



The Diarist Project Publications

Learning about the process of implementing
a national initiative on the ground

The Diarist Project is a new approach the Annie E. Casey Foundation is using to learn from its *Making Connections* initiative, a long-term effort to strengthen families and transform struggling neighborhoods in 10 cities across the country.

Diarists work to capture strategies and insights of the people who are leading this neighborhood transformation work. They focus in part on the process of implementing an initiative on the ground — the tactics, the relationships, the day-to-day challenges.

One purpose of the diarist work is to produce publications that can be useful to a range of people — practitioners, funders, policymakers, students — who want to learn more about how to improve the lives of families who live in struggling neighborhoods.

This catalog summarizes publications completed through December 2006. More recent publications can be found at the diarist website: www.DiaristProject.org/pubs. The website also includes more information about the diarist work itself, as well as a broad range of unpublished reflections by individuals involved in implementing this ambitious initiative.

Reflections



Journey to Engagement:

A first-person reflection on how to engage residents

For more than 30 years, former Casey Foundation Senior Program Officer Garland Yates has been working with residents in low-income communities across the country. This publication—which is based on a series of interviews—lays out what he’s learned about how to engage residents in trying to transform their communities. It also tells the story of how he came to this work.

A Reflection on Why Social Networks Are Critical to Sustainable Change

The Casey Foundation’s Audrey Jordan explains why social networks are so important to the process of transforming struggling communities. This reflection includes the story of how a community group in Lawrence, Ma., has used a social network approach to start revitalizing its community.



A Reflection on How Social Networks Can Become a Powerful Tool to Meet Basic Needs and Build Momentum for Change

The founder of an organization that uses the “promotora” model reflects on her organization’s social network approach and why it has been an effective way to educate and activate many local residents.



Community Mobilization and Action for Results:

A new approach to building local movements to strengthen families and transform neighborhoods

This publication explains why a long-term effort to change a local community needs a commitment to mobilizing this community, and why a focus on results can help a local movement succeed. It also lays out the lessons learned so far about building a local movement for change.



Where the Rubber Hits the Road...

The Evolving — and Growing —
Role of Local Site Coordinators in *Making Connections*

To help build a national initiative from the ground up, the Annie E. Casey Foundation has increasingly relied on “local site coordinators.” This publication explores this role through the eyes of the site coordinators themselves. It also explains what they are learning about how to develop local efforts to transform struggling neighborhoods.



A Reflection by Ralph Smith about What Sustainability Means, Why It Is So Important and How to Achieve It

One of the creators of *Making Connections*, Casey Foundation Senior Vice President Ralph Smith, reflects on how to sustain this work and why a focus on sustainability is so important for any community change initiative.

Making a Difference: One Life — One Family — Transformed

A crucial part of transforming a low-income community is transforming the lives of individuals and families who live in that community. This publication tells the story of a Denver resident who has been on a long transformation process: Candace RedShirt.



Making Media Matter: How and Why Making Connections in Hartford Stressed Communications to Explain Its Work and Pursue Its Neighborhood Transformation Goals

An early emphasis on communications has helped clarify what *Making Connections* in Hartford is all about, provided an opportunity for people from two very diverse neighborhoods to work together, and developed a group of resident leaders who understand how to get their community’s messages out through the media.

Site stories



Building a Pipeline to Success:

A Look Inside the *Making Connections* Louisville Career Development Initiative

In Louisville, *Making Connections* has successfully connected residents from its neighborhoods to jobs in a nearby hospital complex. But it hasn't always been easy, and MC has learned a lot about what it takes to build a successful jobs pipeline.

A New Way to Give It Away:

How a small grants program has engaged residents and achieved quick successes in Boston

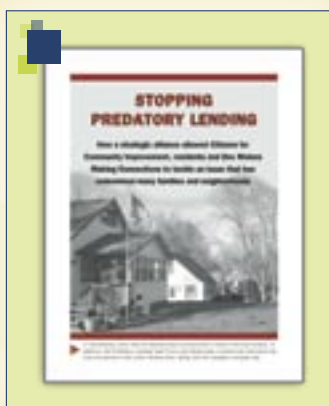
A challenge in doing a long-term community transformation initiative is what to do about the short term. This publication examines how this challenge was overcome in Boston.



Stopping Predatory Lending:

How a strategic alliance allowed Citizens for Community Improvement, residents and Des Moines *Making Connections* to tackle an issue that has undermined many families and neighborhoods

Many low-income neighborhoods have experienced an epidemic of predatory lending, which involves loans with very high interest rates and fees that go to people who don't have access to traditional loans. This publication tells the story of a group in Des Moines that has successfully fought this practice.



Helping Low Income Immigrant Families Buy the "American Dream"

This is the story of how an Oakland *Making Connections*' seed grant helped dozens of immigrant and refugee families buy homes. The report looks at the role a grant can play in building the *Making Connections* process. It also finds lessons in this experience for other *Making Connections*' sites.





Having Faith in Communities of Faith

In San Antonio, *Making Connections* has relied heavily on faith-based institutions to start a movement for change. This publication explains how *Making Connections* built relationships with churches on San Antonio's West Side, what they have accomplished working together and what *Making Connections'* leaders have learned from this experience.

Rebuilding a Neighborhood from the Ground Up

When people talk about the potential of resident-driven community change, they often talk about Boston's Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative. Begun in the mid-1980s, "DSNI" has helped bring about a palpable change in this once-forsaken neighborhood.



If at First You Don't Succeed...

The Evolving EITC Story in Hartford

Making Connections in Hartford helped launch and invested heavily in a local EITC campaign in 2002. The investment paid off in 2005. In those three years it learned a lot about strategic investments and partnering with local organizations.

Learning from a Learning Partnership:

What Denver's Community Learning Network Can Teach About How to Build a Resident-Driven Process and Keep a Community-Building Initiative Accountable

A key element of *Making Connections* is the idea of each site having a local "learning partner" that functions as a source of local data, data that can be used to carry out, evaluate and learn from the local work. In Denver, *Making Connections* was able to deeply engage residents in this work. This publication explains how this happened and what was learned.



Principles that Guide Diarists

As the diarist work has evolved, three principles have come to define it:

- **As in a diary, the diarists try to capture people's thinking about the work as it happens.** Often people document a project after it has completed its work, interviewing people about what happened and what they learned. But memory is often imprecise. Much of the day-to-day struggle of implementing a project is lost. Diarists try to capture the challenges as they occur and how people respond to these challenges.
- **Diarists focus on capturing the thinking of the people who are doing the day-to-day work.** Diarists provide an opportunity for those doing the work to think deeply about it and communicate what they are learning. The assumption is that people implementing a project have a lot to teach...if only they had the time to reflect on and communicate what they are learning. Diarists try to give them that opportunity.
- **Diarists' primary goal is not to evaluate or tout the work on the ground, but to learn from it.** Over time, the diarists have been writing more stories about the successes experienced by *Making Connections* sites. While these stories bring attention to these successes, diarists also focus on the lessons that others can learn from these successes.

NEW! Easing the Burden of Medical Debt in Des Moines

More than one in three residents of Des Moines *Making Connections*' neighborhoods struggle with medical debt. But a campaign led by an organizing group called AMOS has helped thousands of Des Moines residents get free or discounted medical care.

All diarist publications are available for free on the Internet:

DiaristProject.org/pubs

Single printed copies of most publications are also available for free. You can send this form to:

The Diarist Project, c/o Charitable Choices, 4 Park Ave., Suite 200, Gaithersburg, MD 20877.

Multiple copies of some publications are available for free if available or at cost of reproduction.

Contact: Harriet@CharityChoices.com.

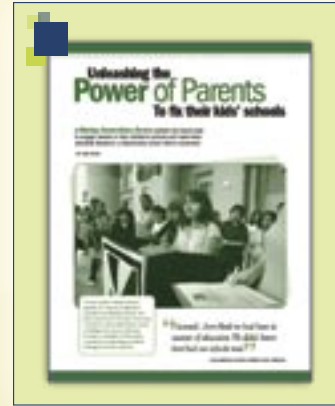
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Unleashing the Power of Parents to Fix Their Kids' Schools

A *Making Connections Denver* partner has found ways to engage parents in their children's schools and help them become articulate leaders in a district-wide school reform movement. This publication explains how this movement was built, what it's achieved so far and what others can learn from this experience.



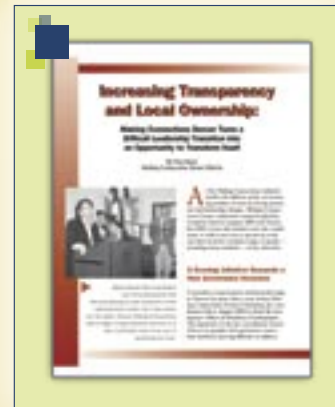
The Gates Cherokee Redevelopment Project: "A huge step forward for low-income people in Denver"

After a three-year campaign, a broad coalition has helped establish a new standard for the community benefits that should be expected when government provides large subsidies to development projects in Denver.

Increasing Transparency and Local Ownership:


Making Connections Denver Turns a Difficult Leadership Transition into an Opportunity to Transform Itself

Long-term initiatives inevitably go through transitions in leadership. This publication examines the process Denver *Making Connections* used to replace its founding site coordinator, a process that deeply involved six residents of Denver's target neighborhoods. This transition in leadership also became a transition in the way Denver MC is governed. This publication includes a reflection with Site Team Leader Garland Yates about his strategy for these transitions.



Taking Care of Our Own: A Denver Neighborhood Leads the Way in Alternative Youth Justice and Shows a Way that Communities Can Help Build a Model for System Reform

A *Denver Making Connections* neighborhood helped establish a community court to handle minor violations by young people living in this community and to coordinate services for these young people and their families. This publication looks at how this system reform came about and what's been learned so far.



The Diarist Project is supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, which works to build better futures for disadvantaged children and their families in the United States. Its mission is to foster public policies, human service reforms and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families.

For more information:

www.aecf.org

For more information on the
Foundation's Making Connections initiative:

www.aecf.org/initiatives/mc

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