford Institute is helping the group manage a popular three-day Fun Run & Festival.



# Stronger, effe

## Training shows demonstrable impact on organizations

When Jeff Bush started the Rip City Riders in Klamath Falls, he had a dual purpose: to change the sometimes negative image people had of motorcycle riders and to raise money to benefit the children of the Klamath Falls community.

The group decided to concentrate on one big fundraising event each year, to include crowd-pleasing bike events, an outdoor concert, vendors and activities for the kids. It proved to be a recipe for success, with the group raising more than \$40,000 over the last four years for groups that benefit children.

This July, the group will host the 5th Annual Summer Fun Run & Festival. With the popular event drawing up to 1,600 people a day during its





PHOTO COURTESY OF RIP CITY RIDERS

# ective groups

three-day run, it's a much-needed boost for the Klamath Falls economy as well as for local youth.

As members of the group's board of directors watched the event grow in popularity, they realized that they needed a little help. "We're a bunch of old bikers," Bush says with a laugh. "We were breaking new ground and doing new things. None of us had been on a nonprofit board before. We wanted to make sure we were doing the right things and doing everything legally."

Members of the board decided to participate in training from the Ford Institute for Community Building. Trainers Roi Crouch and Mary Ward took the board through the Institute's Effective Organizations training, which focuses on strategic planning,

organizational leadership and resource development. A follow-up coaching session focused on board recruitment, organizational structure and fund-raising strategies.

The Ford Institute training is built on the premise that strong organizations help create and maintain strong communities. In the recent Oregon State University evaluation, the Ford Institute set out to discover if that premise was

**[Effective Organizations] participants are exposed to information about strategic planning, resource management, and operational leadership.**

—Evaluation of the Ford Institute Leadership Program 2010 Report

proving to be true. The answer was yes.

Participants in the Effective Organizations training reported that they leave the training highly likely to implement many of the strategies discussed there. They were most likely to improve the functioning of their boards, update their organizations' strategic plans, and improve the development and management of human and financial resources. "Thus, the trainings have a demonstrable impact on participants, and they are likely to carry out the actions necessary to creating and sustaining an effective organization," the report concludes.

## Rogue Valley

Building a strong organization takes a distinct set of skills that are different for each group. In the Rogue Valley, the Rose Circle board of directors focused on building capacity. The group's mission is to support and empower youth through mentoring (see

article, opposite page). Two board members attended the Effective Organizations training, where they realized their group could use some extra help in building capacity. Through a Ford Family Foundation technical assistance grant, the board developed a strategic plan to help them carry out prioritized goals. "It was very effective for them," says trainer Roi Crouch. "One of the other outcomes was the creation of a long-term budget projection that allows them to track what it cost to run the program and where the money is coming from."

In Klamath Falls, Bush says the board of the Rip City Riders is now more confident of its processes and strategies, and is well positioned to deal with the burgeoning event. Three of the group's volunteers have gone on to grant school. "It was really worth it," Bush says of the training. "If it comes back around, we'll do it again." ■



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROSE CIRCLE

**Rose Circle in the Rogue Valley supports and empowers youth through mentoring. Board members attended Foundation-sponsored organizational training to help develop a strategic plan and budget projections.**



PHOTO COURTESY OF BANDON WESTERN WORLD NEWSPAPER

Jeneveve Winchell, Autumn Moss-Strong, and Tessa and Destyni Fuller sing a song from the musical “Hairspray” for Bandon Feeds the Hungry, a fundraiser that raised \$13,000 for Bandon’s food assistance programs. The groups collaborated to lessen “donor fatigue.”

# What was unique: ‘true rel

**Network cultivation ranked second for community impact in Leadership Program survey**

**In Sherman County, a meeting to discuss revenues from a wind-farm project ended with improved networking. Resident Sandy McNab notes: “Now, if one city needs to be working on a big sewer line project, another city is likely to send over some maintenance guys for a few days.”**

PHOTO: STEVE ROELOF

**W**hen Elin Miller moved to Douglas County in 2009, she didn’t know many people in the area. Recently retired from a high-powered career — her last job was as a presidential appointee overseeing a four-state region for the Environmental Protection Agency — she joined her husband on their hazelnut farm in Umpqua. She decided to join the Ford Institute Leadership Program’s Roseburg cohort, not because she needed the leadership training, but for the networking.

“After a pretty intense career path, I wanted to find a place for myself in the commu-

nity where I could create some value and do some good for the community itself,” Miller says. “What was unique about this experience was the true relationship bonding resulting from how the classes were set up. It wasn’t just sitting there and hearing about leadership;

**“... participants use their networks to improve the ways they work in organizations, perform their jobs, and complete community projects.”**

—Evaluation of the Ford Institute Leadership Program 2010 Report

it was the *doing* part. You had groups and teams mixing up, and you got to know everybody in the class.”

When Oregon State University researchers interviewed participants of the Leadership Program, the second most frequently cited community impact of the Leadership Program was the networks it cultivated. (The first was the increased number of effective community leaders.) “We are finding more and more that networking is just critical to be able to carry out the mission of nonprofits in rural areas,” says Mary Ward, a trainer for Ford Institute classes.

For Miller, those relation-

ships quickly paid off when she decided to run for a position on the Umpqua Community College board of trustees. She tapped fellow students in the Leadership Program and other community members to advise her, winning the hotly contested race with 67 percent of the vote. "Without the leadership class, I would never have done it," she said.

### Sherman County

Networking is valuable even in a county so small that it feels like everyone already knows each other. Take Sherman County, population 1,725. A countywide meeting to discuss what to do with revenues from a large wind farm project began with input

**Lyn Silverman was in the middle of a Ford Institute Leadership Class when she figured out how to cure the "donor fatigue" that was driving down business contributions in her coastal area.**

searchers found that, though respondents most often talked about the networks that were formed among Leadership Program participants, others spoke about the expansion of networks throughout the com-

munity. Bandon resident Lyn Silverman was in the middle of a Ford Institute Leadership Class when she figured out how to cure the "donor fatigue" that was driving down business contributions in her coastal area.

"Just being at the training put all kinds of great thoughts in my mind," she says, "and I came up with an idea for the food assistance programs in the county. We were all helping low-income people with food. Why didn't we join together in a major fund-raising?"

Her brainstorm turned out to be a huge success. All of the county's food groups banded together to plan one big event, a variety show. Volunteers

were able to concentrate their efforts, businesses made just one donation, instead of several, and supporters did not have to choose which group to support.

"The community really got behind it, and it has become a part of the culture of Bandon to do this fund-raiser," Ward says.

The success of the food group collaboration was just the start of a formalized network that today helps nonprofits connect throughout the coastal area. Bandon Cares began by surveying all of the nonprofits in the area to find out what kind of support they needed. This allows all groups in the area to know what each other is doing, what their needs are for volunteers and provides opportunities for common training.

The group works with the Bandon Chamber of Commerce to maintain a common community calendar of events, maintains a website to provide information to nonprofits about opportunities for recruiting, training and meeting, and holds events a couple of times a year that boost communication and networking among nonprofits.

"At a time when resources are diminished and need has increased, the successful strategy is being able to work together to leverage resources," Ward says. "That's what networking is all about." ■

# Relationship bonding'

from the more than 200 people present; it ended with a plan for improved city-county networking.

Today, a monthly meeting puts people representing the city and the county together; speakers talk about common issues. "A lot of this came out of the first go-around of the Ford class," says Sandy McNab, a member of the cohort. "It opened some doors for us. Now, if one city needs to be working on a big sewer line project, another city is likely to send over some maintenance guys for a few days."

### Bandon Cares

Networking is not always done between people. Re-



**Elin Miller works in her hazelnut orchard in Umpqua. Miller, who moved to Douglas County in 2009, credits the networking she developed in the Leadership Program for her decision to run for a position on the Umpqua Community College board of trustees.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF ELIN MILLER

# Reading materials offer insight

## Select Books provide practical approaches to community building

Get the tools you need to help make a difference in your community with the Ford Institute for Community Building Select Books. We provide these resources at no charge. Keep them, share them. The only requirement is providing us with your feedback on the publication ordered.

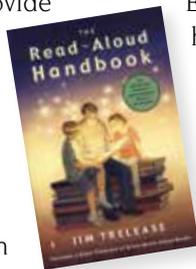
Here are details on some of the books on the Select List:

**Nonprofit Sustainability: Making Strategic Decisions for Financial Viability** by Jeanne Bell, Ian Masaoka, Steve Zimmerman. 191 pages. © 2010.

The key word in this comprehensive book is sustainability. Too many organizations focus on their activities at the expense of their long-term viability. This book will change all that, with its belief that nonprofits must operate like businesses. Not quite sure how to do that? This book will take you through the essential steps: understanding the theory, mapping and adjusting your business model, analyzing your income stream, and ongoing decision making and leadership. And it doesn't

just tell; the authors show their concepts with a wealth of tables and charts.

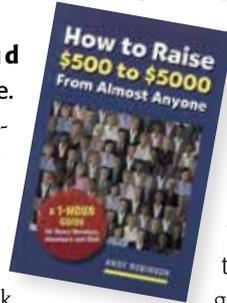
**The Read-Aloud Handbook** by Jim Trelease. 340 pages. © 2006. Reading is the key to a new world, and you can help children discover how to get there with the Read-Aloud handbook.



Effective early childhood development is an absolutely essential component in raising successful kids, and teaching young children to love reading is a

great way to start. Want to know how to lure your kids away from the TV? Looking for ways to create a reader-friendly home or classroom? Writer Jim Trelease mixes practical suggestions with the latest research and information, all of it designed to help you integrate reading into a young child's life.

**How to Raise \$500 to \$5000 from Almost Anyone** by Andy Robinson. 109 pages. © 2011. Billed as a "1-hour guide for board members, volunteers



and staff," this book packs a big wallop in its small package. Readers will learn the word you hear most often in fundraising ("no") and how to deal with that, along with effective ways to ask for a money gift, the importance of setting goals, and whom to ask for funding. ■

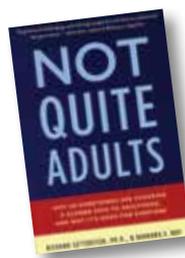
You can receive one of these books for free. Simply complete the form at far right. The full list of Select Books offers more than 25 other books. View the list at [www.tfff.org](http://www.tfff.org), or call (541) 957-5574 to receive a copy of the list and request form. ■

# FREE

## Passage to adulthood

*Continued from page 16*

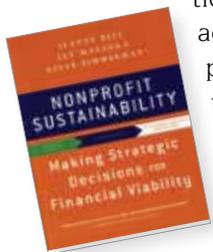
"A slower course is not a slacker course. Quite the contrary. This is a period of life that can't be taken lightly. It's a period of life that generates an extraordinary inequality."



Decisions made in a person's 20s—on education, on parenthood, on marriage — heavily influence the rest of your life. "We should be a lot more worried about people who go too fast than kids who go too slow," Settersten says. "Quick marriages often end in divorce. Quick parenting makes it hard to get an education. Quick departure from the family home leaves you with few resources to get by, especially in today's economy.

"A slower path today is often very good, and a fast path is often very risky," Settersten says. "We can't advise young people today based on the world we knew at their age. That world no longer exists." ■

You can receive a free copy of *Not Quite Adults* by simply completing the form at far right.



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# Making a difference?

Continued from page 1

evaluations. The most obvious, of course, is to determine the results of the large investment made in the Leadership Program and to look for indications that it is benefiting the communities it aims to serve.

We also use the results of the evaluation to improve program delivery. The feedback we get from the people on the ground is invaluable in helping us make mid-course corrections and improvements. We are now, for example, in the sixth major revision of the Leadership Program curriculum, changes driven largely by comments and suggestions from participants.

The evaluation also allows us to share the lessons we learn with other audiences that can benefit—other foundations, for example, as well as the public and other interested people. A nonprofit foundation in British Columbia even adapted the Leadership Program to the needs in its province.

## What does success look like?

Although it's easy to do an evaluation without talking to people, the numbers can tell us only part of the story. When we designed the evaluation, we intentionally set out to collect the soft data— anecdotes and stories—that really tell us what is going on. The focus groups and interviews allow us to collect information that may not be covered in the survey. It provides people with a way to share what the impact of the program has been, and to tell us what has worked and what

has not. The stories bring the data alive for everyone.

## The conclusions

The evaluation set out to answer several questions, including these: Does the program develop effective community leaders? Does it contribute to increased civic engagement? Does the program build strong organizations?

The evaluation's conclusion came as no surprise: the answers were all yes. The program's overarching approach works: Community leaders who attend the classes learn skills, maintain them and use them.

And now that we know that the program is meeting its goals, we can look to the future. The hope is that these leaders with increased capacity will use their skills and their commitment to make things happen in their communities.

Next, we'd like to measure the effect the program has had on the economic health of our communities. But for now the evaluation findings confirmed for us something else we already knew—this is long-term work. ■

**The hope is that these leaders with increased capacity will use their skills and their commitment to make things happen in their communities.**

—Joyce Akse

# REDEEMABLE FOR ONE BOOK

An evaluation/feedback form is included with each book mailed. If you have an evaluation/feedback form pending from a book requested from a previous *Community Vitality* or the Select Book form, please return it so that we may process your new request. The full list of Select Books offers more than 25 other books. View the list at [www.tfff.org](http://www.tfff.org), or call (541) 957-5574 to receive a copy of the list and request form. Books can be sent only to addresses in Oregon and Siskiyou County, Calif.

## Which book would you like?

Please check only ONE:

- Nonprofit Sustainability*
- How to Raise \$500 to \$5000*
- Read-Aloud Handbook*
- Not Quite Adults*

(Books are described on page 14 and the back cover.)

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## Review

# Passage to adulthood

A more calculated, slower transition may lead to a better future for all

We've all heard the "failure to launch" stories—the 20-something down the street who's still living with mom and dad, the college graduate who can't seem to decide what to do, the kids who just won't cooperate when it comes to producing grandkids.

Contrary to public opinion, these young people may actually be getting it right. In *Not Quite Adults*, researcher Rick Settersten and co-author Barbara Ray find that young adults today are facing a completely different set of challenges than their parents. For this age group, taking things slow—delaying marriage, parenthood and even moving out of the house—is a sound strategy that will pay off later in life.

Settersten is professor of human development and family sciences and endowed director of Oregon State Uni-



***Not Quite Adults* offers tips for parenting children in the twenty-something age range including kids who have returned to the nest.**

versity's Hallie Ford Center for Healthy Children and Families. He spent a decade studying the topic as part of a network of scientists funded by the MacArthur Foundation. "The research was just so socially relevant, we wanted to take it to the streets," Settersten says. "So much of our research evidence runs counter to public conversation about young people today, which is often so negative."

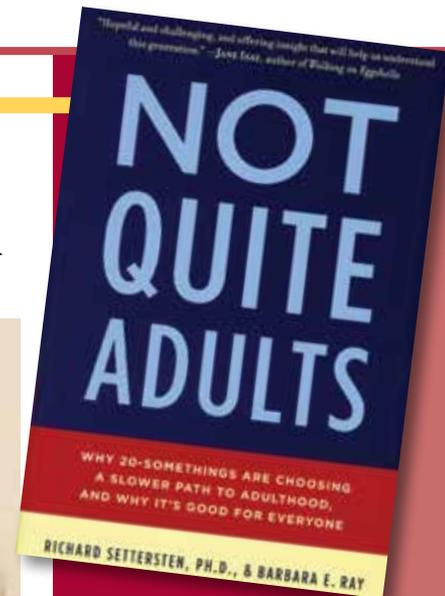
### **Living at home**

One of the biggest issue researchers found was the battle over living at home. Although commonly cited

as an example of the slacker mentality, researchers found that sharing space with parents can be a really smart decision. "Especially if it allows them to be in school or an apprenticeship, or to save money so they have a stronger launch when they do go," Settersten says. Not only that, but living at home keeps a lot of young people out of poverty.

"All of this evidence shows that there are real benefits to slowing down, but it can't be random," Settersten says. "It has to be careful and strategic."

*Continued on page 14*



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for **FREE**.  
See page 15.

  
**THE Ford Family  
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### **MISSION**

Successful citizens and vital rural communities

### **CORE VALUES**

**Integrity:** Promoting and acknowledging principled behavior

**Stewardship:** Responsibility to give back and accountability for resources and results

**Respect:** Valuing all individuals

**Independence:** Encouraging self-reliance and initiative

**Community:** Working together for positive change