A Joyful Journey

The Patterson Foundation's CEO, Debra Jacobs, has a lovely saying, “Innovations to Actions is a joyful journey.” As we all know, the most important factor in any joyful journey is the other people with whom we are traveling.

Nearly a year ago, Mary Mack joined over 70 other “yellow travelers” who embarked on a new journey called Aspirations to Actions and she became a Harwood Public Innovator on the United Way of Manatee Partnership. A native of Sarasota, Mary is a graduate of Booker High School, as is her husband and three grown children. Last September, she earned her college degree in accounting and business from Stetson University. She has always been actively involved in the community and is truly passionate about making it a better place for all.

In a roundtable interview, Mary shared what she has learned over the past year while engaged in the Aspirations to Actions initiative.

Has the Harwood practice changed the way you approach engaging others and the community?

MM: Absolutely! We would love to touch as many people as possible to get a broad overview of the issues and concerns of the community and then focus on the most critical.

What Harwood question or techniques do you like using the most?

MM: I had taken our “Turn Outward” questionnaire in our initial workshop. My score was 58/100 again when our committee started our yearlong journey. I scored 12. “Turn Outward” has changed the way I think about community engagement and conversation. Coming together is what makes things happen. I'm a great believer in that.

How do you think “turning outward” accelerates and deepens impact?

MM: People want to feel that they are a part of the decisions that are being made in their communities. No one person speaks for the people of a community unless there are disinterested concerns and the majority of the constituents are in agreement. We need to be blind-sided with rules and regulations without their input, especially when it affects their livelihood. I would encourage citizens to be at the table whenever possible. Stay in the know. Voice your opinion — you do have one. Engage with the officials who govern your community on a regular basis. This promotes participation and trust.

How does focusing on assets or aspirations change the conversation when we are creating change?

MM: We must aspire in all aspects of our lives and look to the future with hope. We must include our community in these aspirations. We must also understand the expectations for change, setting realistic expectations for change and making progress, understanding public time and rhythm, and pursuing actions rooted in purpose and meaning for people. You must account for what you are doing and where you are going. Engage with your own pledges and promises.

Innovation Space is Here

On Monday, June 8th, the Sarasota County Library Aspirations to Actions Team held its first Innovation Space meeting. Ann Hardy led the discussion on how to use Innovation Space and in our July newsletter, we will share what we have learned. Stay tuned.