

Beyond the Borders

COMMUNITY, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT and LEADERSHIP NEWSLETTER

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Building Communities

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Welcome to our first quarterly issue. This newsletter is meant to share with you practical tools and information to assist you in your important role in community and economic development work. We welcome comments on current letters plus encourage your advice for future articles.

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Dakota Connectedness

Editorial

A headline in the August 5, 2001 issue of the Fargo Forum read **□ Bismarck residents get top marks for public affairs interest.□** This certainly caught my attention, so I read on. The article, written by Brain Witte, described the latest results from the Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey that was designed by Robert Putnam of Harvard University. The study was conducted in 40 communities and regions in 29 states. Bismarck, ND and South Dakota were included. Five hundred and six Bismarck residents were interviewed.

What they found is very encouraging. I've talked about the demise of social capital in past newsletters, but it seems that Bismarck and South Dakota, although, not perfect, do have a higher degree of social capital than other regions in the U.S. We led the pack, as

Wendy Rahn, associate professor of the University of Minnesota says, in terms of engagement in civic or community affairs. Bismarck placed fourth in communities, with a high level of religious involvement and second in the civic leadership category. Bismarck was first in participation in conventional politics and placed second, just behind South Dakota, in social trust. It all sounded great, and it is, except for the last item in the article. This one does concern me. Bismarck placed last and South Dakota placed second to the last when asked about friendships with diverse groups of people. Several studies have shown that the most successful communities have the greatest diversity. The most successful communities welcome and celebrate diversity.

Lindon Robinson and Marcelo Siles, professors at Michigan State University, have done several studies in Michigan and in the U. S. on social capital as a resource that has important economic and social consequences. Their 1999, study found important connections between the distributions of social capital and the distributions of household incomes. A more recent study completed in December 2000 supported their earlier hypothesis. The 2000 study also looked at the trade-offs that communities make between socio-emotional and economic goods and between investments in bonding and bridging social capital. Their hypothesis was again supported. They concluded that those who are less mobile and get together with friends and family members more frequently are generally less satisfied with their communities, earn less income, and attain lower levels of education than those who are more mobile and participate more with other community members, are more educated, and earn higher incomes. This is not saying that getting together with friends and family members is not good. It is saying that where people are involved in their community and with other community residents on a broader level, there is stronger social capital and more economic success.

The authors of the study have defined social capital as a person's or group's sympathy toward another person or group that may produce a potential benefit, advantage, and preferential treatment for another person or group of persons beyond that expected in an exchange relationship.

So what does this mean for our communities? Think about it!

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"Agritainment" in North Dakota

Recent trends in tourism indicate that more and more people are looking for experiences in rural communities. They want to "get back to nature" and experience "real" events, not simulations. They wish to spend time on activities that both educate and entertain them. Plus, they want to learn about the people who live in the area they are visiting. North Dakota farmers and ranchers are looking for alternative sources of income. A farm/ranch recreation business may be a good fit, but it's not for everyone.

The NDSU Extension Service is planning to offer several "Agritainment" workshops in January 2002. The goal of these educational programs is not to promote recreational businesses. The goal is to provide information so that the farm/ranch family can decide whether or not this type of business might be a good addition to their current operation.

Tentative dates for January workshops are Jan. 7 in Stanley, Jan. 8 in Cooperstown, and Jan 9 in Devils Lake. For more information or to register for the programs please contact the local NDSU Extension Service office or call my office at 701-328-5134.

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The National Conversation on Youth Development in the 21st Century

Source: National 4-H Council

Imagine 100,000 people of all ages gathering across the nation taking part in conversations about how youth can best meet their potential in the years ahead. This is exactly what is happening through the National Conversation on Youth Development in the 21st Century project. It is the 4-H youth development movement's gift to the nation to celebrate the 100th anniversary of 4-H, according to the National 4-H Council.

The National Conversations will begin in North Dakota this month. County NDSU Extension Service agents will be hosting groups in all counties for their input. All ages are invited to these open discussions and action planning sessions. For the time and place of your local conversation please contact your county NDSU Extension Service office. For more information on the national conversation and 4-H Centennial go to

<http://www.4hcentennial.org/>

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Tips for Charts

If you have ever been forced to throw away several sheets of chart paper because of spelling or other errors, you are not alone. Dark blue marker is impossible to correct but not impossible to cover. Try using a couple layers of sticky address labels to cover the mistake. They are easily written on and can't be seen from a distance. This will save you time, money and stress!

Water-based wide-tipped markers work the best for writing on charts. They do not bleed through and can be seen from a long distance. I recommend that you use two different dark colors alternately between new ideas, items, etc. This is easier to read and an easy way to separate ideas. Colors such as yellow and orange are great for highlighting or providing accents but they are impossible to read, so do not use for printing. Some

professional facilitators would also tell you to use black sparingly when working on charts. Other ideas for chart making, if you have the time and talent, is to jazz them up a bit. Add simple pictures, boxes and other bits of color.

Charts can be used over again if taken down and stored properly. If you plan to use the same charts several times it is highly recommended that you laminate them.

A rather new item in the school supplies section of your local store is poster glue. It comes in several tube sizes and brands. This product can be used on paper of almost any size. Paper can be easily moved or removed. No tape, no residue and very easy to use.

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North Dakota's Smart Prairie Strategy

Source: New Economy Initiative Committee & Economic Transformations Group, Inc.

The New Economy Initiative program is a public/private initiative coordinated by the Greater North Dakota Association. It is a new network and resource to help North Dakotans successfully manage economic growth and change. The initiative committee has recently published its action plan, which lays out an emerging vision of the state's future that both public and private leaders can commit themselves to and presents an action agenda for achieving that vision.

According to the document, the New Economy Initiative offers a way forward for all North Dakotans. North Dakota leaders from the public and private sectors are invited to help advance this agenda and create a more vibrant business community in North Dakota. The document is intended to stimulate discussion and mobilize action. The committee welcomes your comments and suggestions and looks forward to your involvement.

Version 1.0 of the New Economy Initiative Action Plan is available on the GNDA web site at: <http://www.gnda.com/>.

One of the action items is called the **100 New Economy Business Challenge**. The goal of this action item is to bring together resources and expertise from throughout the state to support and nurture new economy businesses. A "new economy" company is one that relies on a technology or information technology as part of its core business model for a process, device, service, or marketing.

Qualifying businesses should have fewer than five employees, \$100,000 or less in annual sales, and operate in the manufacturing, service, IT, value-added agriculture or energy sectors. The Initiative is designed to help grow businesses far beyond their current status.

Participants will receive a number of benefits, including a Business Resource Kit. This kit includes the Atlas Business Solutions Business Plan Software, directories and referrals to available expertise and discounts on products and services provided by GNDA members, such as business planning, marketing and accounting. As the program develops, each of the 100 will also receive discounts on conferences and training seminars and consideration for financial incentives from private and public financial institutions.

Participation is free, but entrepreneurs are required to implement the kinds of activities that are proven factors in successfully starting and building a business. Participants must agree to complete a business plan, participate in an NEI industry cluster, work with a mentor and commit to an assessment of key business functions including marketing, management, technical, production and finance. Participants are welcome to become a member of GNDA.

Entrepreneurs start by completing a workbook that will help the action committee determine which stage the entrepreneur is at in the planning and launching of his/her business. After that they will be provided with software to complete a business plan. If a business plan is already completed, this will facilitate the work with the company.

The information will be used to connect companies with resources and expertise in North Dakota's business community and in the public sector. All information will be held in the strictest confidence and any information about a company will not be communicated publicly without prior consent. For more information or to get started: Call 1-800-328-1405 or e-mail: gnda@gnda.com

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