

SUMMER 2009



HOMETOWN PARTNERSHIP

COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY FOR LONG-
TERM RURAL COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY

HomeTown Partnership: Over 2 Years in Action

It has been over two and a half years since the inception of HomeTown Partnership in Barry County. Based on the HomeTown Competitiveness model in Nebraska, HomeTown Partnership has grown and developed into its own comprehensive strategy for long-term rural community sustainability for the Barry County community. Barry County has been able to turn this model into a “way of business” and energize our community to build upon our assets and strengthen our economic outlook.

Long-term rural sustainability can be interpreted as maintaining and protecting our community while making the necessary strides to assure current and future success. These strides will be taken in the HomeTown Partnership model’s four pillars: Entrepreneurship, Leadership, Youth and Community Assets, which define and support a healthy, rural community. Such a model is important for Barry County because it maximizes our assets, models responsible action, strengthens our community core and allows the community to keep its rural character, small-town atmosphere and reliable citizenry into the indefinite future.

Each of the pillar committees have been working hard over the past year to put on events and create opportunities to work towards our common goal: long-term sustainability. In the next couple of pages you will find updates from each of the four pillars and up to date information about the overall group’s accomplishments and happenings. HomeTown Partnership is being organized by the partner agencies of Barry County United Way, Barry County Economic Development Alliance, Barry Chamber of Commerce, MSU Extension and the Barry Community Foundation. If you would like more information, call the Barry Community Foundation at (269)945-0526. We will help you find your place in our partnership!

“Rural communities in Michigan are struggling to create and retain jobs, maintain a high-quality of life and to create systemic change to support current and future economic stability and growth. This project will provide the framework to drive and support long-term community development efforts.”

-Barry County Economic
Development Alliance

A Look Ahead: Future Goals of HomeTown Partnership

Each pillar presented outlines at the July 24th joint HomeTown Partnership meeting addressing their impact, purpose, objectives for 2009 and action strategies; laying foundation for the future.

The Community Assets Pillar identified three long-term facets: natural resources, health and human service support and charitable sustainability. In addition, the pillar would like to accomplish three community wide projects in 2009, one of which, Cupboard to Cupboard, is already underway. The pillar would also like to involve all of the HTP pillars in at least one community initiative.

The Entrepreneurship Pillar will remain steadfast in its commitment to fostering entrepreneurship and busi-

ness growth in pursuit of creating a positive economic climate. The pillar plans to analyze Barry County’s current entrepreneurial climate and assess the readiness of the community for new business growth and business expansion through a 41 question survey developed by Michigan State University.

The Leadership Pillar’s long term goal is to create opportunities for all residents that want to participate in leadership roles the ability to do so. The pillar’s political process workshops, “Running for Public Office” and “What Does that Public Official Do” will continue to offer training, incorporating survey responses of people who currently hold each elected position in Barry County to help determine what they think core competencies are for

their position, in addition to survey responses from Eaton County to serve as a comparison.

The Youth Pillar identified youth retention as a key initiative, striving to create a community atmosphere that encourages and supports that goal. The pillar plans to continue to develop their “Generation E” youth entrepreneurship program and begin training educators/mentors, while also pursuing the creation of informational packets on “How to get a job in Barry County” for youth, and providing support for the Barry County Substance Abuse Youth Leadership Symposium.

Pillar specific upcoming projects and past successes can be found on the next page under “Pillar News.”

Consulting Firm to Take HomeTown Partnership to the Next Level

Phillips Wyatt Knowlton Inc., a consulting firm specializing in management and measurement counsel, will be working with HomeTown

Partnership in August to develop a model that clearly displays the relationship between the planned work and the intended results.

Commonly referred to as “Logic Models” these diagrams

provide an easy way to see the whole system and generate shared understandings, illustrate flaws and ensure ownership. Logic models can be used in a broad range of programs, but always produce an effective communication tool. When

read from left to right, the model provides a chain of reasoning which connects one element to the next.

PROFILE: Phillips Wyatt Knowlton Inc.

Partners, Cynthia Phillips, Ph. D. and Lisa Wyatt Knowlton , Ed. D.

Design and support strategy, learning and organization development, evaluation and project/initiative management services.

Cynthia is the author of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide

Local clients include Battle Creek Unlimited, Grand Rapids Community College, Kellogg Company, Western Michigan University and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Such a model’s use in HomeTown Partnership will provide a link between programming from within the four pillars and the overall goal of long-term community sustainability. Evaluation at several key

points will be HomeTown Partnership’s key to success. Real, systemic change will result from “connecting the dots” we already have in place and work to define the future of Barry County.

This model will not only “put meat on the bones” of HomeTown Partnership in Barry County, but may serve as a future model for any rural community to use. A successful HomeTown Partnership model in Barry County secures our long-term sustainability, but a successful HomeTown Partnership model for other rural communities provides a testament to our strategy and success.

As HomeTown Partnership moves forward, community members will join the efforts of Phillips Wyatt Knowlton Inc. These key players are being sought out based on geographic location and industry to ensure diversity and a fruitful outcome. Those selected will have the opportunity to participate in two half day sessions with the group.

HOMETOWN PARTNERSHIP

P I L L A R N E W S

LEADERSHIP ENTREPRENEURSHIP YOUTH COMMUNITY ASSETS

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The 10 week FastTrac programs that began in February graduated 34 individuals on May 13.

The NewVenture program was geared towards new entrepreneurs. Participants were assisted through the process of writing a business plan by the MI – Small Business Technology Development Center. 16 individuals graduated from this program.

The GrowthVenture program was geared towards those looking to expand their current enterprise. Participants were educated on the tactics in growing a business and asked to create a three year growth plan. 18 individuals graduated from this program.

The Entrepreneurship Pillars plans to continue ventures that will provide support for new business development and growth of existing businesses in an effort to promote and enhance the growth and prosperity of Barry County.

For more information on this pillar or how to join , call Erin Welker at the Barry Community Foundation at (269)945-0526

LEADERSHIP

The “Thinking of Running for Public Office” workshop in March 2008 that drew thirty individuals from the area had seven out of nine participants that ran for public office elected. In an effort to continue this level of success, the workshop will be offered every other year with the next training being held in March 2010.

A basic education workshop on the duties and qualifications of public officials will also soon be offered. To supplement this effort, information is being gathered through surveys in Barry and Eaton counties to address core competencies of various public offices and will be made available to the public as a printed booklet.

The Leadership Pillar remains committed to encouraging more citizens to volunteer and take on leadership roles within the community through partnerships with the Barry County United Way’s Volunteer Center and Leadership Barry County.

For more information on this pillar or how to join, call Jennifer Richards at the Barry Community Foundation at (269)945-0526



YOUTH

Barry County youth identified recreation, destructive behavior and jobs as the necessary areas of the Youth Pillar's focus through a survey last year and their ideas are being met head on.

The Youth Pillar is teaming up with four Thornapple Kellogg students and Liz Lenz of the Barry County Substance Abuse Task Force to plan a youth symposium with workshops aimed at the prevention of underage drinking. This "for youth, by youth" event will be held at the Fehsenfeld Center at Kellogg Community College this winter. Look for more details soon!

A key initiative the Youth Pillar will be taking on this summer is the creation of informational packets on "How to get a job in Barry County." Topics covered include resumes, job training, skills, interviewing and contact information for potential employers; giving Barry County youth an edge.

Also look for community specific recreation activities beginning this fall.

For more information on the Leadership Pillar or how to join, call Ryan Rose at the YMCA of Barry County at (269)945-4574 or Laurie Black at the Barry Community Foundation at (269)945-0526

COMMUNITY ASSETS

The Community Assets pillar remains committed to a charitable giving focus which facilitated the creation of the Cupboard to Cupboard program, county-wide initiative, July 11 through August 15, to help struggling families make ends meet during these challenging economic times. "Cupboard to Cupboard" is a program designed to supply Barry County Families with everyday items that cannot be purchased with Bridge Cards. Items will be collected at storefronts around the county in hope of stuffing the Bradford-White semi in front of the Pennock State Street Center.

Another initiative incorporating our natural resources is the development of two community gardens. MSU Extension has developed a youth gardening program, F3ENERGY! This program will provide nutrition and entrepreneurship education, but while it is directed specifically at youth, the greater community is encouraged to purchase produce to further the idea of "grow local, buy local." In addition, MSUE has partnered with Stephanie Stevens in creating a community garden at Delton Kellogg Elementary School. The Garden Project will provide educational and social activity for students, families and community members.

For more information on the Community Assets Pillar or how to join, call Bonnie Hildreth at the Barry Community Foundation at (269) 945-0526 or Lani Forbes at the Barry County United Way at (269) 945-4010

20 Now HomeTown Partnership Certified

In October of 2007 eleven community members joined the ranks of those certified as HomeTown Partners. Originally, ten representatives from our community attended the HomeTown Competitiveness Academy in Mt. Pleasant, but October 15-17 2007 the HomeTown Competitiveness Academy made its way to Battle Creek, providing a great education opportunity for the additional eleven HomeTown Partnership members. To date we have 20 certified, which include:

Original Certified Partners:

- Audrey Cantrell Van Strien
- Kim Norris
- Karen Heath
- Bonnie Hildreth
- Lani Forbes
- Fred Jacobs
- Deb Hatfield
- Dixie Manshum
- Julie DeBoer

Newly Certified:

- Brandi Carroll
- Valerie Byrnes
- John Hart
- Jan Hartough
- Chris Jacoby
- Deb McKeown
- Mark Olmstead
- Jennifer Richards
- Michelle Skedgell
- Dave Solmes
- Jeffrey VanNortwick

A Focus on Community Assets

Community members gathered March 11 for a community asset workshop sponsored by the Barry Community Foundation, Pennock Hospital and Consumers Energy. Consultant Luther Snow focused the discussion and activities around energizing communities.

The community members present participated in "asset mapping" which consisted of listing local assets. Snow encouraged the group to use what you've got and not to focus on what you need to have. During the activity Barry County's many assets were listed, including agricultural, community based and organizational assets such as the YMCA, MSU Extension, Barry Community Foundation and Charlton Park, our youth and natural resources such as trails, rivers, lakes and rural atmosphere.

On October 16, HomeTown Partnership will be able to build on this workshop when the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) Institute from Northwestern University makes its way to Barry County. ABCD will engage directly with community members support our current community development efforts and give basic ABCD training. Find more about the institute at www.abcdinstitute.org.

The process of asset mapping and connecting assets is beneficial even if only one idea is successful. Useful in itself is the tangible skill; the ability to identify Barry County's assets and to recognize its wealth. In building upon current assets, Barry County moves closer to long-term sustainability.



HOMETOWN PARTNERSHIP ORGANIZATION

Pillar Leadership

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Erin Welker serves as one of the co-chairs of the Entrepreneurship Pillar. Full time, Erin is the Communications Director with the Barry Community Foundation.

Don Drummond serves alongside Erin as the other co-chair of the Entrepreneurship Pillar. Don, who is now retired, served in all facets of manufacturing management for 40 years. Don now volunteers as a SCORE counselor.

LEADERSHIP

Sandi Drummond serves as a co-chair of the Leadership Pillar. Sandi is retired after many years in the public health and education fields. She remains an avid community volunteer, including consulting with the Drug Court of Barry County.

Jennifer Richards also serves as a co-chair of the Leadership Pillar. Jennifer is also Vice President of the Barry Community Foundation and manages Leadership Barry County and the Youth Advisory Council.

COMMUNITY ASSETS

Bonnie Hildreth serves as a co-chair of the Community Assets Pillar and is responsible for the “Charitable Sustainability” facet. Bonnie is the President of the Barry Community Foundation and a rural community advocate attending workshops across the country.

Lani Forbes serves as another co-chair of this Pillar and is responsible for the “Health and Human Service Support” facet. Lani is also the Director of the Barry County United Way and is also a volunteer firefighter for the community of Freeport.

Michelle Skedgell serves as the third co-chair of this Pillar and is responsible for the “Natural Resources” facet. Michelle also serves as the Executive Director of Pierce Cedar Creek Institute.

YOUTH

Ryan Rose serves as a co-chair of the Youth Pillar. Ryan is also the Program Director at the YMCA of Barry County.

Laurie Black also serves as a co-chair of the Youth Pillar. Full time, Laurie is the Administrative Assistant for the Barry Community Foundation.

LIFE'S EXPENSIVE...

Get extra money to help with the
Earned Income Tax Credit,
Do You Qualify?



If you're like millions of Americans, you work hard but don't earn a high income. The federal government has several resources including the Earned income Tax Credit (EITC) that can help you and your family. If you qualify, you could pay less federal income tax, pay no tax, or receive a refund. So you could catch up on bills, afford a few extras, or just worry less about money.

Families with **three or more children** who earn less than **\$43,279** (single parent) or less than **\$48,279** (married) in 2009 are eligible for a credit up to **\$5657**.

Families with **two or more children** who earn less than **\$40,295** (single parent) or less than **\$45,295** (married) in 2009 are eligible for a credit up to **\$5028**.

Families with **one child** who earn less than **\$35,463** (single parent) or less than **\$40,463** (married) in 2009 are eligible for a credit of up to **\$3043**.

Workers **without a qualifying child** who earn less than **\$13,440** (single) or less than **\$18,440** (married) in 2009 are eligible for a credit of up to **\$457**.

To file your taxes online for free go to www.icanfile.org, or to find more information about **FREE** tax help from IRS-trained volunteers, call [1-269-948-4260](tel:1-269-948-4260) or go to <http://michiganeic.org>