



## A Small Investment with a Big Payback

Sometimes small gestures have big impacts. This became the case in Hartford not long after the Making Connections site team invested in translation equipment to facilitate communication among English and non-English speaking residents.

*Making Connections in Hartford's* work now focuses on the primarily Latino Frog Hollow neighborhood and the African American/Caribbean Upper Albany neighborhood. Children and families face similar challenges in both neighborhoods, but historically there has been little meaningful interaction between them.

*“We see a growing awareness among residents in each neighborhood that they share a mutual interest in the common ground outcomes and a growing acceptance of the value of joining forces to bring about favorable results,”* says STL Debra Delgado. *“While several dynamics are at work here, it is clear that by making translation equipment available at the meetings of resident groups, we have facilitated a level of interaction and dialogue that did not previously exist. Frankly we didn't really foresee having such an influence on this.”*

One dramatic action that came from using the translation equipment at a community meeting was the commitment to create a resident-run newsletter for the two neighborhoods. Simply by making it easier for residents to discuss the key issues affecting their families and neighborhoods, the translation equipment helped people decide that residents of both their neighborhoods could benefit from a newsletter that covered family-specific and neighborhood-specific topics.

The translation equipment has been employed by the Institute for Community Research at a number of other community meetings among Frog Hollow and Upper Albany residents. The Hartford Community Partnership uses the equipment at its monthly meetings and when it holds community events. The Village for Families and Children used the equipment at two of its community forums. A work group of the *Making Connections* local governance body used the equipment to present a community school idea. Hartford's LLP also found the equipment helpful for residents at a community meeting it convened.

The translation equipment has also been used by the Institute for Community Research, the Hartford Community Partnership, the Village for Families and Children, Hartford's LLP and a work group of *Making Connections'* local governance body.

*A diarist snapshot by Mike Salius, May 12, 2004*

**REFLECTIONS**

on Making Connections

