

ASPIRATIONS TO ACTIONS

Wednesday, August 23, 2017

UNITED WE STAND? BRINGING TOGETHER DISPARATE VOICES

Editor's Note: Chelsea Baker is a Manatee County Information Services Librarian and a participant in the Harwood Public Innovators Lab underwritten by The Patterson Foundation for library leadership in Sarasota and Manatee counties.

At the end of last September, when staff from Manatee and Sarasota counties joined together to learn the Harwood methodology at the Public Innovators Lab, our country was in the middle of a deeply divisive election season. It seemed like the American people simply couldn't agree on anything. I was starting to wonder if we really deserved to call ourselves the "United" States of America. It seemed like a particularly challenging time to start asking people about their aspirations for the community.

Now, after almost ten months of studying the methodology, holding community conversations, and conducting ASK exercises every chance we get, the time has come to summarize what we've learned about the community and share this knowledge.

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SARASOTA LIBRARY TEAM

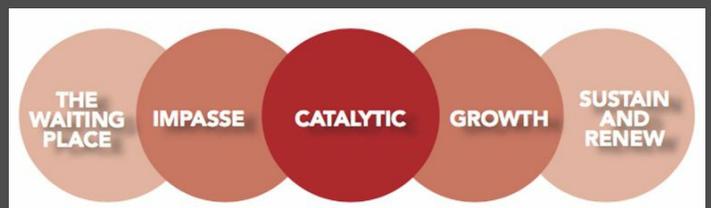
Spotlight on Susan Totter: Harwood Institute's Virtual Lab

Sarasota County Libraries recently hired Susan Totter as a Manager of the new Shannon Staub Library, due to open this October on the campus of the Suncoast Technical College in North Port. Susan is an experienced library manager, but



new to Sarasota - and to the Harwood Innovation Lab. She has been coordinating the building of the new library, interviewing an entirely new staff,

RICH'S CORNER



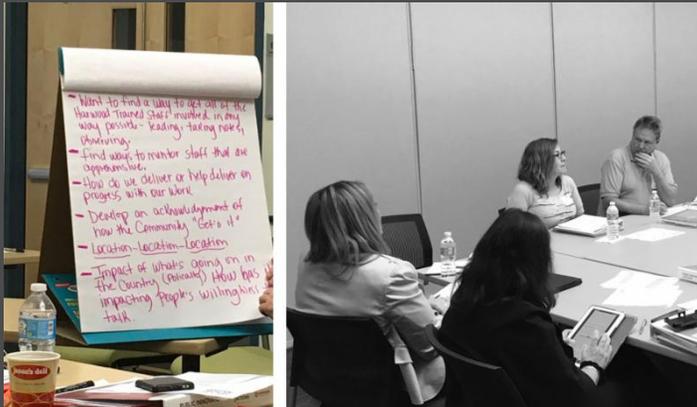
As we aspire to take action, the Harwood Institute uses a framework called, "Community Rhythms: The 5 Stages of Community Life." Most communities are in one of the stages below. What's important is to identify which stage your community is in - as each stage has different implications for how to help a community move forward.

learning County processes, and absorbing the Harwood information and tools. It's a lot to take in for anyone, but she's up for the task!

As she completed the lab, she was asked, "What's a key insight for you, or an Aha! moment that you had from the lab?" She enthusiastically responded, "At first, I felt that I might not be able to easily apply the Harwood practices to my community based on my short time in North Port (three months). But then, I read through Harwood's chart, The Stages of Community Life, and found myself immediately recognizing North Port's current stage. I realized that through my informal interactions in North Port and my conversations with library staff residing in North Port, I had a better sense of the community than I thought. The Stages of Community Life was written in a way that made it easy to sense its current stage."

Susan's insight underscores the simplicity of the Harwood tools. It's a great reminder for the rest of us to refer to these tools often. We just might be surprised how much we've learned and absorbed in our learning journey, thanks to Richard Harwood's approach to teaching.

MANATEE COMMUNITY UPDATE:



Stage 1 of the Harwood project arc is quickly drawing to a close in Manatee County. Following numerous community conversations and ASK exercises throughout the area, our Core Team decided that our Manatee cohort was ready to begin summarizing our results and developing strategies to inform the community of our findings. So over the summer, the Core Team with vital direction and assistance from our coach Carlton Sears, developed a plan to revitalize all of our county's Harwood participants by holding a series of re-engagement meetings to involve

The Waiting Place: In the Waiting Place, people sense that things are not working right in their community, but they are unable to clearly define the problem; the feeling could be described as a "felt unknown."

Impasse:

At Impasse, the community has hit rock bottom, and people can be heard saying, "Enough is enough! It can't go on like this any longer!"

Catalytic:

The Catalytic stage starts with small steps that are often imperceptible to the vast majority of people in the community.

Growth:

During the Growth stage, people begin to see clearer and more pervasive signs of how the community is moving forward.

Sustain and Renew:

In Sustain and Renew, the community is ready to take on, in a deeper and more sustained way, the tough, nagging issues such as race relations or economic growth, that may have been tackled before but were not adequately addressed.

These five stages of community life help explain why some communities move faster and others slower when it comes to change. Each stage has its own implications, or do's and don'ts.



Community Rhythms: The 5 Stages of Community Life

[Click here for a 2-page PDF of The Stages of Community Life and the Do's and Don'ts](#)

those who had tended to drop away from the process. We also wanted to create an effective way to cut our tasks into achievable chunks that matched participants' passions and skills with the tasks at hand. What resulted was the formation of five subcommittees made up of five or six members each that individually tackled their particular pieces of the plan.

The **Public Knowledge** working group, led by Chelsea Baker, started the process off as they went about the task of identifying, categorizing, and summarizing the common themes taken from the conversations and ASKS. The **Communications** working group, led by Kevin Beach, would identify the best strategies by which our cohort would inform the staff, community, and leaders about our findings. The **Marketing** group, led by Ava Ehde, would decide how to design or format then publicly share the information from the public knowledge summary via promotions and social media outlets. The **Presentation** group, led by Linda Noyce, shall be ultimately responsible for sharing the information with the public via impactful presentations. Finally, the **Visioning** group, led by Cheri Coryea, will transition us into Stage 2 by formulating a plan for what's next for our cohort, the Library, and Neighborhood Services teams. Stage 2 will focus on taking steps forward, identifying and training community partners, and in general, transitioning our team from planning to action.

The Public Knowledge group was very successful in creating a simple two-page summary of Manatee County's community aspirations. Not surprisingly the primary ideals centered upon safety, environment, infrastructure, and community engagement. Before the summary is communicated publicly, however, it is being evaluated by our internal staff. On the advice of our coach, the Communications group created a feedback template for this purpose. But already we are impressed that the Summary includes

meaningful quotes and demonstrates a passionate desire for change, condensed into a highly readable document. The Communications group also created a new monthly newsletter called **Harwood Update**, which keeps all of the Library and NSD team informed about the ongoing process. Meeting templates, more feedback tools, videos, and other presentation concepts are in the works as all the subcommittees are hard at



Those of us involved in the Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading sometimes call [Vroom](#) the on-ramp. Vroom is a free app that helps parents and caregivers of children aged 0-5 turn everyday moments into Brain Building Moments. We set up tables and booths with Vroom information at community events, school events, fairs, foodbanks, and festivals. Outreach team members are available to begin conversations with interested people, telling them about the Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and how Vroom can be used as a tool to enhance [executive function skills](#) in their children. Since February of 2016, we have had 37,542 conversations.

These conversations create connections and provide a platform to discuss shared aspirations for the youngest members of our community. These connections often lead to introductions to other people and deeper conversations about how the community can ensure our children are successful. As a result of the Vroom conversations, we heard from school district personnel who expressed a wish for more professional development for teachers centered around child development. We heard from parents who wanted to learn more about how their children's brains work. We heard from early learning professionals who wanted to be able to encourage more family interaction in the education of their children. And we heard from agencies and social workers that our lowest income families are isolated and would benefit from the opportunity to build social capital.

All of that shared information led the Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading to support [Mind in the Making trainings](#) throughout the region. Mind in the Making provides valuable child development information with a focus on building the

work. With the assistance of The Patterson Foundation team, our coaches, and sister cohort in Sarasota County, we look forward to an amazing and productive fall season.

Kevin Beach, Operations Manager.

information and the latest brain research. The trainings are designed to appeal to educators, parents, administrators, and grandparents. Each cohort meets eight times which allows for friendships to be started and support networks to grow. The on-ramp of Vroom has led us to the superhighway of The Mind in the Making. We continue to reach out to the community believing that every connection makes our aspirations more likely to come true.

Beth Duda, Director of Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading.

REMEMBERING GWENDOLYN ATKINS

Gwendolyn Atkins, community passionary and public innovator passed away on August 5th, 2017.

Gwendolyn participated in the Harwood Public Innovators Lab in August 2014 and was instrumental in the United Sarasota cohort which focused on aspirations in north Sarasota. She was a role model for Turning Outward for all.

At 81, she spent her days rushing between church, Habitat for Humanity meetings, and events for her sorority. She could be hard to pin down for an appointment because Atkins always had somewhere to be.

As the third black woman to work as a nurse for the Sarasota County Health Department, at a time when health services were still segregated, Atkins paved the way for the many who came after her. Even after she retired, she was a steady and passionate presence in the community.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made in Atkins' name to the [American Cancer Society](#), [Florida A&M University National Alumni Association Sarasota/Manatee Chapter](#), or the [Shining Light Church's Food Pantry](#).



SNN: Remembering And Honoring A Pioneer In The Newtown Community

A FESTIVAL FOR ALL AGES

Sarasota County was the first community in Florida to join the [World Health Organization \(WHO\) Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities](#) in 2015 -- a movement of more than 300 cities and communities from 35 countries striving to promote active, happy, and healthy lifestyles for people of all ages. Today, this movement has grown to more than 500 communities worldwide with 37 countries benefiting over 155 million people. And Sarasota County is about to



people. And Sarasota County is about to embark on another first for the movement -- the first city in the United States to host the Age-Friendly Festival. It's a gift to this region from The Patterson Foundation (TPF) and it's FREE -- For All Ages.



TPF looks to its tenets as the North Star: Connecting, Learning, Sharing, Evolving, and Strengthening. Using the Harwood practices of Turning Outward as a starting point for the Festival, TPF is taking Public Knowledge -- findings based on the input of nearly 1,200 Sarasota County residents -- and marrying it with Expert Knowledge as it navigates through this uncharted territory.

Tying into stereotypes of ageism, this isn't just a festival for "older people" and age-friendly doesn't equal "older people." Rather, age-friendly refers to all ages -- which means The Silent Generation, The Greatest Generation, and Baby Boomers aren't going to be the only ones at the party.

Heck No!

Aside from interactive experiences, exhibits, entertainment, educational panels, food trucks, games, and fun for the entire family, the reality is that participants will be a part of the Age-Friendly Movement. This is one for the books, folks.

Aging is a fact of life and we are all aging each day. Life is ever changing and with the advent of technology and learnings, we are living longer. In addition to living longer, there are certain things aside from water, food, and shelter that we as [humans want and need as we evolve](#).

The Age-Friendly Festival is an opportunity to embrace life in all its stages and that is a beautiful thing. As grandparents, parents, children, [volunteers](#), businesses, non-profits, and governments living and serving in the community, here's your chance to be a part of the future.

Here's to this community for pioneering the way ... this era's Lewis and Clarks, and Sacagawees ... leading us on a new expedition through life, all while hearing the community's aspirations of what we want our future to be. Hopefully that in itself is enough to get you out to the [Age-Friendly Festival](#) at the Sarasota Fairgrounds on Saturday, October 28, 2017.

Stacy Sternberg, TPF Communications Coordinator.

GET CONNECTED

Learn more every month about how to turn aspirations to actions, follow this link to [A2A's July Newsletter](#).

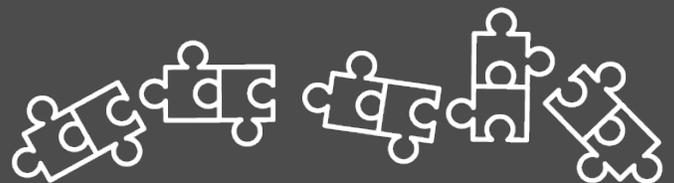
Interested in learning more about Aspirations to Actions? Subscribe to the newsletter [HERE](#).

[Bloggers share how Aspirations are being transformed to Actions in our community.](#)

Have a story about turning outward?
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