

Innovate, the Innovation Center's quarterly newsletter, highlights promising practices in youth and community development.

Innovation Center Tool Kits in Action!

The Innovation Center tool kits capture and build upon the insights and experiences of young people and adults who have worked creatively and steadfastly to strengthen themselves and their communities.

The strategies and resources in the tool kits are not theories. They have been proven successful in the real world. For example, Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice in the Bronx, New York, developed a sophisticated approach to interest young people in community organizing. They have had several successes, including convincing the city to build a new park for local children. Leadership Excellence in Oakland, CA, helps young African-Americans connect with their heritage as an entry point to understanding themselves.

Designed to be adaptable to the unique situation of each community, the tool kits support a wide variety of community-building and youth development endeavors. This edition of *Innovate* features stories from three people who are strengthening their organizations and the work of others through their use of Innovation Center tool kits in different contexts.

Steve Hennes: Involving Youth Leaders in Missouri

Steve Hennes is Program Coordinator for the 4-H/Community Youth Development VISTA Program, in association with the University of Missouri Extension. He is part catalyst/part cheerleader in statewide efforts

to give youth a greater voice in the community: "I tell them, 'here are the tools; here are processes; how can you put them in action?'"

Working with youth trainers, he has trained communities to use the Innovation Center's *Building Community* tool kit in a number of contexts. One noteworthy project is based in St. Francois County in Farmington, Missouri where a team of youth and adults, led

by VISTA member Branson Merrill, was instrumental in developing a countywide youth-adult council with 16 seats out of 32 held by youth. Steve notes that "The council's goal is to expand the role of young people in local organizations and demonstrate what can be accomplished through youth/ adult partnerships. Many activities from the *Building Community* tool kit were used during the process." The council has



Steve Hennes

formed work groups and is now planning projects, including a financial aid fair to assist people of all ages in getting ready for college.

Under Steve's leadership, youth and adults throughout Missouri are also

using the tool kit to support efforts to develop youth centers. Steve says, "The tool kits help surface assets and strengths that young people bring to the community."

A state youth civic leaders summit is on the agenda for 2005.

The summit will bring together approximately 100 youth leaders and adult facilitators to celebrate accomplishments and create local action plans for engaging more youth and adults.



A Building Community participant gets to work

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TOOLS from the Innovation Center

■ Learning and Leading: A Tool Kit for Youth Development and Civic Activism

Drawing on lessons from the Youth Leadership for Development Initiative, this tool kit includes practical training, activities and resources on civic activism as a strategy for developing personal, community, and organizational leadership.

■ Building Community: A Tool Kit for Youth and Adults in Charting Assets And Creating Change

This facilitator's handbook makes it possible for individuals and groups everywhere to bring an asset-based approach to creating positive change in their communities. Filled with concrete activities and real-life case studies, the *Building Community* tool kit provides practical information about creating youth-adult partnerships, mapping assets, creating community visions and plans, and mobilizing local change.

■ Creating Youth-Adult Partnerships: Training Curricula for Youth, Adults and Youth-Adult Teams

Printed in 1996, *Creating Youth-Adult Partnerships* leads youth and adults new to group facilitation and to youth-adult partnerships through a 6-8 hour training to build their capacity to work together in true collaboration. The step-by-step curriculum includes detailed scripts, activities, and evaluation materials.

■ Youth-Adult Partnerships: A Training Manual

Created in partnership with four national youth-focused organizations, *Youth-Adult Partnerships: A Training Manual* provides activities and resources that guide experienced trainers and practitioners of all ages through the process of engaging youth and adults to create community change. The manual explores the foundations of effective youth-adult partnerships and includes nuts and bolts skill development activities.

■ Reflect and Improve: A Tool Kit for Engaging Youth and Adults as Partners in Program Evaluation

This practical, easy-to-follow tool kit is designed for adult and youth staff at youth development and youth civic engagement organizations. It guides readers as they assess their organizational needs for evaluation, design evaluations to fit their organizational goals, and use evaluation data to report to funders and other community stakeholders.

From the President WENDY WHEELER, *President*

Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development



Welcome to the second issue of *Innovate*, the Innovation Center's quarterly newsletter highlighting promising practices in youth and community development.

This issue of *Innovate* is dedicated to the proposition that communities grow stronger when youth and adults come together, create roadmaps for improvement, and implement their plans. Creative ideas, wonderful intentions, and fabulous values are a great starting point, but not enough. The whole point of what we do is to put values into action – empowering people on the ground to share what works and change their communities.

This simple insight keeps our focus on the heart of communities, youth and adults who implement change on a daily basis. Our job is to give these committed individuals the training and the tools they need to make change happen. We currently have 99 people in our cadre of trainers – all of whom are graduates of our 4-day “train the trainer” program. In this issue you'll read about two of them – Steve Henness and Beth Tucker. You'll also read an article by Alayna Lucero Contreras, a young woman from Flagstaff, AZ, who is using our tool kits to create a unique program for young mothers.

The Innovation Center's tool kits are designed with a practical focus. From *Building Community* to the newly released *Learning and Leading* and *Reflect and Improve*, these tools have been developed and tested through hundreds of training sessions in diverse communities across the nation. Our training sessions not only prepare facilitators to work with community groups, they enable us to learn from the myriad experiences and accomplishments in communities across the country. They enable us to improve our programs and expand our perspectives. All our materials are co-designed by youth and adults.

The tool kits appeal to a wide range of audiences: youth and adult, urban and rural, local and national, nonprofit and corporate. The exercises contained in them are relatively easy to adapt and use. In today's environment, where so many non-profits are financially challenged, making the tool kits affordable and readily available is especially important. The thinking and activities incorporated into the tool kits can help organizations keep their doors open and assist community leaders in making their communities more just and equitable.

I believe our focus on collaborative learning and action is important because the need to bring people together in our increasingly polarized society is so great. At the Innovation Center, we are dedicated to finding new and innovative ways to help people of all ages and all ideologies consider the question: “How can we make our community more just and equitable to all?” Through answering such questions, meaningful change will emerge.

Thanks to all of you for your ongoing commitment and support of our work.

How to Reach Us: www.theinnovationcenter.org

Share your reactions to this issue, ideas for future issues, or suggestions for ways we can create change together. Contact us at **Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development**:

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Would you prefer to receive *Innovate* electronically? Let us know by calling or emailing us.

Both the *Building Community* and *Learning and Leading* tool kits are important resources in planning the summit.

“We’re seeing a national movement to get youth involved in decision-making and governance. But I’m most excited about the groundswell of interest and support from local officials in involving youth. The tool kits are a great resource for helping us facilitate what communities want to see happen,” says Steve. ■

Beth Tucker: Community Development in Kenya

Beth Tucker is a lead trainer for the Innovation Center’s training cadre in addition to her work as Coconino County Extension Director and an educator at the University of Arizona. As a long-time partner of the Innovation Center, she helped develop some of the tools in the *Building Community* tool kit. Over the last ten years, she’s also facilitated community-building activities overseas during leave and vacations. She says, “I found the tool kits helped increase involvement, encouraged reflection, and increased ownership of the process whether I was leading an activity in Kenya or in Flagstaff.”

In a recent trip to Kenya, Beth facilitated a series of meetings with a women’s cooperative group using activities from the *Building Community* tool kit. In order to help the group think creatively of ways that young people could contribute to the village’s handicraft business, she asked them to explore the skills that older men and women contribute and to consider what young people bring to the table.

The participants realized that while women traditionally made the crafts and men sold them through travel to other towns, young people could play a role, too, and expand the market. This was a groundbreaking realization as young people suddenly had an important role in the economic life of the community.

On a return trip nine months later, Beth found that the lessons learned had stuck and had helped fuel a tremendous increase in young people’s involvement. The groups were mobilizing their sales force and looking for new opportunities. Using asset-mapping activities from the



Beth Tucker leads an activity from the Building Community tool kit

tool kit, young people identified opportunities in the community, including new markets like the local hospital and

school. An AIDS orphan group made up of young people ages 15 to 25 had formed and begun identifying their own business opportunities.

She thinks the secret to success is allowing the people who are using the tool kit to make it their own. This creativity is especially true when young people are running the show. “I’m constantly amazed by what I learn from the young people I work with,” Beth said. “Their energy and fresh perspective can bring new life to an organization that’s treading water. It’s empowering when community members realize that you can get things done on your own.” ■

Share your story through Innovate. Contact us for more details.

Profile

Alayna Lucero Contreras

Building Community in Action: Flagstaff, AZ



I am a sixteen year old with a one year old daughter and a baby on the way. When my parents first found out I was pregnant, they thought I had ruined my life. Now, they are proud of all I’ve been able to do.

This Friday, I will graduate high school a year-and-a-half early. I’m going to be starting classes at the community college. And I work at the Cooperative Extension office where I’m starting a teen parent support group for Flagstaff.

In Flagstaff, we have a Teenage Parent Program (TAPP), a school for teen mothers. That is pretty much all we have for teen parents. It is a wonderful program, but there are always 18 to 20 girls on the waiting list. There is nothing for them.

Beth Tucker did a workshop here at the Cooperative Extension office using the *Building Community* tool kit. The goal of the workshop was to figure out what teen parents get from their community and what they need. First, we brainstormed ideas about teen parents—what strengths do they have? Some of the strengths we listed were: problem solvers, passionate, visionary, strong, courageous and full of energy.

Then we came up with things that our community gives back to us, to help teen parents. There weren’t many things we could think of. So, we came up with things that we could try to get.

I am going to use this activity with the girls at the Teenage Parent Program. Hopefully, if we think we need something, like more childcare from DES, we can go over there and ask. And I hope that the *Building Community* activities will help with starting the teen support group.

We’re still in beginning steps. Right now we are working on getting information out to people so we can pull them in. I didn’t realize that there was so much to getting a group together—newsletters, brochures, getting everything right and saying things right. You have to be careful about what you say and where you distribute information because some people get testy about teen mothers. That makes it intimidating.

A few weeks ago, I got to meet with Yomara Velez, who started a group for teen mothers in New York called *Sistas on the Rise*. The Innovation Center brought Yomara to Flagstaff as part of an international exchange program. Yomara came to TAPP to meet with us. She inspired and excited the girls and made them want to help in any way they could.

This work has opened my eyes to how much I can help people. If somebody had started what I am trying to start now, it would have been a lot easier on me. It’s something that can make a big difference in this community.

Doing work like this makes me proud of myself. That’s very important to me because I know that the prouder I am of myself, the prouder my daughter will be of me. I want her to know all the things that I was able to accomplish, even though I was only 15 when I had her.

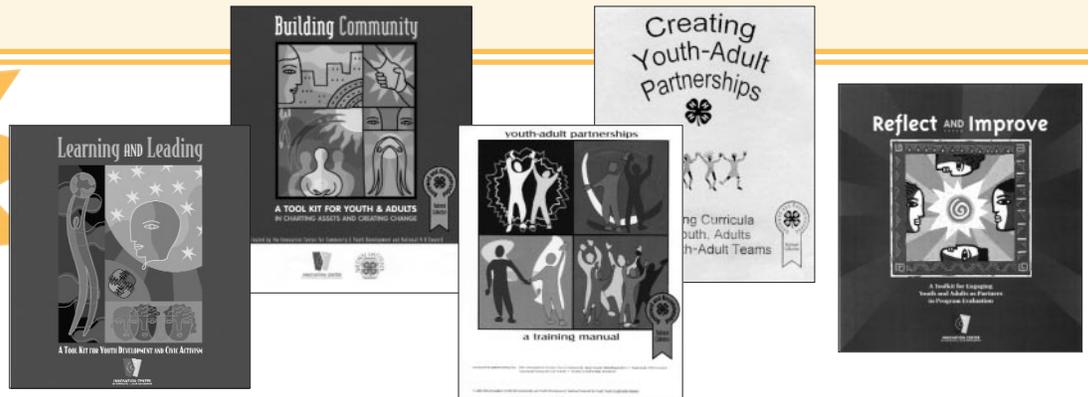
Calendar of Events

March 17, 2005 – March 19, 2005
 National Youth Leadership Council (NYLC)
 16TH ANNUAL NATIONAL SERVICE-LEARNING
 CONFERENCE: EDUCATING FOR CHANGE
 Long Beach, CA
 Workshop on Planning and Evaluation.

April 10, 2005 – April 12, 2005
 Council on Foundations
 56TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE
 San Diego, CA
 Innovation Center Exhibit.

May 25, 2005 – May 27, 2005
 Children, Youth and Families at Risk (CYFAR)
 CYFAR CONFERENCE 2005
 Boston, MA
 Exhibits on the Innovation Center and the Building
 Community Process and Poster Sessions on Evaluation and
 the Youth Leadership for Development Initiative.

August 18, 2005 – August 19, 2005
 Education and the Civic Purpose of Schools in the Americas
 CONFERENCE
 San Jose, Costa Rica
 Presentation on Civic Education.



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