

## **Opportunities for the Next Generation**

A Project 20/20 Leadership Meeting

March 27, 2013

Burnham Brook, 7:30 a.m.



### **Welcome and Opening Comments**

Talia Champlin opened the meeting with introductions and an overview of the meeting agenda. The theme for the meeting was “Opportunities for the Next Generation.” Talia reminded attendees that Project 20/20 facilitates these important conversations among leaders and community members to move Battle Creek toward excellence. As these conversations take place, we are building connections. These connections lay the foundation for the trust and reciprocity that is crucial to create and sustain successful communities. Talia then introduced Laura Otte.

### **Presentations by Laura Otte, Carla Fernández-Soto and Ed Ouellette**

Laura Otte, Community Engagement Coordinator at the United Way of the Battle Creek and Kalamazoo Region, shared information about the Beacon Community work happening in Battle Creek. A Beacon Community is a place where organizations and individuals are committed to working in a different way to make change in a community. It aims to create a culture of community norms, spaces for interaction and networks and relationships necessary for sustainable change. Organizations/individuals will be using several tools and frameworks to gather public knowledge and take action on an issue important to the community. Harwood practices have already been used in Battle Creek through work with the Burmese community, United Way, Voces, BC Pulse and Project 20/20. Several organizations are already involved and include Project 20/20, KCC, BC Pulse, the City of Battle Creek and the Chamber of Commerce. Everyone is invited to participate in the Beacon Community work. It’s an ongoing and evolving effort. More information will be shared and additional opportunities to connect will be available.

Carla Fernández-Soto, Outreach Coordinator at Voces, shared her personal experience in Battle Creek and her perspective as an individual that works with youth through the Voces Youth Council. The position at Voces brought her to Battle Creek. She is a recent graduate and was looking for a position to put her skills and passions to work. Through her work with the Youth Council, she knows that youth are eager to have their voices heard. They want to do something. They want to try new things. They want to volunteer. We (adults) need to give youth the space to do what they want to do. We won’t be disappointed. In her experience, youth need support and help with professional development skills. They don’t often get that in school. Also, there is a need for more youth leadership development, especially “urban” focused.

Ed Ouellette, President of Biddergy.com, shared why he chose to live in Battle Creek and raise his family here. He was born and raised in Battle Creek and wanted to live in Battle Creek after going to college. Family is what brought him to Battle Creek. The lake is important to him. Goguac Lake sits in the center of the city and is an underutilized asset. He commended attendees for being at the 20/20 meeting and for their dedication to Battle Creek. The downtown is looking great. We have new businesses moving into the Fort. However, we need to do more. We need to promote Battle Creek to our kids so that they stay here. When we hear negative stories or

when we hear someone speaking ill of Battle Creek, we need to correct them. We need to educate people about Battle Creek's assets and share the positives widely within the community and outside of the community.

### **Group Discussion and Input**

Following the presentations, members were asked to participate in a small group discussion. The following two questions were posed: 1) What are you doing to engage youth/young professionals in the community or your business/organization? and 2) What opportunities/barriers are you encountering as you engage youth/young professionals? What support do you need and who do you need it from?

Both questions were discussed within each group. An individual from each discussion table shared one key point with the group (however, some shared more than one). All additional ideas are located at the end of this document.

### **Key Points Reported by Each Group**

- 1) What are you doing to engage youth/young professionals in the community or your business/organization?
  - Make sure we know the assets of the community so we can promote them – Battle Creek IS a great place to live
  - What is here that a young professional wants? Have you asked them?
  - JA, connect with the Chamber, directly invite people to events/networking
  - Getting people together to engage youth (via departments)
  - Various programs – Generation E, BCMAMS, etc.
  - Introducing people from Kalamazoo and Battle Creek to each other
  
- 2) What opportunities/barriers are you encountering as you engage youth/young professionals? What support do you need and who do you need it from?
  - We have conventions that dictate that we talk to people in our own group or organization, but not talk to others. You do your work, but you do it alone.
  - We struggle with communication in the community.
  - We need to connect the pieces and the people
  - Schools so focused on academics that doors are closing to leadership/building community, etc. → find out what kids and schools need → then school needs to communicate this to the community for help
  - Need more mentoring both formal and informal with young professionals
  - Keep improving communication of what's happening – effective use of technology
  - Finding young professionals
  - Time and money – a challenge for young professionals
  - Known as “local” vs. “expert” in other cities
  - Educating people to local venues – “Addington Hills example”
  - Generational “gaps” – young professionals want to find or develop their “own way”
  - Tap into existing organizations - sharing email lists

## **Personal Commitment & Closing Comments**

Members were asked to complete a survey, make a donation, become a fan of Project 20/20 on Facebook or follow our tweets, visit the Project 20/20 website at [www.bcproject2020.com](http://www.bcproject2020.com) and invite others to join us. Information about the next meet will be shared in the coming weeks.

## **Additional Ideas from Small Group Discussion**

- 1) What are you doing to engage youth/young professionals in the community or your business/organization?
  - At HS – listen well
    - Attendance (for high school)
    - Arts in Education grants (Calhoun County Arts Council) – county-wide coloring book containing history of area
    - Increase creative outlets (original drawings from kids for next coloring book)
  - CACC has grants to teach artists business skills
  - How to move from “needs” to implemented solutions
  - We have all the pieces we need to be an extraordinary place to live – we need to talk to each other
  - Urgent need to connect with young people who need to decide if they will value contribution (we need to show that we value them)
  - Talk about assets – why would a young person want to be here?
  - This is a community where you can make things happen – how do we connect with others who want to make things happen?
  - Our history is important – we have a history of innovation
  - We have a focus on food and food production that emphasizes sustainability
  - Use HandsOn Battle Creek – see Abby Buckley then assign someone from your organization to mentor interns
  - Chamber of Commerce – Sophomore Future Track – looking for one-day mentors to lead “A day in the life” career training for local 10th graders. See Kara Beer
  - Engage “new to the area group” by taking them with you to meetings (i.e. Young Professionals). See Amanda Lankerd or Kasi Casterline. 2nd Thursdays at 5 p.m. are networking opportunities
  - St. Phil – seniors have required internships for a semester – see Kyra Rabbitt. The difference between employable and unemployable graduates is the connections that have been made.
  - We need to develop and promote intern opportunities via local colleges i.e. KCC paralegal intern program, KCC Service Learning
  - Recreational opportunities, arts opportunities, BCMAMS
  - Engage multiple age groups
  - K-12 – many leadership, young professional opportunities, seem to be same group of core kids engaged
    - Use Harwood principles to expand the conversation
    - Reach out to students, expand by listening/empowering
  - Young Professionals – many opportunities in the community – BC Pulse, 20/20, Kellogg, MAMS, JA, etc.
    - Business flexibility

- Ask-listen → plan
  - Career Center – get all departments together, 2 week, youth rep
  - A + D – interns – H.S., college
  - KCC Career Center – Generation E/Center for Entrepreneurship
    - Students come in to work, paid volunteer, asks “what would keep you here”, seeks good businesses to fulfill interest
    - Volunteers
    - Math & Science Center – inventors and investors program
  - Real Estate – introduce folks from Kalamazoo and Battle Creek to each other to make aware of recent United Way merger
  - KCC – Kellogg coming to talk to youth about business and living in BC
  - BC Area Young Professionals (400 members) – networking meetings, professional development, social media, social activities
    - BCMAMS – community connections, networking
- 2) What opportunities/barriers are you encountering as you engage youth/young professionals? What support do you need and who do you need it from?
- We have barriers – well-established organizations and people – who stop innovators and new energy from being integrated
  - We talk, we plan, we talk, we plan but we just don’t do
  - Training how to do internships
  - Employment opportunities for youth
  - High school students need to be directed in interpersonal/communication soft skills and written/verbal communication necessary for professional development, etc.
  - Junior Achievement teaches many of these skills but program may lose funding
  - Family financial limitations
  - Family transportation issues
  - BC Creative has scholarships to Music Center
  - Difficulty knowing how to access opportunities which are available
  - Language barriers
  - Encourage business owners to support activities for young professionals (support....but don’t direct)