



*Linking People and Organizations to Service Opportunities
Matching Community Assets to Needs ~ Fostering Cross-Sector Partnerships*

Introduction

Welcome to Community Without Walls¹ (CWW), a new community resource that links organizations and individuals through a structure that will match assets to needs effectively for the benefit of the greater Pasadena community. This model is called a Sustainable Learning Community and it is defined as "A community that is able to deal with the opportunities and challenges of today and invest in its capacity to embrace tomorrow." Simply stated, it is people working together more effectively by developing trusting relationships, sharing and leveraging resources, and by engaging in cross-sector partnerships.

What Is Possible When Assets Meet Needs Effectively!

In 1996, in a speech to members of Eastside Intercambios, a coalition of community organizations in East Los Angeles, noted futurist Dr. Leland Kaiser shared this challenge with his audience as he likened our communities to the human body. He marveled at how the human body was so efficient and could relieve an itch in any spot on the body with the simple movement of a finger in the exact location and for the exact duration of time needed. He discussed that this was possible because of the body's amazing communications network called the central nervous system. He noted that our communities are dysfunctional because they lack such a communications system (central nervous system) that would link people to people more effectively, and through them link community assets to needs. He challenged those in attendance to imagine what our communities could look like if we were to follow nature's example of the human body and create such a network of communications and relationships in our communities that would allow our abundant needs to be met with our abundant resources. This is vision Community Without Walls is making a reality.

Need

In this best case scenario above, a communications network makes more efficient communication possible. Further, assets and needs are shared or matched for the benefit of the common good. While communications and sharing of assets are present in our community today, they are not organized in the comprehensive and holistic way mentioned in Dr. Kaiser's example above. The three issues CWW will address to put us on the path toward increased efficiency are:

1. The need for efficient conduits, and a network, that allows the sharing of information around issues of shared concern among individuals and organizations in our community.
2. The importance of building trusting relationships through which people feel comfortable communicating openly and honestly with each other regarding their assets and needs.
3. The need to honestly assess and address both long-term and short-term needs, long-standing and pervasive community issues, root causes of problems and the societal barriers that still prevent us from coming together around a shared vision of success.

The Challenge

The most important asset we have as we seek to foster a culture of people who communicate openly and share freely is people, our community members and our community leaders. In this respect, preparing to work effectively together and contribute to the common good our people are woefully underdeveloped. CWW will focus its initial efforts here, in delivering CWW's five components which are designed to engage and prepare community members to contribute to the common good at their highest level of ability and interest. Once individuals and organizations engage, the challenge shifts to linking and leveraging individual actions and resources so they can work interdependently and create greater results together, as compared to working independently. The fifth component, Forums to Educate and Foster Partnerships will focus there, in leveraging interdependent relationships.

Five Components

Five components make up the Sustainable Learning Community model and the preliminary areas of interest of the organization. Each focuses on a different sector of the community and is designed to encourage civic participation in such a way as to also build the capacity of the volunteer. CWW may not necessarily produce programs in each of the component areas but instead may foster collaboration among organizations working in those areas or feed resources to them as needed.

- 1. Volunteer Action Projects--Match community volunteers to the needs of public schools and non-profits.**
These projects, of all types and sizes and addressing a multitude of issues, mobilize families and all community members to come together across real and perceived societal barriers to serve in fun and interesting ways. Projects can be as simple as beautifying a local school or cleaning a local stream or Arroyo, or they can be larger in scope and scale like converting a classroom into a health clinic to serve students, their families and the community.
- 2. Service Learning Initiatives--Matches fun service activities to the need for students to engage in learning.**
Similar to Project Based Learning, Service Learning uses the community as a classroom, makes learning fun, and helps youth become effective in personal and team objectives by integrating service projects into academic lessons thereby demonstrating how school is pertinent to preparing for success in real life.
- 3. Leadership Programs--Matches trained community members with the leadership needs of a community.**
Programs engage participants in personal and group initiatives and foster cross-sector partnerships to enhance individual and team leadership skills. Programs vary in format and by sector of community served and may be directed at policy, program or grass roots levels. They may be tailored for youth or seniors, or for the members of specific organizations, etc. The result of these programs is an ever-growing cadre of people trained to engage in leadership roles as their interests dictate.
- 4. Teen Peer Programs--Matches youth to youth in positive alternatives to negative peer pressure.**
Teens who are positive, contributing community members can influence their peers who may be struggling in one-on-one activities or through fun and interesting volunteer service projects. Resulting positive experiences provide alternatives to negative peer pressure and activities. Focus areas can include conflict resolution, mentoring, tutoring and others.
- 5. Forums to Educate and Foster Partnerships--Matches our ability to focus on developing partnerships and long-term success with the needs of organizations whose resources are concentrated on short-term results.** These forums will educate people on social and community issues, and provide unbiased information on tough issues and taboo subjects. These forums will maintain a focus on the future and what is possible and provide ongoing support for long-term change. The forums will be a vehicle for each CWW component to research successful models and innovative methods, and to find support for new collaboratives and cross-sector partnerships that can contribute to a sustainable community and world. This component will sponsor the major communications links in the community and it will focus on supporting organizations to work more effectively together, reduce redundancy and create opportunities for synergy.

Purpose Statement

We are a socially, economically and environmentally conscious community that seeks to model the way for ourselves and for communities around the world in matching assets to needs effectively.

Working in harmony and with respect for the human spirit, we are committed to sharing information about the quality of life that can be achieved by people who are passionate about living purposefully and contributing to community and to the common good.

Our purpose is to continuously grow and develop our people and every sector of our economy and community.

We are dedicated to working with people and organizations and to supporting them to combine expertise and resources through deep and trusting relationships and strong cross-sector partnerships.

Sustainable Learning Community Model

Assets flow back and forth to meet needs between components. CWW may not produce programs in each of the component areas but instead may foster collaboration among organizations working in those areas or feed resources to them as needed.

