



Grossmont-East County Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative

*Building Healthy
Neighborhoods Collaboratively
“Telling Our Story”*

*An Evaluation Report sponsored by Alliance Healthcare Foundation and
Grossmont Healthcare District
July 2000*

CENTER for
COLLABORATIVE PLANNING

A CENTER OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTE

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Neighborhoods Collaboratively
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The opinions expressed in this report are from the HNI collaboratives and consultants and do not necessarily reflect the views of Grossmont Healthcare District, Alliance Healthcare Foundation or the Center for Collaborative Planning.

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The following are ideas generated by participants at the inauguration of the Grossmont-East County Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative, January 7, 1998. This vision represents the ideas generated by East County residents in response to the question, "What would a healthy East County look like in the year 2010?" Small group discussions were followed by a general sharing of thoughts and concepts that were illustrated by a graphic artist.

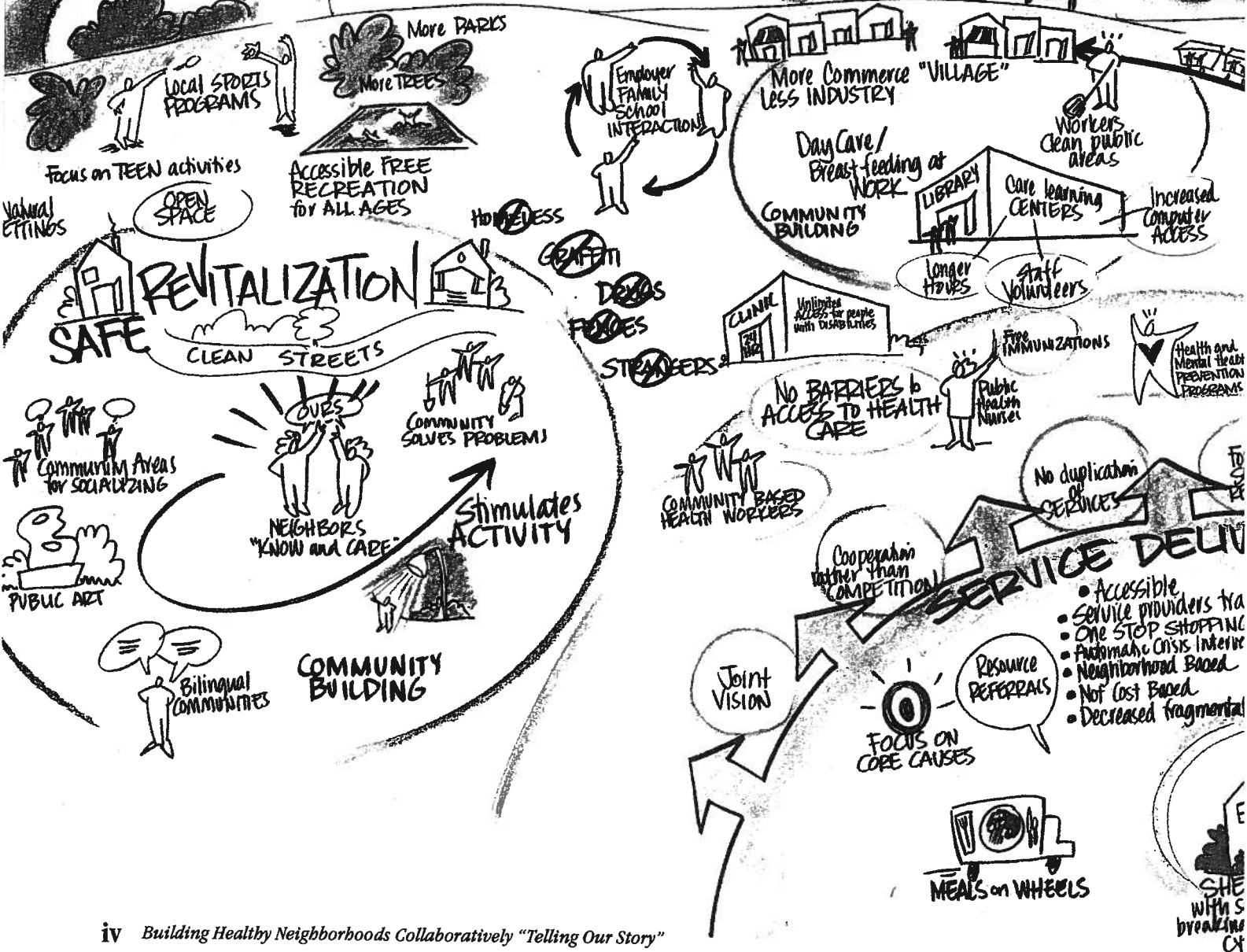
YEAR 2010 VISION

GROSSMONT
EAST COUNTY

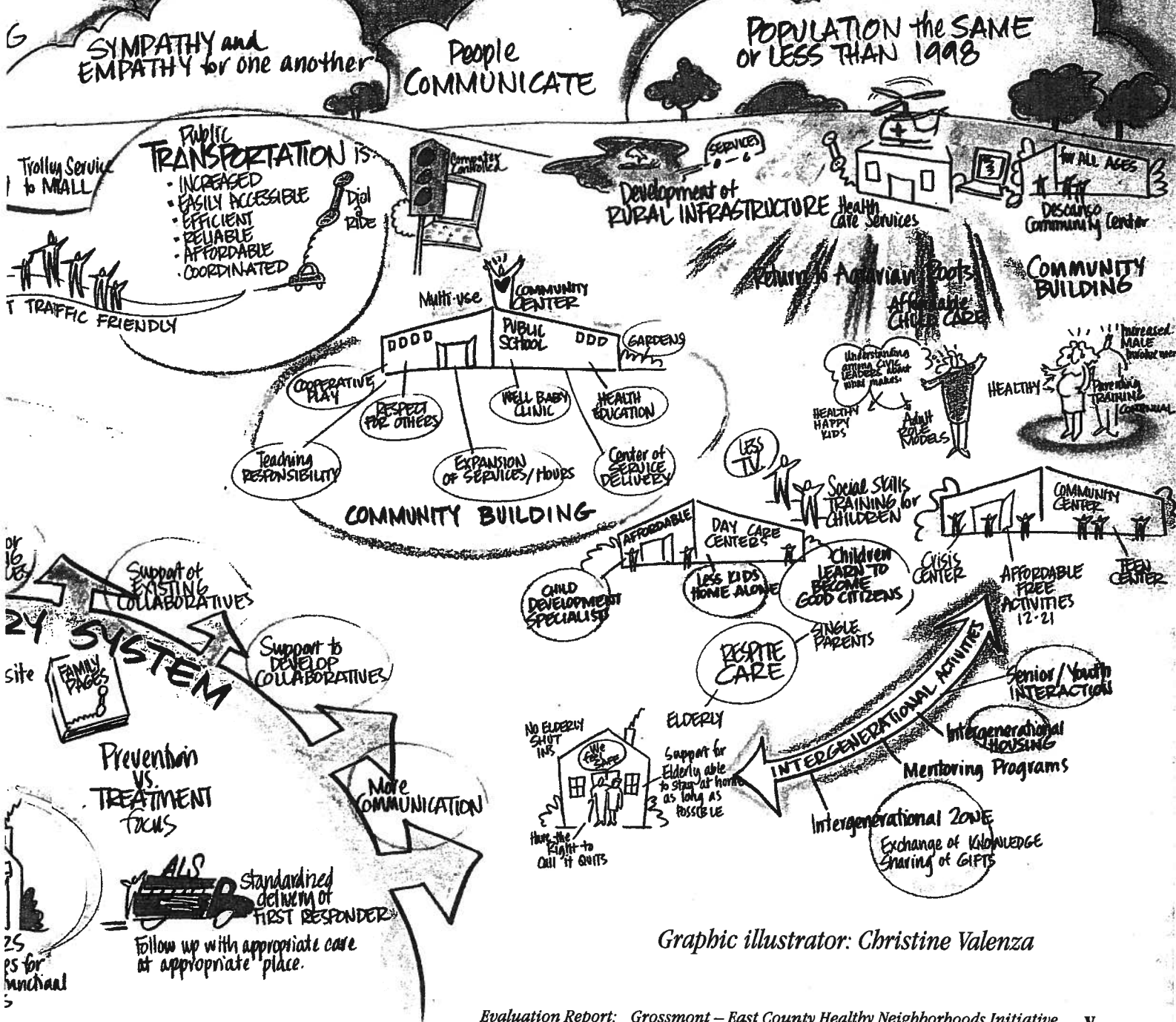
Individual
INTERESTS

Involvement,
leading to
COMMUNITY EVERYTHING

"Trib
LEARN



HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOODS INITIATIVE



Graphic illustrator: Christine Valenza

Acknowledgements

This report is dedicated to Dick Bea and his commitment to a healthy East San Diego County.

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HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOODS INITIATIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

For believing in the initiative and maintaining the dream and commitment

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Common Ground Collaborative
East County Families with
Children with Disabilities
Council
El Cajon Collaborative
Healthy Working Families
Collaborative
La Mesa West Collaborative
Lakeside Collaborative
Lemon Grove Collaborative
Many Nations Collaborative
Mountain Empire Collaborative
Potrero-Tecate Collaborative
Project Health Collaborative
Safe Neighborhood Action Plan
(SNAP)/American Red Cross
Collaborative
Santee Collaborative
Spring Valley Family and Youth
Coalition

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Building Healthy Neighborhoods Collaboratively

The Preface

In 1997, the Grossmont Healthcare District expressed an interest in learning more about the health issues affecting residents in East San Diego County communities. As a distributor of more than \$1.5 million of grant funds annually, Grossmont Healthcare District invests in the health of 450,000 people in a 750-square mile region.

Phase I

In that same year, the district, in partnership with East County Community Clinics, contracted with the Center for Collaborative Planning, a center of the Public Health Institute, to facilitate a community-based study to identify critical issues, assets and strategies related to improving the health and well being of East County residents.

The *Grossmont-East County Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative* was officially launched at a community visioning event in January 1998. This phase of the Initiative was designed as an opportunity to discover more about the strengths of these communities, to identify the issues affecting the health and well being of its residents, and to begin to understand the value of neighborhood and community collaboratives in finding solutions to community health issues. The following goals guided the Initiative:

- ◆ To engage residents in identifying and mobilizing community assets;
- ◆ To identify health issues affecting local residents;
- ◆ To recommend the most strategic use of existing and new resources;
- ◆ To develop constructive solutions; and
- ◆ To provide direction to the Grossmont Healthcare District and other interested private and public funders on how to improve health in East County

From its inception, the initiative embraced the principles of asset-based community development, a community building movement that is gathering momentum in both urban and rural neighborhoods across the country. While traditional grant-making approaches often focus on identifying needs to be met by service providers and programs, the asset-based community development philosophy suggests that residents, encouraged to recognize and utilize local resources, can bring about real, sustainable improvements in their neighborhoods.

This approach fosters community renewal and civic life by identifying and mobilizing the assets of local citizens, associations and institutions. Increased citizen participation has been shown to strengthen communities in such areas as health, safety, education and economic growth. The key to improving the health of communities, therefore, is to improve the communities overall.

During the initial phase, East County residents successfully gathered information about their respective communities through an asset-based community planning approach. The findings were presented at a culminating Community Forum in July 1998 and released in a final report, *The Grossmont-East County Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative*.

Phase II

The Grossmont Healthcare District sought to build on the success of Phase I by supporting the creation and strengthening of grassroots community infrastructures known as neighborhood collaboratives. During Phase II of the Initiative, the District allocated up to \$300,000 across 16 neighborhood collaboratives who were prepared to go forward in local community building and planning efforts. Communities that participated in Phase II of the Initiative were to form or strengthen a community collaborative structure, develop a shared vision for a healthy community, and complete a strategic planning process that would identify community resources which can be used to achieve the community's vision. The District also contracted with the Center for Collaborative Planning to provide trainings on asset-based community development and community based planning for the collaboratives. Twenty-five communities applied for funding to become a HNI Collaborative. Sixteen were selected and it is fifteen of those sixteen whose journey we will be following in this report.

Introduction

This report is about a journey, a “collective adventure” undertaken by sixteen different groups of people with sixteen different purposes, all united by a common cause: to improve the health and well being of the residents within the neighborhoods of San Diego’s East County.

This report looks into the motivation for their journey. It discovers the challenges they encountered along the way. It honors their heroes, heralds their successes, reflects on their learning, reports their next steps, and records the collaboratively determined “moral” of each story.

Organization of this report

Following the introduction is the story of the collaboratives themselves. Like all good stories, it has a beginning, a middle and a conclusion. It is complete with challenges and heroes, tears and triumphs. It documents the collective journey of the collaboratives and their outcomes. The next section (Reflection) looks at the collaboratives’ accomplishments in relationship to the Community Vision for a Healthy East County 2010. The Reflection section answers these questions:

- **Mobilizing the Community**

Did the HNI Collaboratives identify and mobilize gifts and talents of individuals, inspire and mobilize groups, and promote continual learning among members and celebrate successes?

- **Addressing Community Challenges**

Did the collaboratives address the challenges and barriers that stand in the way of achieving their vision of a healthy community?

- **Strengthening the Community**

Did mobilizing and investing in these local community collaboratives serve to strengthen the overall health of the community?

- **Moving Toward the 2010 Vision**

Did investing in these community

collaboratives begin to move the community closer toward achievement of their “Community Vision for a Healthy East County 2010?”

Story Telling Methodology

A San Diego based consulting firm, Adams & Adams, was hired to design and facilitate a storytelling inquiry with the 16 Healthy Neighborhood Collaboratives. The resulting “Storytelling Process” used in this assessment borrowed from the story writing methods of “Tell Me A Tale: Capturing and Telling Community Stories” developed by the Center for Collaborative Planning, and the “Wall of Wonder” and the “ORID Discussion Methods” developed by the Institute of Cultural Affairs. The underlying approach or methodology was drawn from two interrelated schools of thought; Organizational Learning Theory and Appreciative Inquiry.

The “Storytelling Process” was multidimensional in its intent. The process consisted of framing collaborative efforts into a traditional fairy tale timeline. It was designed to intrigue and engage the participants in order to be “user friendly” and to embrace a wide variety of style differences. It had to be accommodating since it would be used with groups as small as one person or as large as 40, depending upon the collaborative.

Fifteen of the sixteen collaboratives and the HNI project director participated in an individual two hour storytelling assessment. Subsequently, each collaborative was provided with first a draft for review and return, and then a final clean copy and a PowerPoint format of their story for community presentations and local fundraising efforts. The individual reports were then analyzed for trends, similarities and differences and serve as the foundation for this report.

CHAPTER ONE

In the Beginning

Once Upon A Time We Had Some Dreams

“Once Upon A Time” was designed to clarify the heart and goals of each collaborative’s original purpose.

We had hope and vision

Our first task in undertaking this assessment was to find out why folks had decided to participate in this project. More specifically, what would motivate a group of citizens to take on the challenges, responsibilities, and obligations of participating in a grassroots effort to develop healthy communities? These are the things the collaboratives taught us about hope and vision.

“We want recreational activities and a park for children who don’t have back yards to play in. And we want that park to be equipped like parks in prosperous neighborhoods.”

LA MESA WEST COLLABORATIVE.

• As agents of change

It turned out that one of the major hopes that galvanized the formation of the HNI collaboratives was the possibility of being agents of change. Potrero-Tecate Collaborative wanted to bring the community together. East County Families with Children with Disabilities Council wanted to bring children and families to the table to be part of a movement on behalf of families dealing with disabilities. Alpine Collaborative wanted to find out what the communities wanted and then help them get it. The Common Ground Collaborative wanted to connect churches and resources to families and individuals.

“We want people to come together around community projects and to get to know and trust each other...”

SNAP COLLABORATIVE

• Fixing what’s broke

Folks came to the challenge with a clear vision of what didn’t work. They wanted to make a difference. They wanted to “de-frag” fragmented services. They wanted to build bridges to missing or inadequate resources such as: “mental health services for the developmentally disabled” and “disaster preparedness for vulnerable communities.”

- **Filling community gaps**

Collaboratives told us that they undertook this effort in order to “fill community gaps” in health services. For example, Lakeside Community Health Advisory Council wanted more services for teens. SNAP Collaborative wanted safer communities. The Lemon Grove Project wanted to make sure that they stayed focused on health issues. They wanted more services and saw participation in the HNI Project as an opportunity to become part of the solution. Spring Valley Youth and Family Coalition was determined to have more teen centers, more family activities and to develop more affordable healthcare for low-income families. Mountain Empire Collaborative wanted transportation for the youth living in their remote and isolated rural communities.

- **Engaging the community**

It was universally true that all collaboratives hoped that they would be able to engage the community. They repeatedly expressed their belief in the power of community participation. From “building up membership” of their collaboratives, to “opening doors for communication,” they hoped to bring community people to the table to help solve the community’s problems.

The East County Families with Children with Disabilities Council hoped that they would be able to reach out and engage families dealing with disabilities, that children and families would “come to the table to find new resources.” *La Mesa West* hoped to “support and motivate all families to ensure that they felt like part of the community.” *The Common Ground Collaborative* hoped that “church leaders, local businesses, schools and agencies could come up with a collective vision of our common needs and strengths and we would build common relationships with one another and the community.” *The El Cajon Collaborative* hoped to promote partnerships and expand their view of their community.

- **Being received by the community**

There was also hope expressed by the collaboratives that they would be well-received by their communities, “that the community would be receptive, would want to get involved, be willing to get to know them and listen to what they had to say.” The collaboratives wanted to build relationships, and they hoped they would be welcomed.

- **Improving upon what is**

Some of the collaboratives hoped to establish and/or improve their own infrastructure. Others recognized their need for governance and leadership. Still others hoped they would find out “what it meant to be a collaborative.”

“We want to bring together all the children from nine different tribes...in a peaceful way...to have them know one another as brothers and sisters...so they can discover their purpose. We want to create unity.”

THE MANY NATIONS COLLABORATIVE

- **There was also hope for healing and creating.**

There is no doubt that the people who formed these collaboratives were driven by clear visions of what could be. Examples of this included: communities and agencies working together; people coming together around community projects and getting to know and trust each other; neighborhoods able to help each other in times of disaster; people charting the course of their own neighborhoods; a park with activities for families with small children; kids becoming involved in their Reservation; working together to provide after school programs, food for the homeless and financial assistance all at one site; the community working together with the Department of Parks and Recreation.

We had some fears

We were also interested in the personal and collective reluctance they had to deal with at the onset of this undertaking. What personal or collective concerns did they bring to the adventure? What happened to those fears? This is what we learned:

- **What if nobody showed up?**

Without a doubt the number one fear was that, “people wouldn’t show up.” Over and over again we heard, “what if we held this event and nobody came, what if we couldn’t get people together, what if the youth didn’t show up to our event? We worried that no one would come to our community kick off.”

- **Can we really do this?**

The second fear was around their own inexperience in collaborative building. “Are we being realistic?” “Is our project too big?” “Will we really be able to form a collaborative?” “Our first meeting was held too soon, we didn’t have enough time for preparation. We might not be able to catch up if we got off on the wrong foot.” “How is our collaborative going to be different from others?” “We really didn’t know what a collaborative was!”

- **Are there unforeseen outside influences?**

Other fears had to do with not being able to manage outside influences. “We might have to close because of insufficient funding.” “We didn’t know what would be waiting for us at the end or how things would turn out.”

- **Will we be stepping on toes?**

Some fears were about upsetting the status quo. “We wanted to be respectful of our leaders and not overstep our bounds.”

- **Will we be sparking confrontation?**

Finally, there was a fair amount of concern about bringing community people together who had remarkably differing opinions and positions on controversial topics and health issues such as abortion, birth control, AIDS prevention, teen health care, and diversity. There were concerns voiced about theological and philosophical differences raised by a faith-based collaborative.

And a few groups said they didn’t “have time for fear.” They were too busy getting underway. They told us THAT was a blessing.

We had some goals

We wanted to see if each collaborative’s hopes and vision translated into concrete goals. Did they start out knowing where they wanted to end up. The answer was a resounding YES! This is what they shared with us.

- *Many Nations Collaborative* wanted to get youth involved so they planned to develop an all day youth event at the Sycuan Reservation and bring together youth from nine different tribes and have them interact with Tribal leaders to learn about their traditions.

- *El Cajon Collaborative* wanted to sustain the infrastructure of their collaborative and promote partnerships that would bring more diversity to their collaborative and enable them see the “big picture.”

- *La Mesa West Collaborative* wanted to create a mechanism that would unite neighborhood families and provide opportunities to work together to help community members gain or instill a sense of leadership within themselves.

- *Lemon Grove Collaborative* planned to reach out into the community in order to develop leadership for their collaborative that was more culturally diverse and more reflective of all aspects of the Lemon Grove community

- *Project Health Collaborative* planned to form a group of Hispanic mothers that met attending “English as a Second Language” and “Health Classes” at Bancroft Elementary School and were united by common concerns regarding the health of their community.

- *SNAP Collaborative* planned to “birth” nine Safe Neighborhood Action Plans that would teach communities to be self-sufficient in times of disaster.

- *Common Ground Collaborative* wanted to develop a collaborative among the faith community and develop a plan for identifying and working together with the communities' needy families at one site.

- *Alpine Collaborative* decided to develop four sub-committees representing the different issues of their community and to have each of these subcommittees develop their own goals and directions to address those issues.

- *East County Families with Children with Disabilities Council* decided to combine two existing groups (ACCESS and SUCCESS) to form this new collaborative in order to "get something going" and to find out what it meant to be a collaborative by attending the training offered by the Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative.

- *The Potrero-Tecate Community Development Council* decided that they would hold a community event to "get out the community" and recruit volunteers to offer computer classes and teach English as a second language classes in the evening at the local elementary school.

- *Lakeside Community Health Advisory Council* would establish the El Capitan Health Center, to obtain a copy of the Healthy People 2000 goals; set up recreation programs, and address health issues.

- *Santee Collaborative* planned to "get organized" by developing a strategic plan with a vision and a mission. They would also develop a reinvestment plan for the school district's Medi-Cal funds and develop governing structure for the collaborative. Finally, they pledged to develop district-wide after-school programs.

- *The Healthy Working Family Collaborative* committed themselves to: supporting working families facing challenges associated with eldercare and childcare issues; improving the quality of life for working families and seniors by enhancing access to knowledge of community services; supporting working families in need of childcare; supporting the creation, training and distribution of information on resources to assist working families in East San Diego County.

- *Spring Valley Youth and Family Coalition* would create an effective formal structure for their collaborative, work together to bring new resources to Spring Valley youth and families, and establish a place where "kids can get involved" in positive activities.

- *Mountain Empire Community Collaborative* planned to develop activities and transportation for their youth offering them healthy alternatives to unhealthy activities.

Rebuilding the Broken Link

The "WHY"

Dying young is normal. The average life expectancy of a Native American male on an Indian Reservation is 45 years old. The children had no sense of purpose. They drifted through their communities as they lived their lives, aimlessly, with no direction. They were known mostly by their deeds and by the people they hurt. They died young. Their lasting mark was decorated by flowers on anniversary dates, a host for weeds in the period between. Their attrition left in question the certainty of a future: Would there be another generation?

The elders bemoaned the loss of culture and tradition. "When the student is ready, the teacher will come." Tragically, too few students came before it was time for the teacher to go. Legacy and legend were being lost for want of a receptive ear. There was no connection. The link had been broken.

The isolation was chilling, a breeding ground for despair. The elders retreated into caves of loneliness. The youth wandered, bonding together in mutual bands, pack animals foraging for meaning, hunting for survival.

The "WHAT"

The "What" came out of six years of actually trying to engage the youth in some conventional psychotherapy. The Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative grant, which was dumped into my lap, came along as a responsibility that I had to manifest in 24 hours. It was an opportunity that wasn't planned.

Very quickly I had to go back to the community with resources. The first question they asked me was "what do YOU want to do?" I told them that I wanted to be helpful. So I returned the question, "well what is it YOU want to do?" Out of that came, (and I'd like to leave you with a sense of hope), in the last several months the most encouraging development that I witnessed in my six year tenure in this community.

We rallied the people to develop by our terms, a collaborative—by their terms, a sense of community that transcends geographical boundaries. There are eighteen Indian Reservations in San Diego County, eight of which are in the service area targeted for this grant. There was no one sense of community. There was rivalry, jealousy, competitiveness, geographical boundaries, isolation, and cultural loss of spiritual centers. But we banded together a group of people who had common bonds in trying to

intervene and reach these youth in a way that would give some purpose and sense of future.

As an outcome of that, we came up with creative ways of engaging kids. We seduced them. There are several things that will normally draw kids together: drugs, alcohol, sex, music or food. Well, we ruled out the first three. They're already perfectly capable of finding those things for themselves! Through a series of coincidences and the generosity and spiritual support from one of the Reservation Tribal Councils, we were benefited with a concert. It was probably about a \$10,000 event. It was just given to us.

It allowed us to stage an event that was designated, for the first time in their history, as an alcohol and drug-free community event. There was a mass of people there with one common theme: we're going to do this for our entertainment, for our benefit, for our inspiration, and in our own way. The entertainment was not just entertainment. It came with a message. The talent was not just music, but was music with a message. The message was about unity, traditional values and spirituality.

This is the first time that I knew of in my history, that so many kids were brought together for this purpose. Of the 120 youth who were involved, sixty came from our most isolated community. I'm sure there'll be plans for more.

As an offshoot of this event, we are developing new leadership councils, and we're recruiting the kids. They have a sense of purpose and investment in this, and a sense of continuity. They know they can make a difference in their future. We are also engaging community leaders for mentoring and connecting with the youth to build a foundation for the future. We have recruited an individual who has maintained the integrity of traditional spiritual traditions to be the facilitator for a Youth Gathering.

Bringing these two populations together is a rare and exciting phenomena. One of the things we have in mind is a rekindling of traditional spiritual activities. By the nature of our youth's input, these are the very activities that they're creating, and the kids are eating it up. What I have witnessed is a growing bond and sense of community that transcends age and all sorts of other factors, and has brought together a sense of community and purpose.

—KEN MARLOW

MANY NATIONS COLLABORATIVE

We Set Out On A Journey

The "Journey" section was designed to identify and name the types of risks and challenges faced by the collaboratives, the solutions they created, and some of the payoffs that resulted from their risktaking.

We displayed some courage and took some risks.

Here we wanted to understand the risks the collaboratives felt they were taking as they got underway. Three "risk factors" emerged in their story telling:

- **Public Failure**

"We could fail." "We had no experience or even a clear picture of what we wanted." "By accepting this funding we would have to go after additional funding; could we do it?"

- **Public Criticism**

"We risked offending the community." "We were going to be giving out information to kids that some community members wouldn't approve of and we have a very conservative school board." "What if we unintentionally excluded people?" "Getting people together who don't agree with each other and working together in an adult manner, could we do it?"

- **Personal Cost**

"We were going to invest time, energy and emotion without knowing if our ideas would be accepted." "We diverted valuable time to make this work." "We continued even despite the changes in the game plan including receiving less money than we had hoped for."

And our risks paid off !

What we were looking for here were their own reflections and insights about the worthiness of taking those risks. We asked them "Were the risks worth it? How did they know? Did they see any payoffs or related outcomes? And if so, what were they? They unanimously told us "Yes!" and this is some of the evidence they presented and a compilation of their comments and responses to our questions.

- **People came and got involved**

Alpine had 150 people come to their visioning meeting and their health fair was a success. People came and they continue to come. Community members took charge. SNAP found nine homes to serve as disaster headquarters. Youth were engaged. Many Nations Collaborative had more than 100 youth turn out for its event. Membership grew. Santee Collaborative was able to develop broad-based support for its expanding collaborative. La Mesa West held a community event in the park and more than 85 people showed up. ECCDC reports that Selpa schools became a member and invited us to become part of their parent board. Collaboratives report substantial increases in new membership. Looking at just five collaboratives, combined membership increased from 30 members to 302, a ten fold increase in community participation over the last 12 months.

- **We worked well together**

"We are united by our desire to benefit the children and we established networking between us." "We enjoyed meeting with each other. We learned how to disagree." "We were free of hot political topics." "Children know they have leadership within them and they now trust us to respect what they say."

- **We explored new options**

"We allowed ourselves to explore unknown territory. Issues are now being discussed." A change in direction worked. We have a broader scope and better attendance, lots of dialogue and no conflicts."

- **We got things done**

"We met all our contract requirements—9 communities are now prepared for a disaster and we have 139 members serving 1178 households."

- **We get letters**

"We already have positive feedback through letters. We have formed new community connections."

- **"And we can still shine**

brightly—even through disappointments!"

We encountered challenges

Our next area of interest concerned the challenges or barriers that emerged once the collaboratives were launched. What was the nature of the challenges they had to face?

- **Collaborative Challenges**

Developing leadership: people would participate, but wouldn't take on responsibility of leadership. *Staffing:* two different collaboratives talked about the challenge of finding and training community members as staff, only to have them turn around and leave the collaboratives for better paying jobs. "It is difficult to get volunteers to help." *Developing infrastructures:* "We had too many ideas; too much apathy; we had a lack of organization," "lack of follow through and commitment by members." *Time constraints:* "One year was not enough time for us to develop our skills." "Devoting time out of our busy schedules; in the short term there were intangible results." *Internal conflicts:* "Differences and divisions among our own ranks and membership—members entrenched in the 'wrong' roles."

- **Things cost more than expected**

"We had to ask the Tribal Council from other tribes to help us pay for our event." "We

needed to broaden our insurance coverage for community events and programs." "We didn't get as much money as we had hoped for and we had to go out and raise more."

- **Personal challenges**

"Trying to organize home, husband and children and still find time to serve the community." "To become more independent so that we could show the community that we were really there for them."

- **Contractual Challenges**

Required training, report formats and instructions, reduction in funding from \$25,000 to \$18,000 and disappointment that the HNI project would not be funded for a second year were challenges expressed by some collaboratives.

- **Community Challenges**

Overlap. On occasion, new and existing collaboratives ran into each other. "We had to deal with 'turf issues' who would do what because of other existing collaboratives."

We overcame our challenges

We were especially interested in how collaboratives responded to the challenges they faced. We wanted to know what they did to overcome them. How did they turn those challenges into victories? Did they learn and flex? Did they adjust their goals? This is what they told us.

- **"We learned more about being collaboratives"**

We sought out mentors and experts to acquire the new skills and resources need to "run" collaboratives. "We realized that we needed to attend more collaborative training meetings." Some reached out to established collaboratives to use as models. "We received help from Lemon Grove's collaborative." "We asked for help from other established collaboratives." A few even used part of their funding to hire consultants to help them develop the collaboratives. "We developed a process for problem solving and used it." "We

called on Jayne Reinhardt, HNI Project Director, and she helped us with forms and reports." We learned not to let our internal divisions become dead ends; we are now able to talk through differences."

- **"We changed our expectations based on our learnings"**

"We backed off some of our expectations, realizing that we are still in pre-collaborative work and must learn to be a collaborative."

"We are constantly rewriting our mission statement." "We changed the way we work. We found that community members will take on small amounts of shared responsibility at a time—a piece of a project, part of a leadership role—so we work at their pace."

- **"We developed multiple strategies for getting out the community"**

Collaboratives told us that getting the public to participate depended upon setting up a **good communication/networking system**. This included making sure that meeting notices and minutes went out promptly to everyone and asking over and over again, "Who else needs to know?" Keeping everyone "in the communication loop" was a key to participation.

Secondly, **identifying formal and informal leadership** and getting their buy in and participation was a strategic action that produced great results. Examples of this included: The Potrero Tecate Collaborative reached out and recruited the publisher of a tiny local newspaper who was well known in their rural community. This resulted in accessing a very conservative element of the community and also provided them with a communication tool. The Many Nations Collaborative called on Native-American Bird Singers and Drummers, comprised of tribal leaders, to participate in their multi-tribal youth project. At the heart of the Project Health Collaborative was a teacher who was held in high regard by Hispanic mothers in the community. La Mesa West's draw was a well-known school nurse. The East County Families with Children with Disabilities

Council elicited the support of their Mayor and the legislative aides of County and State officials.

- **"We targeted outreach"**

Identifying people invested in the collaborative's effort was highly successful for the SNAP Collaborative. They targeted folks who would be most impacted by a disaster—mobile home parks—and then went out and held meetings at the parks. The East County Families with Children with Disabilities Council succeeded in reaching out to families wherein parents as well as their children had developmental disabilities. They established linkages with the Regional Centers for the Developmentally Disabled who provided access to their target population.

- **"We established convenient meeting times and locations"**

Making collaboratives "user friendly" resulted in improving turn-out. The Mountain Empire Collaborative holds its meetings at five o'clock while it is still light out in a community center. The Alpine Collaborative meets at 9:00 a.m. at the new Senior Citizens Center. The La Mesa Collaborative has lunchtime meetings at the local school district building. Potrero-Tecate meets at night at the local elementary school.

- **"We figured out ways to expand financial resources"**

Collaboratives addressed financial shortfalls by hiring grant writers, writing proposals, leveraging funding and combining resources. And in several cases they were successful: "Our original COPPS school based partnership grant has led to another." "Our collaboration with the County Department of Housing and Community Development resulted in a million-dollar Lead Hazard Abatement grant." "Our work with the Mountain Empire School District has made us partners in their \$3 million '21st Century' Learning Center Grant." "A \$5,000 Casa grant helped us establish our Youth Council." "We received our second Title V grant, a Healthy Start Planning grant, and a Healthy Start Operations grant."

- **“We learned to ‘side step’ some issues”**

Some collaboratives focused on partnership and participation and developing relationships as a precursor to addressing “hot topics.” First develop trust and open communication, then they would deal with harder issues further on. They focused on long-term outcomes.

- **“And we learned we could hit issues head on”**

On the other side of the coin, several collaboratives reported they had addressed

issues that they assumed would drive membership away, but they didn’t. Folks stayed and at a minimum agreed to disagree.

- **“We ‘bonded by fire’ ”**

While a number of collaboratives reported a high drop out rate among initial participants, they attributed much of their success at overcoming challenges to a core group of people who stayed on, developed trusting, sustained relationships, and strengthened each other’s commitment to “stay the course.”

“A Mother’s Story: Finding the Face of Collaboration”

Working with the collaborative became meaningful to me only after attending meetings for about a year—amazingly endless meetings filled with “service provider jargon” and initials that stood for who knows what. I was a stranger and a fish out of water, but I did have Debbie, a friend and ally who encouraged me to hang in there.

While attending an executive meeting, a school principal made a presentation. She pled with the group for help for her school. She told how 89% of her students were on public assistance. Her teachers were overwhelmed with dealing with social issues that they were ill equipped and ill prepared to handle. Some children couldn’t do homework because they had no homes. Some children’s parents were drug abusers, alcoholics, or simply and terribly neglectful. Teachers were staying at school until six, seven, and eight o’clock at night trying to help.

Suddenly the work of the collaborative became meaningful and even more significant and important. I pictured my own children walking in the shoes of those children. I pictured my mother who came home tired and drained every day as a school-teacher of 27 years. It was unbearably sad

and intolerable to think that within ten miles of my cozy home, sad children had to endure deplorable conditions.

I wanted to “collaborate” in the community. I wanted to share and spread the news that there is hope, agencies, programs, and people with good will and big hearts that would dedicate themselves to the assistance of those in need. I wanted to somehow connect with those poor struggling souls who found themselves for whatever reason incapacitated, and let them know that they could become happy and self-reliant. I wanted to let them know that there were people out there ready to hand them the tools and walk by their sides until they enjoyed success.

I made it my business to find out as much as I could about my collaborative partners—their roles, strengths and intricacies of their programs. Collaboration now has a face, and it is every man, woman and child reaching out to each other to build the community together.

REBECCA BENNION
EL CAJON COLLABORATIVE

CHAPTER TWO

Along the Way We Discovered Some Treasures

"Treasures" was designed to answer the questions, "What can collaboratives attract? What power exists collaboratively vs. individually. Did the collaborative opens doors that they would otherwise not be able to access? Did power shift? What did they learn?"

New relationships were formed

On Thursday, March 15, 2000, we drove three hours to visit the Mountain Empire Collaborative in Campo at the rural edge of east San Diego county. This collaborative serves several small communities and covers over 900 square miles. Campo is generally recognized by the fact that it is home to a county juvenile detention facility. This tiny town also boasts a Border Patrol station, a post office, public school buildings, a sheriff's sub-station, and a Veterans of Foreign Wars Post. There are several stark, rectangular, two-story apartment buildings in the center of the small town, reminiscent of government built housing projects. The road into town forks to the right and left after we pass these main buildings and then shortly thereafter runs out of paving and turns into hard-packed rutted dirt roads that wind out into the outskirts of town. It was dusk when we arrived.

On this particular evening, the collaborative was meeting in the Campo Community Center. Juice and cookies were being served. In attendance were representatives from the Southern Indian Health Council, the Border Patrol, the local Kiwanis Club, the Senior Citizen's center, two staff from a local youth services program, the superintendent of the Mountain Empire schools, a drug and alcohol prevention program, a census taker and a few small children who were running in and out of the building. All people present lived and worked within one of the Mountain Empire communities. Here were both the community and its leadership at work.

As we watched, the group went about discussing the feasibility of a multi-million dollar grant that would establish a network of much needed community youth services across the broad catchment area of their rural district. The Campo community center would serve as the operational hub. As the group discussed the possibility of pursuing a project of this magnitude, one by one the participants added their comments, viewpoints and perspectives.

First hand accounts of existing youth resources and activities emerged. We heard stories about what was working: a big turn out and a recent teen dance sponsored by youth at the Potrero-Tecate Collaborative. They used a local Disc Jockey who was also the school bus driver. Parents and youth alike turned out and over 80 people participated. What wasn't working was a video night for youth here at this community center. Less than ten youth attended, even with transportation provided. We heard a progress report on the development

of a small youth community center in nearby Jamul. Local youth were pitching in to help get it up and running, but it still wasn't quite ready for a grand opening.

Round the room the conversation went and we realized, as we watched, that they were listening to each other's stories, building a common knowledge base, anticipating challenges and problem solving, filling in informational blanks across their agencies and organizations and communities. They were creating a shared vision of what was and what could be, pertaining to youth services in their rural communities.

They were obviously comfortable and familiar with working together. It was clear that they were going to be able to reach consensus on a decision that would have otherwise taken days even weeks without the existence of this ongoing collaborative. Schools, law enforcement, counselors, local business owners, community members, service clubs, health services, all in the same room working together to get things done. We were seeing collaboration at its finest. This experience mirrored what other collaboratives were telling us. They were getting things done.

And new relationships resulted in new benefits

As we traveled from collaborative to collaborative, they told us stories about new multi-level, multi-organizational relationships being developed within their communities.

- They talked about partnering with community-based organizations, fluoridation committees, water districts, family literacy programs, and even the American Cancer Society. "School districts provided meeting sites, supplies and equipment." "Other collaboratives were sharing resources and knowledge."

- County and government agencies were being drawn in and were providing informa-

tion, removing access barriers and directing attention and resources to the collaboratives. Immigration services, local libraries, regional centers for the developmentally disabled were participating along with Parks and Recreation Departments from several cities.

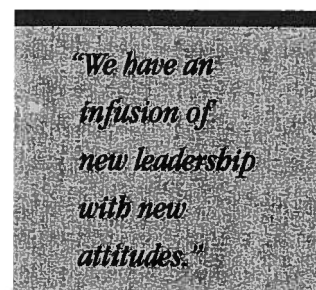
"We have new ways of seeing needs and services." "We have a better understanding of what communities want and need." "We have an infusion of new leadership with new attitudes."

- Law Enforcement agencies, including the La Mesa Police Department, Border Patrol, and County Sheriffs, were providing information and statistics.

One group talked about law enforcement contributing "credibility" to their collaborative.

- Community members, businesses, youth groups, and the faith communities were providing energy and excitement to the meetings.

- Issue driven groups, such as domestic violence groups, the faith communities and local businesses were working side by side. People talked about "expansion of services," "more available expertise," "leveraged funding that contributes to our sustainability," "Costco donated food for our event." "People donated raffle items." The Santee Chamber of Commerce donated office space for our collaborative."



People benefited

We asked the collaboratives to talk to us about how the communities benefited from their collaborative efforts. We wanted to know what communities knew now that they didn't know before. This is how collaboratives answered our questions.

- **Communities can speak out and make things happen**

"Seniors have a voice in their community in Alpine." "Disabled children and families have improved access to services in East County." "Adults and youth have information about community resources and improved access to services." "Word of mouth: Each time we meet, we educate somebody about what is out there in their community." "The community has updated information about health care and improved access to those services."

- **Communities can do more because of sharing and teamwork**

"People are being better served because the faith community is working together to coordinate and share resources to meet those needs—less duplication of services and effort." "Communities are better utilizing resources, reducing wasted effort, expanding capacity and connecting the dots between services and needs." "We also hear about what *isn't* working and can bring the problem to the table and get it solved."

- **Communities are better prepared to take care of their own**

"Teens have access to better health care and the community is talking about teen health issues." "Neighborhoods have nine new disaster preparedness programs."

"Children in rural communities have after school programs and the possibility of more services to come as a result of collaboration."

- **Communities have taken ownership and have a shared investment in the future**

At the end of this first year, collaboratives have new partners, which expands their

potential and their resources, and increased opportunities to develop new funding. People are learning that they can make a difference, that working together "works." Success breeds success. The more people get involved, the more success they have, and the more people will want to get involved.

We had some surprises

Now we wanted to turn our attention again to the learnings of the collaboratives. What were the unexpected benefits and gains from their perspectives? Their words best answer these questions.

We discovered that...

- We can solve problems at the community level
- We can work together to establish and improve communication
- We can establish services
- We learned what is and isn't needed in communities
- We learned more about our communities—the talents, skills and resources. The resources are there!
- We don't have to duplicate efforts. Lots of work has already been done.
- Community members share common interests, concerns and efforts.
- We can create a plan and be effective; we can get things done.
- We learned how messy collaboration really is, that relationships are critical and we must trust and go to bat for each other, and that all challenges are not bad.
- We can leverage funding to pay for services.
- There is power in working together.

“Out of the Potrero Development Council, a ‘Community Soup’”

Potrero—a small community of two thousand people imbedded in a mountain setting. The roads are winding and the nearest neighbor is a half-mile away. People move here for the quietness and privacy. People have to travel thirty-five miles or more to work, but they don’t mind because a few miles out of town you can feel the serenity of the peaceful mountains, and life becomes good again.

But among this serenity a restlessness was starting to stir. People were asking, “what is there to do?” Then they found a flier posted at the local market:

Potluck Community Meeting
Monday, February 12, 7 PM
Potrero County Park

“What do you want to learn?” “What do you want to teach?”

Lo and behold, 200 people showed up—a first for Potrero! No one expected such a turnout. People that hadn’t seen each other in a long time visited together, enjoying the food and entertainment. There was a Karate group demonstration as people dined. Music played, and children played in a supervised section. All the leaders of the organizations and institutions were there to hear what was going on.

LOLI LOPEZ
POTRERO-TECATE COLLABORATIVE

Along the Way Some Heroes Emerged

The Heroes section was designed to answer the questions, "Can collaboratives identify and mobilize gifts and talents of individuals, inspire and mobilize groups, promote continual learning among members and celebrate successes?"

They had remarkable qualities

We were very interested in the nature of the "hero qualities" from the viewpoint of duplicating this project. If someone else was going to undertake a project like this, what participant characteristics would help to ensure a new collaborative's success? This is what the collaboratives told us about the qualities of their heroes.

Vision

"Heroes have good ideas" and "are able to see the needs and bring people together." This includes people who "understand how communities grow and develop," "have collaborative building skills," "promote collaborative thinking and team work."

Courage

"Heroes are not afraid of lawsuits." They speak out and they take risks. They instill courage in the heart of the collaborative.

Time and dedication

"Heroes make time, dedicate their energy and are willing to take ownership."

Commitment

You can count on a hero's commitment, they don't quit. "They are the first ones to admit when they don't know something and the first ones in line to sign up to learn."

Determination

Heroes stay the course, they don't give up, and they are "there turning off the lights and shutting the doors at the end of every meeting."

Emotional tone

Heroes set the "emotional tone" for the collaborative. They make you feel like you can do it; things will get done. Their tone encourages and inspires. They bring their "basic core values" to the group.

Ownership

Heroes are willing to take on "ownership and responsibility."

Resources

Sometimes a hero is the person who has exactly what the collaborative needs such as supplies, space, transportation, or funds and then contributes those things without strings attached.

History Keepers

Heroes often are the keepers of the community's stories and development. They know how things work (and what won't work) and who to go to get things done.

Specific Skill Sets

And on some occasions, heroes turn out to be people who are skilled at grant writing, graphic arts, computers, facilitation and community development.

Robin's R.E.A.C.H

Her gap-toothed grin and "Noo Yawk" accent have become something of a local legend, a part of everything we do. The plain brown triple-wide trailer where she works has become a community hearth, the source of a miraculous mix of caring and concern for young people. She is Robin Wood, the Director, *Prime Mover* and heart and soul of the R.E.A.C.H. Youth Center.

Set at the back of an older, undernourished asphalt parking lot on Old Campo Road in Spring Valley, the R.E.A.C.H. Youth Center is a haven where upwards of a hundred kids find their way everyday before and after school. The electronic games, computers, ping-pong and pool tables get a lot of use, and the noise level has a life of its own. But the kids are there because the place belongs to them, and because Robin is there, an ally, an advocate and an adult connection.

When the SVY&FC was awarded a Title V Juvenile Delinquency Grant in 1998, Robin stepped up to establish the R.E.A.C.H. Center and fill a void in youth resources and youth advocacy.

Robin took hold of the challenges and obstacles inherent in the project like a good-natured pit bull, and never let go. There were nay-sayers and nervous neighbors and less than optimistic business owners raising concerns. There were issues of ownership, turf conflicts, and excruciating contract negotiations. There was inertia and apathy. Robin embraced every one and every concern as an opportunity, and took us all along with her.

BARBARA WARNER

SPRING VALLEY FAMILY AND YOUTH COALITION

Along the Way We had Many Successes

We wanted to know what the collaboratives defined as their successes. What had special value to them? What were they proudest of? "Success" was designed to answer the question, "Did the community collaboratives accomplish what they set out to do?" They identified the following successes.

We accomplished some of the things we set out to do

- **We developed and expanded partnerships**

"We developed stronger partnerships and better networking within the agencies involved in our collaborative." "We built relationships; people won't leave our meetings when they are over." "Health care providers are beginning to attend our meetings." "We had legislative response—a mayor, a congressman, and a member of the board of supervisors now attend our meetings." "Schools came on board who wanted to participate on our collaborative and returned the courtesy by inviting us to attend their board meetings." "Our service organizations are committed to meeting quarterly."

- **We expanded and built upon our needs assessments**

"We updated our needs assessments and completed our strategic plans." "We rewrote and published the SNAP manuals; we added information about floods and fires in the new ones." "We learned more about

grassroots outreach, computers, and community disaster plans and we developed the know-how in funding these groups.

- **We developed shared vision**

"We developed a shared vision and mission statement." "We plan on continuing our goals." "We did not give up—we are still meeting."

- **We identified sustainable funding options**

We received a National Collaborative Award and the 21st Century Grant." "We have funding for two more years." "We made money on the health fair." "We plan to write for the Healthy Start Grant." "Communities can channel funds."

- **We increased community involvement**

"More families use our resources. We strengthened families and funded a coordinator." "Neighbors were out helping us. We felt good about our message." "The participation in our seminars increased. We had over 150 people present at our visioning meeting." "A lot more people got involved; 37 organizations and 78 families are now members." "We held community education classes and gave

them the tools to empower themselves." "We sponsored a safety program for Japanese immigrant women." "We raised community awareness; members of our churches now know we exist."

- **We developed our collaboratives**

"We have better orientation for our new members." "We have better organization and focus." "We diversified the board and almost reached our goal of ten members." "We charted our history."

- **We expanded our services**

"We have a new teen center."

We enjoyed ourselves

After 12 months of operation, we wanted to give people a chance to tell us about what they enjoyed as a result of their work. Which successes were personally and/or particularly rewarding?

"We saw that living in ambiguity was what worked—holding the tension of not knowing and keeping the resolve and faith that things will evolve and resolve on their own."

HNI COLLABORATIVE

- **Seeing Results**

"We saw neighbors out there helping each other." "We felt good about the messages we were sending out." "We got a lot of new people involved—150 turned out for our visioning meeting."

- **Meeting New People**

"We liked holding meetings at the mobile home parks, Campo and other far-fetched places—where we found everyone to be very

responsive and hospitable." "We have stronger partnerships."

- **Learning New Things**

"We learned more about grassroots organizing, how to use computers, and we have more 'know-how' on forming groups." "We learned how to work together."

- **Being Better Organized**

"We have better orientations." "People are dedicating more time to the collaborative's efforts." "We know we are better organized."

- **Developing New Resources**

"We brought together a team of diverse talents." "We were able to get food and supplies donated." "Working better together to get things done." "Our original COPPS school based partnership grant has led to another." ("Our collaboration with the County Department of Housing and Community Development resulted in a million-dollar Lead Hazard Abatement grant.") "Our work with the Mountain Empire School District has made us partners in their \$3 million 21st Century Learning Center Grant." "A \$5,000 CASA grant helped us establish our Youth Council."

- **Empowering the Community**

"We gathered the community and gave them tools to empower them; community members are sharing ideas among and between churches." "We increased awareness and knowledge of community assets." "People now know whom to contact to get things done."

We developed some new strengths and skills

This question had to do with collective successes-what did they have now that they didn't have before. Four strengths emerged:

- **The first strength dealt with knowing how to work better with each other**

They told us about developing more patience with the collaborative process, and with one another. They talked about the value of the collaborative process and the collaborative training and their insights about the time involved in involving everyone, but the benefits that could be derived when everyone was "bought in."

- **The second strength had to do with working with the community**

Folks told us about improving grassroots outreach-being willing to leave comfortable offices and go out into neighborhoods and communities. They also were doing a better job of matching volunteers with activities they were interested in-like helping kids do homework or teaching computer skills. "Put people to tasks that they like and believe in and they'll turn out."

- **The third strength had to do with learning to live with ambiguity**

Folks talked to us about the importance of living with the tension of not knowing the outcome and being willing to let people and projects develop naturally at their own pace, rather than trying to drive the process from the top.

- **The fourth strength seemed to be about overcoming existing personal biases and territorial prejudices**

Groups talked to us about moving beyond mistrust and breaking out of isolationism. They cited traditional competitive funding processes and non-existent networking systems as key causes. We heard again and again that new strengths included knowing how to get things done, whom to call, increased awareness of new resources and contacts, and a willingness to call on them. We realized that when dealing with theory, it is easy to forget that calling on a stranger and asking for information, resources or favors can be daunting in the best of circumstances-and even more difficult when you don't have a history or haven't established networking contacts.

"Tribal"
LEARNINGSYMPATHY and
EMPATHY for one anotherPeople
COMMUNICATEPOPULATION the SAME
or LESS THAN 1998

Here are some examples of collaborative accomplishments supporting the 2010 community vision of a healthy East San Diego County

Children and Families

- Conducted a community picnic and 150 families from the local community participated and learned about our collaborative
- Created a bi-lingual parent advisory committee
- Conducted an all-day event for families and their teens from nine different tribes

Youth/Teens

- Two new teen centers were created.
- A youth advisory council was initiated.
- One dedicated Helix high school youth is single-handedly turning an old tennis court into a tricycle park.
- Provided new after school activities for rural youth.

Education/Schools

- Conducted training sessions for faith community about collaborating.
- Educated the community about needs of people with disabilities.
- Developed "Minitown" programs for teens/sheriffs & community, focused on reduction of racial prejudice.
- Conducted community education classes in Spanish (computer, cooking and gardening)
- Educated bilingual community about available health services for children and families.
- Educated the community regarding natural disaster preparedness.
- Educated community about quality childcare AND elder care.

Family and Intergenerational Activities

- Brought youth and elders of different tribes together for an all-day event to bridge the generation gap.
- Expanded senior services to include all members of the community.

Senior Services

- Explored the needs of seniors in our community: transportation, housing, companionship and community involvement.
- Expanded our senior services to provide contact with more community members. (Breaking out of isolation)

Collaborations

- Joined with American Cancer Society, SHARP and CASA
- Linked with other churches without compromising theological differences to help provide resources to families and children.
- United with school districts and community organizations in the east region.
- We now have 37 organizations and 78 members in our collaborative.
- The mayor attends our meetings.
- We have developed our infrastructure and engaged the immigrant community in our collaborative.
- Sheriff Department, Border Patrol, service clubs and the Mountain Empire School District are members of our collaborative.
- Community members are now turning out for collaborative meetings in the Potrero-Tecate collaborative.
- We engaged 139 members serving 1178 households in our community safety program.
- We have identified and involved community stakeholders in our work.
- Connected to the child and elder care communities, Chamber of Commerce and the Alzheimer's Association. We have new perspectives and new ways to disseminate information.

Improved Neighborhood Environments

- Conducted a community health fair that brought neighbors together.
- Collaboration grew, neighbors worked together, developed a neighborhood voice.

- Neighborhood Watch is now a Neighborhood Action Group.
- Brought different groups of teens together and didn't have any "tagging."

Safety

- Developing a neighborhood park so that families with young children will have a safe place to play in their neighborhoods.
- Trained the community about saving lives in case of a natural disaster.

Transportation

- Established a philosophy and a collaborative system about transporting rural kids to and from events.

Health Services

- Conducted a health fair
 - Expanded Little House and the number of services that it provides.
 - Established the El Capitan Family Health Center providing medical home for teens.
 - Developed new teen recovery program
 - Partnership with Children's Hospital and the Santee school district brought counseling to students and families.
- Developed plan for using recovered Medical funds to meet community's health needs.

Rural Solutions

- Bringing community members together to develop their communities.
- Created after school activities for youth.
- Developed plans for youth and family activities
- Utilizing schools as adult learning centers
- Working on transportation issues
- Uniting to bring in new funding for youth and families services.

Business

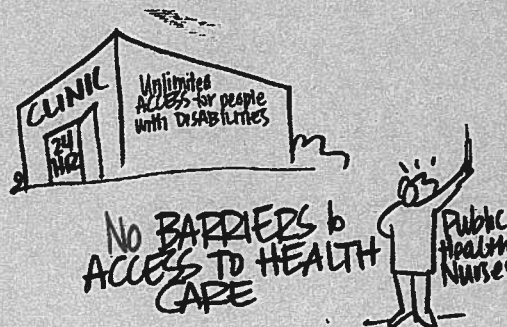
- Contacting corporations for donations of food and supplies
- Inviting business and service clubs to join collaboratives
- Involving the Chambers of Commerce in community issues.
- Creating new ways to get business involved in the next years.

Recreation

- Developed a recreation club for the community
- Re-doing a park, turning it into a resource for families and children in the neighborhood.
- Developed a recreation plan to bring back a community swimming pool, and recreation center.
- Using collaborative resources to repair a basketball court
- Transforming a dilapidated tennis court into a tricycle park.

Delivery Service/System Change and Improvements

- Submitted two critical hour grants
- Collaborated in numerous grant applications to bring in new services
- Collaborated and linked service providers to solve problems, share resources
- Working to improve service delivery by bringing new partners to the table; insurance companies and businesses.
- Identified systems of care and access points and brought information to the parents in their collaborative.
- Opened channels of communication across systems
- Distributed videos in English and Spanish about accessing child and elder care.
- Identified non-responsive elements of the delivery system and are developing targeted strategies to improve service delivery.
- Empowered the community through education and information; created a community voice.
- Gained the attention of community leaders and politicians and made them aware of problems within the county system.



Along the Way We Shed Some Tears

The “Tears” section was designed to capture the collaboratives’ negative experiences, to record what “didn’t work.”

We had some disappointments. We didn’t always succeed

This question was designed to find out what couldn’t be overcome in the first year of the HNI funding. We wanted to get some insights about what didn’t get done and why? And eventually how this would impact their future directions

- **The number one disappointment had to do with community involvement**

“We didn’t get the broad based support we hoped for.” “It takes time and skill to get the community to turn out.” “It is harder to organize the community than we expected.” “We couldn’t get the press coverage and media attention we had hoped for.” “Overcoming community apathy and disinterest is more difficult than we anticipated.” “We couldn’t get parents to get involved.” “We need more diversity; better representation in our collaborative.”

- **The next most frequently mentioned disappointment had to do with collaborative management**

Collaboratives told us that recruiting membership was challenging. Developing and sustaining collaborative leadership was harder than expected as was keeping people interested and making sure everyone followed through with their commitments.

- **Another disappointment had to do with unrealized expectations**

We heard stories about expectations that were now viewed as overly ambitious. “We didn’t get as far as we hoped.” Another collaborative talked about “we kept identifying bigger and bigger needs than expected; one need led to another; one solution revealed another problem; we need more money to get all this done!”

And two collaboratives mentioned disappointment over not receiving ‘hoped-for’ funding that would help sustain or expand their collaborative’s efforts. “We didn’t get the ABC contract.” “We weren’t awarded the regional substance abuse prevention grant.”

And finally, several collaboratives talked about their surprise and disappointment that the HNI Collaboratives would not be automatically funded for a second year. Some collaboratives had assumed HNI would be an ongoing project.

There are some things we would do differently next time.

The purpose here is to identify their collective learnings and to see if any wisdom could be offered for similar endeavors. What we *didn't* hear was significant. Not a single collaborative said they wished they hadn't undertaken this project.

The only significant comments we heard about "doing things differently" had to do with the HNI contract and process:

A few collaboratives pointed out the need to take more time at the front end to better understand the contract requirements, and to clarify the funding commitments. A theme emerged here about "not understand-

ing that the contract and funding was to develop a collaborative."

A couple of issues arise around this theme. Some of the HNI-funded collaboratives had been in existence prior to this contract and wanted the funding to further existing projects. Others didn't understand what being a collaborative meant, and they came to the contract with a specific task in mind and were later confused by the requirements to participate in "collaborative training."

Finally, because the original contracted amount of \$25,000 was subsequently reduced to \$18,750 some collaboratives said that *next time* they would reduce the scope of work accordingly.

Succeeding through Failure

This is a story of failure and from my view, the best way to succeed. When you fail you know you have got it right.

A year ago a white child in our local school announced he was a white supremacist and Nazi and began to harass a fifth grade classmate. I volunteered to work with the principal and mother of the African-American child who was the target of this child's hatred. We convened a group to discuss the issue. The meeting was very painful and acrimonious. We have met many times since and the group membership has declined from at most twenty to six or seven. We have done nothing concrete, many of the former members have thought the group a waste of time and even those most committed

have not returned. By any reasonable objective standard, we have failed.

Yet, of all the projects in the community, I believe this one is the most important precisely because we have failed in this way. *Our failure and the acrimony have taught us how deep and how profound the issues of white supremacy and bigotry are in our community and our country.* And it is the six or seven who remain, despite the criticism, pain, and overt failure, who will begin to build a truly just community by helping the community creatively and successfully address the deepest issues preventing true transformation of the community and country into a just place to live.

RUSSELL DEHNEL, PH.D.

LEMON GROVE COLLABORATIVE

Along the Way We Celebrated

This section on "Celebration" was designed to see if the collaboratives routinely build in traditions of celebration and recognition. Did they think about rewarding and acknowledging those who supported their efforts? Did celebrations differ between collaboratives?

Asking each collaborative if they had celebrated was a wonderful question because the universal answer was: "Not yet, but we ought to. We did a lot!" Going through the storytelling process had provided them with an opportunity to reflect on all that they had done over the past 12 months and every last one of them was surprised by just how much they had accomplished.

A few collaboratives (Many Nations, La Mesa West, and Potrero-Tecate) had conducted community events as a way to bring the community together. "We held a community event with dancing, contests/raffles, traditional Latin dance, and everyone enjoying themselves." "Our event was the celebration." But none had planned celebrations specifically to honor their own accomplishments.

- **So we asked if they thought a celebration was a good idea**

Was it a good way to celebrate their accomplishments? Did they see any value in it? And (with a couple of exceptions, "We are too busy; a job well done and receiving letters is sufficient" and "We will celebrate when we see kids with transportation and things to do") everyone saw some merit in having a party to:

- Thank volunteers
- Sustain their energy and enthusiasm
- Recognize contributors
- Bring public attention to their accomplishments
- Invite new people to participate in the collaborative

- And, to enjoy each other's company and recognize all that had been accomplished together over the past 12 months.
- **There is something about the idea of a party**

Even just the ensuing discussion of a possible celebration was a joy to watch. Just the idea of having a party appeared to be the beginning of their celebrations. "Maybe we'll plan a 'Pot-Luck Picnic' and thank those who contributed." "When our teen center opens, we could use it for a celebration prior before the youth return to school-maybe an inaugural event." "We could give certificates to acknowledge the continuing efforts of those who have participated." "Perhaps a fall celebration with community members; there will be singing, eating, dancing, and an abundance of good things." "Once the new manuals return from the printers we will possibly plan a 'SNAP-on' celebration." "We will explore the possibility of having a celebration in conjunction with one or more of the mini projects." "An annual party in May/June and we'll thank those who contributed." "At our February Collaborative meeting, we will share the report and see what we have accomplished this past year; we will share the report with the La Mesa City Council." "Through our 'story telling' process, we realized that we don't take time to celebrate our successes. We usually just take on another challenge. So we are challenging ourselves to come up with a thoroughly enjoyable celebration."

And who knows? Perhaps they are celebrating yet!

Along the Way We Learned Some Lessons

"As we look back over your journey of the last 12 months, what would you say is the moral of your collaborative's story?"

This is what they told us:

"What we can't do alone, we can do together because it takes a community to raise a generation."

EL CAJON COLLABORATIVE

"Getting people to save themselves is more difficult than you think. Somebody has to do it and we'll be there!"

SNAP AMERICAN RED CROSS
COLLABORATIVE

"Together we can do anything and everything. Cooperation creates community!"

ALPINE COLLABORATIVE

"There is value in the 'process.' It's not always about the 'product!'"

COMMON GROUND COLLABORATIVE

"1 + 1 = We Won!"

LA MESA WEST COLLABORATIVE

"Perseverance pays and never accept that it can't be done. Always advocate for those in need!"

LEMON GROVE COLLABORATIVE

"You gotta stick with it. It'll happen—don't get discouraged. We gain a few, we lose a few."

POTRERO—TECATE COLLABORATIVE

"Todo se puede lograr si uno se lo propone. Si se puede." (Translation—It can be done—it is a way of saying that everything can be achieved if the opportunity is given).

PROJECT HEALTH COLLABORATIVE

"Never underestimate the power and impact of families working together!"

EAST COUNTY FAMILIES WITH
CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES COUNCIL

"The needs are ever increasing. There will never be an end to our story, but we can accomplish anything when we set our minds to it, and we can make a difference!"

HEALTHY WORKING FAMILIES
COLLABORATIVE

"This is just the beginning!"

MANY NATIONS COLLABORATIVE

"Together we can!"

LAKESIDE HEALTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

"You can't steal second without taking your foot off first."

SANTÉE COLLABORATIVE

"Communities can do it. There is a sense of community here and commitment. It's all about relationships."

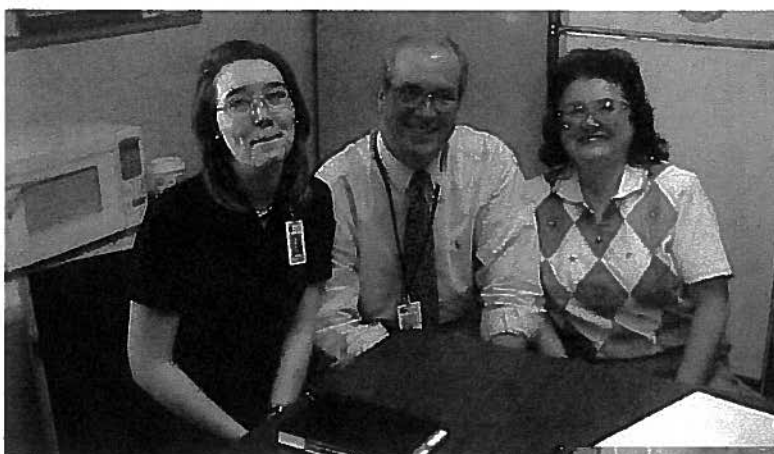
SPRING VALLEY YOUTH AND FAMILY
COALITION

"Keep looking ahead—just move on." Make it happen and then the community will turn out to give you advice."

MOUNTAIN EMPIRE

"There is an asset in each community member. FIND IT."

JAYNE REINHARDT, HNI PROJECT
DIRECTOR



SNAP Collaborative

*Heroes are
willing to take on
"ownership and
responsibility."*

*"Teens have
access to
better health
care and the
community is
talking about
teen health
issues."*



El Cajon Collaborative



La Mesa West Collaborative

*"We saw
neighbors out
there helping
each other"*

CHAPTER THREE

Looking to the Future

“Looking to the Future” was designed to explore the depth of the group’s commitment. It was also designed to synthesize each group’s learning. Looking back over their hopes, dreams and wishes, negative and positive learnings, where are they going from here? Who do they want to bring along? What is the level of their commitment? Do they use their learning to determine future directions?



This is where we plan to go from here...

We asked each collaborative about their next steps. Would they be going on with this project? What did they decide to do next? What kinds of commitment were they prepared to make? They told us that they wanted to sustain the work that they had begun.

SNAP Collaborative

SNAP told us that they were committed to sustaining and nurturing what they had begun and were already looking for \$50,000 in order to expand. They want to have one person in each of the Red Cross's five existing offices dedicated solely to disaster relief. "We will use volunteers from existing SNAP projects to help create new ones."

Others to get involved:

"We want to get more fire and police departments involved, along with more youth leadership." We are able to decrease the cost and people power spent on disaster relief if we refocus those resources on educating communities on disaster preparedness and on SAVING LIVES.

They are committed to: expanding the SNAP program. The American Red Cross currently has five field offices in San Diego County but only one representative for disaster relief. If we decrease the number of dollars spent on disaster relief, we can spend it on educating the community and helping communities to be safe.

El Cajon Collaborative

El Cajon will focus on developing more diversity and more community participation. They will be pursuing more resources to sustain their collaborative and providing more political outreach. They plan to continue working on their organizational structure in order to "be able to staff it as opposed to letting it just happen." They plan to develop an avenue to increase involvement.

Others to get involved:

More citizens, alumni who have benefited from our services, local business, youth, grocery stores and businesses, such as Costco, and the casinos. More service clubs like Kiwanis, Rotary, more members of the faith community, police and government, the drug courts, family court, ROP, the Chamber of Commerce and representation from all ethnic groups.

They are committed to:

"sustaining our process through fundraising (we need approximately \$2 million for the next year). To continue to ask the tough questions regarding homelessness, improving services, whether one is here for themselves or for the community; educating the community through a mentoring process of the collaborative and about the increased number of hate crimes."

Alpine Collaborative

Alpine plans to form seven action groups that will correspond with the seven phases of their vision. They will continue to meet monthly to keep the collaborative alive and to find funding (\$100,000) for collaborative operations and \$700,000 for strategic plans.

Others to get involved:

They plan to get more people involved including the school districts and their board members, youth, more parents, generation X'ers, more seniors, the community garden club and other service clubs.

They are committed to:

meeting, finding funding and starting a column in the local newspaper about the collaborative.

The Common Ground Collaborative

Common Ground plans to conduct a series of short-term projects leading up to a big community project. Their first project will be for youth.

Others to get involved:

businesses and agencies such as the Casa de Oro Business Association and the ongoing participation of the Spring Valley Youth Coalition.

They are committed to:

meeting for another year and Cindy Arntson will take on the leadership role during that year. At the end of the

second year they will evaluate the feasibility of continuing for a third year. "The end of our second year will be the critical point in our collaborative effort."

La Mesa West Collaborative

La Mesa plans to continue meeting and seeking additional funding—approximately \$1.5 million in funding (\$400,000 for their community park project, and other money for programming staffing and a health grant). They will work on recruiting more people to join their collaborative. They will continue to collaborate with other East County collaboratives and perhaps support the development of a collaborative umbrella organization.

Others to get involved:

More businesses. Hire a grant writer who has time to write; the East County Community Clinic; La Mesa/Spring Valley School Nurse; Pre-school programs and last but not least; more families!

They are committed to:

going forward with or without funding.

Lemon Grove Collaborative

Lemon Grove plans to "go where the community leads us!" They also plan to do something for youth. They plan to figure out how to align the collaborative's vision with what the community wants and needs. They will develop a structure for community participation and will come up with a learning system for the collaborative in order to sustain community learning.

Others to get involved:

"The City of Lemon Grove needs to be more "hands-on" in order to deepen their involvement." More cultural, immigrant, ethnic and disabled groups (i.e. Latin/Hispanic, Kosovars, Kurds, African American, Asian). "We have over 22 language groups in our city alone. We want more youth, parent and service club involvement."

They are committed to:

"more of the same. We are serious and not just an organization that comes and goes."

Potrero-Tecate Collaborative

Potrero-Tecate has a very specific list of planned accomplishments for year two which includes pursuing a vision for the future; expanding current Spanish classes to include beginning and advanced; providing transportation for kids to events at school; having a teen school dance that is designed and planned by the teens; getting a park designated as a community park for community activities; developing a "Community Project" fund; developing a batting cage; setting up a center for Neighbors Helping Neighbors; expanding the community newspaper and increasing readership; getting a sign made announcing upcoming community activities.

Others to get involved: Businesses, local organizations, church leaders. "We need increased involvement from the Tecate communities."

They are committed to: continuing on with the work they have begun.

Project Health Collaborative

Project Health decisions include "We will continue in our efforts to bridge the schools with the Hispanic community. We'll look for more agencies to continue to conduct seminars to help the people understand healthcare and their health needs."

Others to get involved: more of "us," the community, and more agencies.

They are committed to "devoting our time and energy to bring more people to the table; to look for avenues for funding with a minimum of \$50,000 depending on community participation."

East County Families with Children with Disabilities Council

"East County Families, in the year 2000, plans to conduct two workshops on "Children and Families with Disabilities Issues" (such as IEP hearings and medications, etc.) We will develop our by-laws, write grants and raise \$25,000 in new funds; finish our database; get Mental Health to the table; elect committee membership; develop a membership fee; ask Collaborative members to help with food, supplies and printing and to *Keep on Meeting!*"

Other to get involved

"We will get a commitment from Mental Health to participate; we will seek a computer data based expert from San Diego Commission on Children and Youth; we need more community representation including businesses."

They are committed to: "each of us bringing in one new member."

Healthy Working Families Collaborative

Healthy Working Families plans to develop a website, "We want to expand the collaborative outside of East County, partner with other agencies and go for larger funding."

Others to get involved: "People with financial resources that would like to make a difference in their communities. We want to involve the medical community, city and county government. We want insurance companies to offer 'cafeteria plans'."

They are committed to: continuing to meet, committing time, energy and our expertise.

Lakeside Collaborative

"Lakeside plans to expand outside East County, to institutionalize a stronger array of mental health services, meet the DAILY needs of children not just a couple of days, to provide a "medical home" covering psycho and socio health for teens."

Others to get involved:

Business and service providers, the Faith Community, youth, seniors.

They are committed to:

"the community. We will put the needs of the youth before our personal or organizational goals. We are committing our time."

Many Nations Collaborative

"Many Nations plans to go on. To provide our youth with more information about their culture and heritage, to pursue more funding, to provide more opportunities for youth to continue to mentor one another."

Others to get involved:

The Tribal Chairs, parents, and representation from all reservations.

They are committed to:

"continuing for another year and will continue with the work we have begun. We will remain at the grace of the community, without their support we can not continue to exist."

Spring Valley Family and Youth Coalition

"Spring Valley Family and Youth plans to go forward. We will work towards sustainability of the R.E.A.C.H Youth Center. We will build on the remarkable work of the Healthy Start Coordinator and Steering Committee to sustain the Spring Valley Elementary Healthy Start Site. We will confront the issues of funding the collaborative coordinator position."

Others to get involved:

"More community members, La Mesa-Spring Valley School District, Grossmont Unified High School District, community colleges, faith community, multiple housing residents, family volunteers, representatives from the Youth Council."

They are committed to:

"to being reflective of the community and community driven; to provide the time, resources, and learning necessary to a genuine commitment; to build relationships."

Mountain Empire Collaborative

"Mountain Empire collaborative plans to continue, to persevere in spite of it all. We will get a swimming pool, and hold a dance among other things. Things will be better for youth."

Others to get involved:

"Parents - when we get the kids involved, the parents will come."

They are committed to:

"first, figuring out how to help our kids earn some money for Christmas shopping-(we don't have summer jobs or part-time after school employment for kids out here)-then we want to arrange for transportation so they can make a trip or two down into town to go holiday shopping-that would be a big deal for our kids out here in our rural communities."

Project Health "East County"



Softening into the Music

We're sitting in a very large circle formed by tables, with a vast amount of space in between. We're all saying we want to help but the intended recipients aren't buying it. They've been here before in front of the authority figures and have been met with critical feedback.

But Mom is softening as she begins to hear the kindness in our voices. There is firmness yet caring and a definite expectation that they can do it. Her arms unfold and she leans forward. She is listening. Talk turns from her son to her, and her eyes get a fearful look. She answers honestly, but only with a nod, not yet able to speak it out loud. To her surprise we do not turn in disgust or smile knowingly.

She has made the first step. Yet, the biggest success is not with Mom, but with the person on my right. She is from the school district, new to the position and a newcomer to this process of including parents and kids

in frank discussions about their behaviors, the consequences and necessary steps that only they have the ability to take. She has never experienced the power of our team. Everyone is working together, softening a harsh but necessary comment made by one, or reinforcing a difficult point of fact that went unnoticed before but that underlines the significance of why action is needed now.

A strategy is offered, Mom balks, and an alternative is suggested. Mom agrees. Another suggestion, (it's terribly unorthodox), but it will work. "What a great idea." "Hey, if you do that, I can offer." "And maybe we can." It's wonderful to watch the synergy in the room as our creativity is fueled by one another—no wrong answers, no red tape we can't cut.

She is amazed. She never thought we could get so far. Who knew a room full of people working in separate worlds could make such beautiful music.

JOANNE BUSHBY
EL CAJON COLLABORATIVE



Many Nations Collaborative

Reflections

The Grossmont East County Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative has resulted in the formation and strengthening of fifteen neighborhood collaboratives across east San Diego County who are mobilized to improve the health and well being of residents in their communities. This investment by the Grossmont Healthcare District in their communities has resulted in healthier residents and communities in East County.

Using a storytelling process funded by the Alliance Healthcare Foundation, the collaboratives are able to share numerous successes in the areas of: children and families, youth, education, family and intergenerational activities, senior services, forming collaboratives, improving neighborhood environments, safety, transportation, health services, rural solutions, involving business, recreation, and system changes. All of these areas are elements of the East San Diego County Year 2010 Vision.

These collaboratives are providing a voice for the concerns and wishes of their communities. Using an asset based community development approach, they have identified and mobilized their resources to strengthen their communities. In addition, they helped leverage close to \$4 million in new funding that will be directly invested in East County communities.

The current challenges facing the collaboratives are to find ways to sustain their efforts and to develop a cross-collaborative mechanism for exchanging information, learning from one another and working together in order to solve shared regional issues.

People have emerged from all corners of East San Diego County and worked hard to make a difference in their communities. They had dreams, took risks, overcame challenges, had some successes, shed some tears, learned some lessons and made a commitment to continue on. Suffice it to say, that this is not the end of the story. In fact, it is just the beginning and we look forward to watching all that the Healthy Neighborhood Collaboratives will be accomplishing over the years to come.

We thank the collaboratives for sharing their great stories. We are grateful for the opportunity to learn together.



APPENDIX

About the Workshop:

“Tell Me A Tale: Capturing and Telling Community Stories”

Center for Collaborative Planning, Public Health Institute, has developed a method to help community members get their individual and collective stories captured and told.

Combining elements from creative writing, participatory group processes and storytelling, the workshop and training materials are designed to illuminate the importance of sharing stories in community while giving participants practical and uncomplicated tools and techniques.

Center for Collaborative Planning’s workshop demonstrates:

Stories have a power in our lives

This power needs to be nurtured and explored

Stories pass on the learning of a community

This learning helps us to do better

Stories allow for complexity

This complexity often stays uncovered in standard reports

Stories allow for many voices

These voices are essential to the conversation

Stories encourage and embrace subjectivity

This subjectivity is often the very heart of a community effort

Stories encourage imaginative thinking

This imaginative thinking is what makes everything possible!

For more information about this workshop,
call Center for Collaborative Planning at (916) 498-6960.

The Story Telling Process for Collaborative Assessment At-A-Glance by Adams & Adams

Facilitation Directions: Pre-made 'Chapter' charts are up on the wall so story line can be seen. Review Process. Explain that group will be working in large and small groups. Answers will be charted onto pre-made charts. Large Group Process: Facilitate discussion and chart large group reflections. Simultaneous Small Group process: Count off individuals into small groups. Assign each group logical grouping of subheadings within each 'chapter of the story.' Small group reflections will be charted on pre-made charts. Small groups share information and chart answers. Then have groups exchange "chapters" charting additional comments. When all are completed, post sheets back up in front of the group and have a representative from each group report out chapter by chapter. Then, based on reports facilitate large group discussion on Chapters IV & V (90 - 180 minutes)

History - Objective (Large Group)	Beginning - Reflective (Simultaneous Small Groups)	Middle - Interpretive (Simultaneous Small Groups)	Next Steps - Decisional (Large Group)	Meaning and Purpose (Large Group)
<p>Chapter I - Once Upon a time, we had a dream: <i>This is how it all began:</i> Think back to when you all began?</p> <p>How did we learn about this opportunity, undertaking? Who was there when we began?</p> <p>How did we begin? Who helped us? Why did you decide to get involved?</p> <p><i>We had hopes...</i> What were your best hopes?</p> <p><i>We had fears...</i> What doubts or concerns did you confront?</p> <p><i>We had goals...</i> What goals were set?</p>	<p>Chapter II - Therefore we decided to set out on a journey - along the way: <i>We displayed courage:</i> What risks did we take? How did they payoff? <i>We slayed some dragons...</i> What were the challenges we faced? <i>We shed some tears...</i> Where didn't we succeed? <i>And we had some successes...</i> Name our successes. Give brief examples that reflect our pride and sense of accomplishment.</p>	<p>Chapter III - We discovered some valuable treasures: <i>We made new friends...</i> What new relationships do we have now? <i>And discovered new insights...</i> What does the community know now that it didn't know before? What were some surprises that added value to this first year of planning? Who has benefited from this work? What other treasures resulted from our work? What have we learned? <i>Some Hero's emerged...</i> Who were they? What contributions did they make? How did they make a difference? (Take Hero pictures with digital camera)</p>	<p>Chapter IV - We made some important decisions: <i>Where do we go from here?</i> Next steps? <i>Who else needs to be involved</i> - Who is missing from our table? <i>We made commitments...</i> What commitments do we want to make to the future of our collaborative? <i>We have recommendations...</i> What recommendations do we have for funding sources, sponsoring organizations, partners and or others undertaking a similar effort?</p>	<p>Chapter V - We discover the meaning and purpose of our journey and we celebrate: <i>The Meaning and Purpose of our Journey</i> The Moral of our story is... Our lessons learned. What would we tell someone about our experiences? How have we contributed to the future of our community? <i>We celebrate our success:</i> How? Who should be involved? Thanked? Can we use celebration to bring attention to our work, & accomplishments to bring in new resources and partners? Party workgroup?</p>
<p>"Once Upon A time" was designed to clarify the heart and goals of each collaborative's original purpose</p>	<p>The "Journey" section was designed to identify and name the types of risks and challenges faced by the collaboratives, solutions and some of the payoffs that resulted from their risk taking.</p>	<p>"Treasures" answers the question, "What can collaboratives attract? What power exists collaboratively vs. individually? By collaborating, did doors open that would otherwise be inaccessible? Did power shift? What did they learn?</p>	<p>"Important Decisions" explores the depth of the group's commitment; synthesizes the group's learning; explores future commitments; provides opportunities to establish future goals based on learning,</p>	<p>Looks for meaning that each group gave to its own experience - was there a higher principle driving their work? "Celebration" looked for traditions of celebration, recognition, reward and acknowledgment.</p>