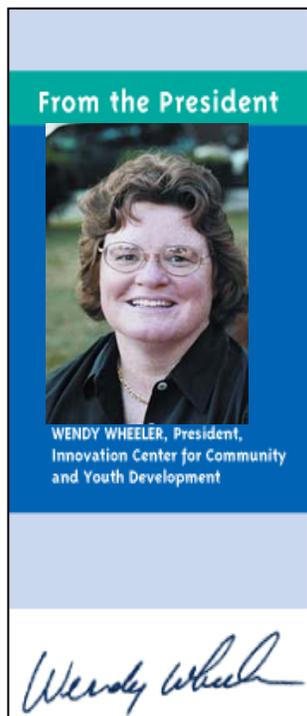




# innovate

[www.theinnovationcenter.org](http://www.theinnovationcenter.org) Newsletter of the Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development

*SPRING 2007*



## From the President

Welcome to *Innovate*, the Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development's newsletter highlighting promising practices in youth and community development.

What do you see?

This edition is about seeing—not just looking, but truly seeing. We may walk by the same old shops, houses and people everyday, looking at them without really seeing them. Sometimes, taking the time to look deeply—using our minds as well as our eyes-- allows us to see things in a whole new light.

For example, on a bright sunny day how many stars do you see? The stars are still there—you just can't see them with your eyes- yet if you think about it for a minute, you know they are there- hidden by the sunshine. You don't need to wait for nightfall to see them.

The same holds true for our communities and our young people. Sometimes we need to look beyond the surface to see the untapped potential. We may walk by a group of kids in the neighborhood without stopping to see that they are eager for opportunities to be constructive. We may drive through a town that appears worn at the edges, limited in services, lacking spirit, without seeing the incredible potential for a vibrant and active community. Seeing is believing—because what you see is what you get.

Inside this issue there are many examples of people who chose to see things differently. In the course of doing so, they are changing the view for countless others.

**Coastal Futures**, a 4-H program in Northwest Oregon, is training young people and adults to define and achieve a new vision for their communities plagued by high unemployment and poverty that often goes unnoticed, overshadowed by the strikingly beautiful Pacific coast.

An article on **community-based youth engagement** offers practical tips for adults working with young people, which requires looking at them in a whole new way.

*Lucinda Garthwaite* wrote about how the Innovation Center's ***Building Community tool kit*** enabled her to see the problems in her town in a whole new way. It also gave her the tools to organize her neighbors, involve people of all ages and look at old problems in new—and more productive—ways.

Also in this newsletter, you'll find a **special promotion** for the Innovation Center's ***Reflect and Improve tool kit***. It offers practical tools for engaging youth and adults in program evaluation.

Enjoy this edition of Innovate. I hope it helps you start seeing things differently.

Wendy Wheeler

## Coastal Futures Program

You can hear the smile in her voice as Mary Arnold, an Associate Professor in the 4-H Youth Development program at the Oregon State University, describes the Oregon Coast.

You might come west through the mountains, she says, and when you get over the ridges, you'd be staring straight down to the ocean, and it's the most beautiful sight you might ever see -- miles of coastline, breakers crashing right along highway 101. It won't take you long to get to the coast; the mountains come down quickly to the sea here, and the effect is stunning.

The sun can turn rock to gold on the right kind of afternoon, and it will also light up the windows of the few stores you'd start to see as you head into town. There aren't many, some trinket shops, maybe one that sells kites to the folks from away who come to the ocean for a day in the wind. You might see a small grocery store, and you'd notice the lack of the shiny, tidiness common to updated supermarkets.

A little further things might start to change, at the edge of the town, resort hotels, a Starbucks, a golf course. If you look up now to the sides of the mountain range, you'd see large, well-appointed homes, huge windows catching the afternoon light. But where you are now, in to the heart of the town, the homes are modest, some with the cracking paint and broken wood of a place where money is tight. These are small towns, and the logging and fisheries that used to sustain them are pretty much gone. Retirees and tourists have discovered them, and that keeps a meager retail and recreational income stream flowing,



*Youth Members of the Oregon 4-H  
Coastal Futures Initiative*

but the folks who have raised their families, retired from good jobs in other places and moved here, or those who come for a day to fly a kite in the coastal wind, don't bring substantial employment opportunities. And just as profoundly, they don't bring a natural inclination to engage with the families struggling to make a healthy community here in the fold of the Oregon Coast.

On this part of the Oregon Coast, some retirees number almost twice as many as those under 18, and the unemployment rates are high, almost 9 percent in some areas. The median household income is well below the national average, and the number living below the poverty line is above.

This is the palate on which the Oregon 4-H Coastal Futures initiative intends to paint a new picture. The artists are youth and adults who live here, their paint and brushes are the tools of community organizing and participant social research. Heather Wiley is one of them, a lifelong 4-Her who grew up on her family's farm a few miles outside of town in Coos County. But Coastal Futures has caught her attention in a different way, offering her new skills in leadership and community organizing.

Heather, her mother and sister attended a two-day training session on the 4-H Coastal Futures program last year. They listened as Mary Arnold and her colleagues described the possibilities of youth-adult partnerships, of community forums, and the ways young people could serve as social researchers, gathering the kinds of information that could inform sustainable community change. Now Heather, having organized a community forum, is part of a group of youth and adults who are creating an evening social gathering-- a start, she says. And it's clear Heather sees an opportunity where there hasn't been one, the potential to engage her community in creating a different future.

The towns are separated by miles and miles here, miles of empty coast line, or dotted with farms like the one where Heather's family lives. Up the coast, in a town as isolated as Heather's farm, another group of young people, organized by a high school teacher with technical assistance and support of Mary Arnold and her colleagues at the Oregon

State University Extension Service, work to hone their skills as they engage in one of the key components of Coastal Futures, intensive training in organizing skills and participatory social research. Young people conduct mock community forums, record the ideas and experiences people bring to the forum and learn skills such as group facilitation and public speaking.

Mary Arnold describes one small moment in a mock forum where a young woman who had not met anyone's eyes was finally encouraged to stand up and voice her thoughts. She stood with an adult trainer at first, limp in her lack of confidence that she could offer anything to the process. But as she began to try, encouraged by her adult partner in the role, and by her peers, a smile crept onto her face. Before long at all, her body was animated too, as she began to understand her capacity to do the task at hand, and the potential impact her contribution could make.

This scene illustrates the results of this work, in terms of leadership for youth development. In before and after self-reports, young people indicate that the Coastal Futures training events more than double, in most cases, their knowledge in areas like facilitation, skills for meeting and action planning and community meetings.

They also report an increase in knowledge of youth-adult partnerships, and this is a key ingredient. Heather Wiley says that it's new for her to be invited, even expected, to contribute her ideas, opinions and experiences in the way that Coastal Futures asks of her. In the past, she says, an adult would plan the activity, set the agenda, and she would be invited to participate. But in this program, for the first time, she sets the agenda, she plans the forum, gathers the information and partners with other youth and adults to make meaning of it and translate it to action.

This is, of course, one of many places where the Innovation Center and 4-H Coastal Futures find their common ground. When Mary Arnold met Wendy Wheeler and Hartley Hobson, she knew she had found strong allies in her work. She counts on the concepts and ideas in the Innovation Center's *Learning and Leading* and *Youth Adult Partnerships* tool kits to strengthen her understanding of youth civic engagement and youth-adult partnership. And the Eight Pathways to Youth Engagement model identified by the Kellogg Foundation and documented by the Innovation Center is a crucial ingredient of the Coastal Futures design. Mary and her colleagues, including Heather Wiley and other young people up and down the coast, would like to expand the scope of their work, bringing community organizing and participatory research skills to young people nationally, bringing them together to learn to analyze the data they gather at community forums, and offering the insights of marketing professionals to translate the data to public campaigns and community action.

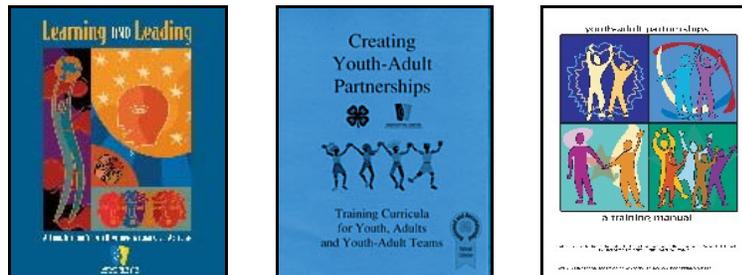
This represents an opportunity for partnership, of course, the kind that lights up and brings to scale small initiatives all over the US and in other parts of the world. And it's easy to see how Coastal Futures might be the seed of a new coming together of ideas, ideas brought to scale through the combined efforts of young people and adults fully engaged with each other in their determination to effect community change.

In the meantime, though, there is a different kind of light on the Oregon Coast. Options for young people after high school here are limited; some leave for college and do not return, some participate in a family business, or find other ways to eek out a living in the struggling economies of these communities. But through Coastal Futures, the potential for that to change is growing. Heather Wiley, for one, intends to stick around for a year or so after she graduates. She's pretty sure she can make a difference, and she wants to learn how. Coastal Futures is her doorway to that dream.

For more information on the 4-H Coastal Futures Project, and the condition of rural communities along the Oregon shore, click [here](#).

*The 4-H Coastal Futures Project is part of the 4-H Youth Development Education and Oregon Sea Grant programs of the Oregon State University Extension Service. The project is funded in part through the Engaging Youth – Serving Communities program, supported by the Cooperative States Research, Education, and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under agreement No. 2005-45201-03332.*

The following tool kits were featured in this article. For more information please click on the picture which will link to the resources section on the Innovation Center website.



## Community-Based Youth Engagement: A Pathway to Healthier and Stronger Communities

It takes a village to...build a community! The hours are long. The work is challenging. The results can be astounding. Community building requires input from all members of the community so that the outcomes reflect the rich perspectives from people of diverse age, gender, economic, racial and cultural backgrounds. These types of collaboration and partnership are frequently discussed but much more rarely seen. They are found in special communities where adults and young people of all backgrounds join together as equals to improve their neighborhoods.

The Innovation Center has worked with hundreds of organizations to engage young people with adults in community change. This article details some of the lessons we've learned along the way. We'd love to hear about your experiences as well. Email Innovation Center project coordinator, Patrick Heiman at [pheiman@theinnovationcenter.org](mailto:pheiman@theinnovationcenter.org) to share your stories of positive community change.

## Why Bother with Community-Based Youth Engagement?

Getting youth involved with adults in community building is a win-win proposition. Young people get opportunities to become leaders on issues that matter to them, and develop skills that will be useful for the rest of their lives. Adults, communities and organizations that work in partnership with youth benefit from the passion, knowledge and insight that young people bring, leading to programs that are more responsive to youth and the community at large. All around the world there are exciting examples of youth working with adults to create successful programs, revitalize organizations and infuse communities with new voices. Young people in Alaska are engaging in statewide efforts to involve their peers in community decision making. Their results are impressive and have led young people to mobilize to highlight the crisis of global warming. On the



Tohono O'odham reservation in Arizona, Native American youth are partnering with their elders to reintroduce traditional foods into the local diet and also market these products to the public. Their impressive results are a testament to the power of strengthening links between volunteerism, community development, and cultural revitalization.

To help in creating outstanding youth centered projects in your area, here are some practical strategies that are designed to support communities, organizations and individuals in fostering youth engagement:



**“Imagine Youth as Resources Today not in the Future”** Too often, adults think of young people as ‘future grown-ups’. By doing so, they overlook young people’s gifts, talents, knowledge, and skills that are useful in the here and now. By treating youth as valuable partners in the process, you will find it much easier to create positive outcomes for a community project.



**“Understand the Many Ways Youth Participate in Community Building”** from supporting and educating to managing and training, young people can do almost anything. As youth coordinators, they organize people for school projects, and act as staff

for community organizations. Working in peer outreach, young people run support groups and staff teen hotlines or referral networks. On boards and councils, they make critical decisions on youth and community needs. Don't limit young people with preconceived assumptions about their capabilities. Instead, work with them to identify, and focus their skills and interests so that they can make the greatest contributions to an organization's direction and overall work.



**“Adults Need to Step Back Without Tuning Out”** The role of adults in partnership with young people is not to parent. Young people need space to develop their skills and leadership capacities, and determine what their role is in an organization's development. Give them space to explore, but don't step back too far. Be available to answer questions and provide feedback. Respect and recognize youth capabilities, but remember that partnerships operate best when they incorporate close communication, mutual learning, and guidance.



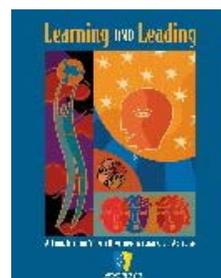
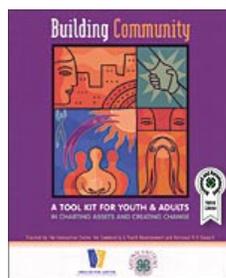
**“Buddy Up and Lighten Up”** A cross-age partnership between an individual young person and an adult is an excellent way to for both sides to mentor each other and connect emotionally. This type of close communication constantly reinforces the principle that adults can learn as much from youth as youth can learn from adults. While community building can be serious business, make time to infuse work with fun. It keeps attitudes positive and motivation high for both young people and adults.



**“Reward and Celebrate Youth Efforts!”** Young people, like the rest of us, need acknowledgment and congratulations for a job well done. Showing genuine appreciation for the hard work youth do is one of the best ways to let them know that, “We need you! You genuinely value your skills and ideas! Our Community cannot be strong and complete without you!”

If you are looking to engage more youth in your organization or strengthen programs, one activity that may help you in this process is called [“Spectrum of Attitudes”](#). This activity is a concise introduction to youth-adult partnerships and works for different kinds of learners, incorporating words and drawings as a way to identify existing areas and opportunities for youth participation in the community.

The following tool kits were featured in this article. For more information please click on the picture which will link to the resources section on the Innovation Center website.



# A Different Story

*- On taking the Tool Kit off the shelf, by  
Lucinda Garthwaite*



I've had the privilege for seven or eight years now of working with the Innovation Center, first as an adult partner in a youth-adult partnership in Maine, and since then as an occasional contributor to publications, like this newsletter, to tell the stories of the communities and individuals who are affected by this work all over the world.

I always feel, after one of those conversations, like I've experienced a moment in the presence of grace, something clearly, cleanly hopeful.

But I have a different story to tell this time. This time it's about the place where I live -- a tiny, underemployed northern New England town. And it's about the possibility of another story altogether.

I have a neighbor, I'll call him Roger, who dug the cellar hole for my house, built the driveway and plows it in the winter. Roger loves to talk, so I wasn't surprised one morning this fall when he pulled over to the side of our dirt road and rolled down his window.

But on that particular day, Roger's face was clouded. He told me that he'd been driving down to the center of town a few evenings a week this fall to wait for his wife, Sandy, so he could drive her back up the hill after her daily run. The center of town is a war memorial set in a bit of grass along the river. Across the street is the old town church surrounded by a waist high stone wall.

"The wall" is where the young people gather. Roger knows this wall. He was one of those boys twenty some years ago. And he knows many of these young people -- he went to high school with their parents, they're friends of his step-daughters, or they're older siblings of his younger children's friends. So on one particular evening, as Roger sat in his truck and watched them while he waited for Sandy, he smiled to himself, thinking about that time in his life.

Then a car pulled up, and two men Roger didn't know stepped out. A lot of the young people hopped off the wall and gathered around the car, as if they'd been waiting for it. Roger watched as the two men exchanged small bags for cash. There was still plenty of daylight, and the young people knew Roger was there -- they'd nodded and waved at him just minutes earlier.

So it was hard for Roger to believe what he thought he saw, and he decided to drive down the next night. Again, the same car, the same men, a larger group of young people this time, and a third man, who Roger could see had a handgun tucked in his waist. Roger is a big man, well-liked and respected in town, and he'd thought he might step out of his truck, walk across the street, ignore the men and speak to the teenagers he knew from town. But once he saw the handgun, he drove instead up the hill to a pay phone to call the state police.

The state police could do little for this small town with no police department, in the midst of a whole state to patrol. For a while a small group of parents came to the wall every evening just to be a presence, but they couldn't stay all night, and eventually their other responsibilities got the better of the early evening vigils.

So the center of this little town is free of obstacles to what everyone understands is a thriving drug trade at the wall. I drive by there every week day on my way home, and I often see the car with the three men, and I often see the group around it. And I never stop. I drive on, not knowing what to do.

But I'm missing a link; I write about the Innovation Center tool kits. I write about the people whose communities have changed as a result of the activities and ideas created and tested by thousands of younger and older people across the country and in other parts of the world. And here I am, on the edge of the possibility of grace.

I have copies of all of the Innovation Center tool kits on my bookshelf. So I pull down *Building Community*, just to see, and I'm reminded right away of what others have done, others who started with just a collection of caring young people and adults, people like Roger and me. They started, some of them, with the "charting youth involvement" activity on section 2. We could do that: even I know, living here with no children of my own, that there's the church, a lot happening at the school, there's even a tiny start up youth drop-in night. I wonder what other connections and relationships we'd find?

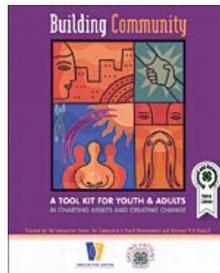
We could do the "history wall" exercise in my living room, or I bet the church would lend us a space. Roger certainly would have something to add, and so would his mother who's lived here fifty years. My friends Leslie and Dave have two kids in college who graduated from the local high school. I bet they would tell us what it was like when they were younger, when they started hearing about the wall. It would give us a sense of how we got here, and a start on how to shape a future out of that.

I remember hearing a group from a Native community describe their experience of exploring the "gift of place" with the guidance of the tool kit. They discovered gathering places, and sacred places they hadn't all understood. Gathering places, like the wall. What is the history of that wall? I bet it has seen more joyful, even sacred, times than what happens there now. I wonder if we could figure a way to reclaim those? I wonder if there are other spaces, just as attractive to younger people who want to be together and watch the town pass by?

I flip through the pages and remember the many stories of community change I've heard and written about, change that came out of a few people trying out these ideas. I keep turning the pages. I'm reminded of ways to identify resources, broaden the circle of involvement, ways to more excitement about a thriving community. I begin to imagine riding my bike downtown myself on a warm evening, greeting my neighbors, and feeling connected. I begin to feel hopeful.

I know what the first step is, at least: the next time Roger plows my driveway this winter, I'll get my boots on and step outside, and motion for him to roll his window down. I'll invite him in for a cup of coffee. Then I'll get the tool kit off the shelf again, and start to dog-ear pages, make a few phone calls. I think Roger and I, along with our older and younger neighbors, might have a different story to tell.

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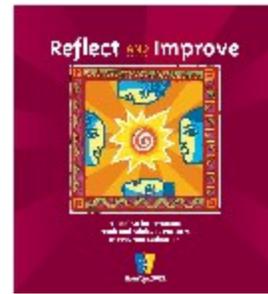


## Special Promotion on *Reflect and Improve* Tool Kit!

Take advantage of a special offer on the Innovation Center's *Reflect and Improve* Tool Kit, **20% of the full retail price** through April 2007. Also, through March and April, buy two or more tool kits of any kind and receive **free shipping!**

This tool kit for engaging youth and adults as partners in program evaluation was developed in association with the University of Kentucky, Social Policy Research Associates, and New England Network for Child, Youth & Family Services. This hands-on training manual includes practical activities, handouts and explanations on involving youth and adults in planning, implementing, analyzing and sharing the results of evaluation.

Click on the tool kit icon to the right to read more about *Reflect and Improve* and our other capacity building tool kits.



## Calendar

### [National Afterschool Association Conference](#)

Location: Phoenix, AZ

Date: March 21-23, 2007

Beth Tucker and Zara Snapp, two members of the Innovation Center Training Cadre, will present best practices and lessons learned from the Innovation Center's national work with the Kellogg Leadership for Community Change program on strengthening youth development by engaging youth with adults as partners in community change projects.

### [Youth Crime Prevention Conference](#) [Youth Crime Watch of America](#)

Location: Denver, CO

Date: March 21-23, 2007

Elayne Dorsey and Rachel Cook will present both a seminar and a workshop on youth governance as it directly correlates with youth development. They will also have an Innovation Center exhibit booth at the "Walk of Knowledge" running throughout the duration of the conference.

### [National 4-H Conference: Our Changing World](#)

Location: Chevy Chase, MD

Date: March 29, 2007

Hartley Hobson Wensing and Rachel Cook will be assisting 4-H Agents from New Jersey in co-facilitating a workshop entitled *New Perspectives, New Partnership... Youth and Adults Working Together*. This workshop will lead adults through a series of discussions and activities on youth-adult partnerships designed to build their capacity to work together with youth in true collaboration.

### [18<sup>th</sup> Annual National Service Learning Conference – Beyond Borders, Beyond Boundaries](#)

#### [National Youth Leadership Council](#)

Location: Albuquerque, NM

Date: March 28-31, 2007

Elayne Dorsey will lead participants in learning about the W.K. Kellogg Foundation initiative, Kellogg Leadership for Community Change (KLCC) session II. This workshop will explore collective leadership and youth-adult partnerships and practical activities used to engage nontraditional leaders in pursuit of visions of service and action.

**Declaration of Interdependence: The Fabric of Community  
National Association of Community Development**

Location: Philadelphia, PA

Date: April 19, 2007

Kendra Wells, Innovation Center partner from the University of Maryland and Rachel Cook will be presenting an Innovation Center poster session at this conference highlighting ways to strengthen, benefit from and contribute to the knowledge and innovations that strengthen the field of community development.

**Philanthropy and the Challenges of our Time: Making a Difference at Home and  
Around the Globe  
Council of Foundations**

Location: Seattle, WA

Date: April 29 – May 1, 2007

Wendy Wheeler will represent the Innovation Center for our exhibit at the Council of Foundations in Seattle. This gathering will focus on how philanthropy can play a potentially transformative role within the four topics of Poverty, Public Health, Environment, and Disasters.

**Children Youth and Families at Risk (CYFAR) 2007 Conference**

Location: Chicago, IL

Date: May 1-4, 2007

Elayne Dorsey and a young person from one of the KLCC session II sites will be conducting a workshop that discusses our ongoing work with the KLCC initiative and provides participants with hands-on activities for implementing youth-adult partnerships and collective leadership in their organizations. We will also be presenting two poster sessions, one around the resources and youth development approach of the Innovation Center, the other focusing on our work in partnering with the organization Roca, Inc. on reengaging at-risk youth.