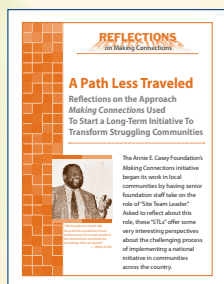
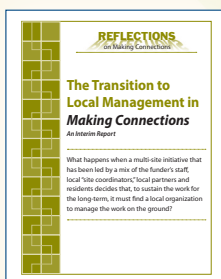


Diarist Project Publications

2007–2009

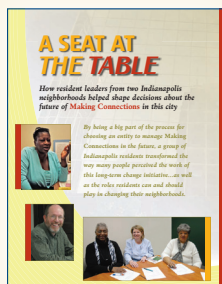


A Path Less Traveled: Reflections on the Approach Making Connections Used To Start a Long-Term Initiative To Transform Struggling Communities: *Making Connections* began its work in local communities by having senior foundation staff take on the role of “Site Team Leader.” Asked to reflect about this role, these “STLs” offer some very interesting perspectives about the challenging process of implementing a national initiative in communities across the country.



The Transition to Local Management in *Making Connections*:

An Interim Report: This report examines what happens when a multi-site initiative that has been led by a mix of the funder’s staff, local site coordinators, local partners and residents decides that, to sustain the work over time, it must find a local organization to manage the work on the ground. The report is based on 36 interviews with people involved in this transition process in seven *Making Connections* sites.



A Seat at the Table: How resident leaders from two Indianapolis neighborhoods helped shape decisions about the future of *Making Connections* in this city. One of the challenges in the transition of *Making Connections* to local management was maintaining a strong resident role in the work. In Indianapolis, a core group of residents played a crucial role in the LME transition. Their work transformed the way many people perceived the roles that residents can and should play

in changing their neighborhoods. This 24-page publication, written by Indianapolis diarists Will Fay and Karen Ruprecht, tells the story of how these residents carved out their role in this process and what others can learn from their experience.

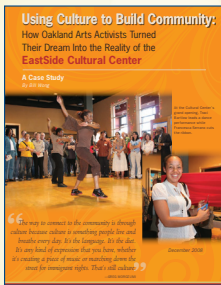


The Long and Winding Road to the “New Normal”: How does a community develop a way to manage a community change initiative that will help sustain this work over time but not undermine the energy of a community working together to create a new way of doing business? The first *Making Connections* community to confront this challenge was White Center/Boulevard Park, which is an extremely diverse, mostly lower-income neighborhood south of Seattle. Diarist Bob Shimabukuro

found that local leaders have learned a lot about the transition process and about creating what they call the “new normal.”

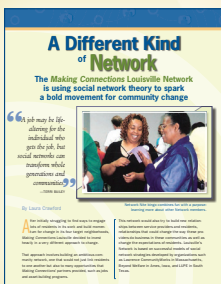
The Diarist Project

Site Stories



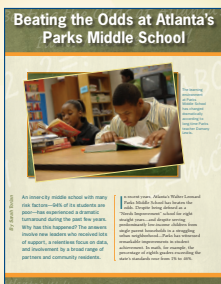
Using Culture to Build Community: How Oakland Arts Activists Turned Their Dream into the Reality of the EastSide Cultural Center. This 40-page case study examines the successful effort to transform a shuttered former hotel into a cultural center and 16 units of affordable

housing. *Making Connections* Oakland helped nurture a group of Oakland artists and teachers as they built an organization, developed partners, raised money and successfully bought and renovated a building to create a base for their community art work. Their vision is to use culture to bridge the enormous diversity of their neighborhood and build community. Through nearly three dozen in-depth interviews, Oakland diarist Bill Wong tells the story of the EastSide Cultural Center and the lessons that can be learned from this story.



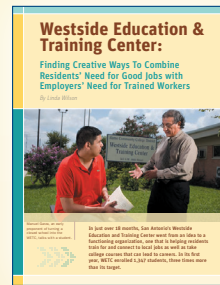
A Different Kind of Network: The *Making Connections* Louisville Network is building an ambitious community-wide network that is linking residents not just to one another, but also to many opportunities provided by *Making Connections*' partners, such as jobs and

asset-building programs. In addition, the network is building new relationships between service providers and residents.



Beating the Odds at Atlanta's Parks Middle School: An inner-city middle school with many risk factors—94% of its students are poor—has experienced a dramatic turnaround during the past few years. In math, for example, the percentage of eighth graders exceeding

the state's standards rose from 1% to 46%. Atlanta diarist Sarah Torian interviewed 17 people to learn why this change happened. The answers involve new leaders who received lots of support, a relentless focus on data, and involvement by a broad range of partners and community residents.



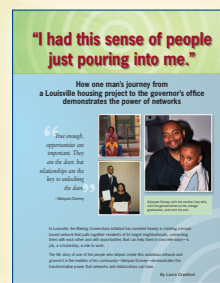
Westside Education and Training Center: Finding Creative Ways to Combine Residents' Need for Good Jobs with Employers' Need for Trained Workers. This 20-page publication, written by San Antonio diarist Linda Wilson, tells the story of the very rapid

creation of a Center that is helping residents on San Antonio's Westside train for and connect to local jobs as well as take college courses that can lead to careers. *Making Connections* played a key facilitation role in bringing together several partners to create this education center in a former school building.



Motivated by Her Two Children, Mayra Lopez Learns To Be an Activist: In part because of her involvement with *Making Connections*, Mayra Lopez has become a leader of efforts to make her Oakland neighborhood a better place to raise

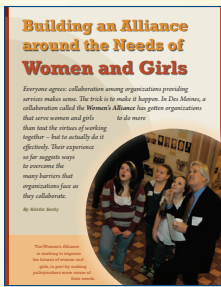
children. While her story is a very personal one, it also communicates a lot about the process that people living in tough neighborhoods go through to change their lives and their communities.



"I had this sense of people just pouring into me." – How one man's journey from a Louisville housing project to the governor's office demonstrates the power of networks. The life story of one of the people who helped create Louisville's ambitious Network and

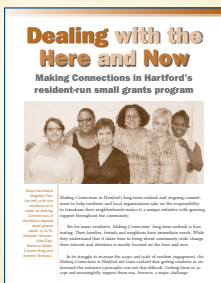
ground it in the realities of his community—Delquan Dorsey—demonstrates the transformative power that networks and relationships can have. He also shows the critical role someone who grew up in a struggling neighborhood can play in grounding a community change initiative in the realities of the communities being changed.

Reflections



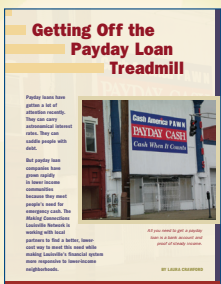
Building an Alliance around the Needs of Women and Girls. As its name implies, one of the key goals of *Making Connections* was to get local people and institutions to work together more closely. But while everyone agrees that collaboration is important, it isn't

easy to make it happen. A Des Moines-based group called the Women's Alliance has built an effective collaboration among nonprofits serving women and girls in this city. One reason people think it has been successful is the presence of *Making Connections* in Des Moines. This publication, written by Des Moines diarist Kristin Senty, tells the story of how this collaboration was built and what others can learn from this experience.



Dealing with the Here and Now: *Making Connections* in Hartford's resident-run small grants program: Any long-term community change initiative has a short-term challenge: how to give the community's residents a sense that things are changing now. In a few

Making Connections sites, resident-run small grants programs have led to some concrete changes in their target neighborhoods while also demonstrating the principle that residents themselves can make things happen in their neighborhoods.



Getting off the Payday Loan Treadmill. In Louisville, the *Making Connections* Network is working with a bank to give residents an alternative to high-cost payday loans. The goal is to help Network members pay off high cost debt, repair their credit and establish an

emergency savings account. This 16-page publication, written by Louisville diarist Laura Crawford, explains how the Affordable Credit and Savings Plan works, how it came about and what challenges it has faced. It also includes a reflection about building family economic success by *Making Connections* Louisville's FES coordinator, Jane Walsh.

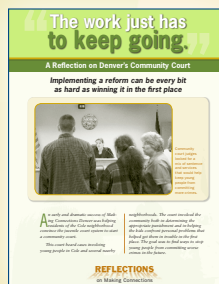


WHAT'S CHANGED... In the way Hartford supports children and their families living in very low-income neighborhoods? In Hartford, where *Making Connections* narrowed its focus, diarist Mike Salius asked people what influence that MC had over the years in

this city and how its influence might be sustained. He interviewed 13 people, all of whom had been involved with MC. What they had to say was quite interesting, suggesting that MC had more influence in Hartford than some outsiders might think. People had very specific ideas about what its influence was. Their reflections were communicated in this 16-page reflection.



"On the Big Battles, we were getting our butts kicked." The long-time director of a growing organizing group in Denver—and a long-time close partner of *Making Connections*—Denver—reflects about why his group decided to invest so heavily in a long-term initiative like *Making Connections* and what has come out of this investment.



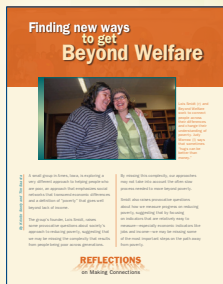
"The work just has to keep going"—A Reflection on Denver's Community Court: As the people who helped convince Denver's juvenile justice system to create a community court based in a *Making Connections*-Denver neighborhood learned, convincing a system to agree to a reform is just the first step. Then that reform needs to be implemented and ultimately institutionalized. The ultimately unsuccessful struggle to institutionalize this community court has much to teach others working on system reforms.

Reflections



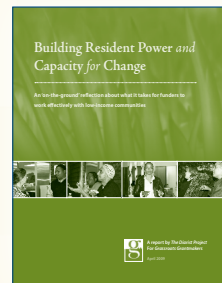
A Story of *Making Connections* Across the Divides of Race, Class and Culture: Nearly everyone doing community change work acknowledges the importance of race, class and culture. But how do you tackle these sensitive subjects? The journey of one *Making*

Connections Des Moines staff person—a self-described “white person from the suburbs”—suggests both some answers to this question as well as why addressing these issues is so critical to any effort to build community and engage residents.



Finding New Ways to Get Beyond Welfare: A small group in Ames, Iowa, is exploring a very different approach to helping poor people, one that links people across income levels. The group’s founder, Lois Smidt, raises some provocative questions about how we try

to reduce poverty and measure our success.



Building Resident Power and Capacity for Change: An ‘on-the-ground’ reflection about what it takes for funders to work effectively with low-income communities: This report, done for Grassroots Grantmakers, uses in-depth

interviews to explore five key topics involving the work of funders who are working in low-income neighborhoods. Each of these topics is available as a separate PDF:

- The need to build strong relationships with these community’s residents.
- The importance of building the capacity of these communities.
- The need to build the capacity of funders to do this work.
- The need for new approaches to insuring accountability.
- How this neighborhood-based work can add up to broader community change.

Diarist reports, stories and reflections are available free at
www.DiaristProject.org.

Hard copies of some diarist reports are available from:

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