

Breakthrough News
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Breakthrough Solutions is a program of the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service, with partners in the public, private and non-profit sectors

The purpose of Breakthrough News is to help communities and regions become vibrant, sustainable and resilient in the 21st century economy

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Introduction

Welcome to the latest issue of Breakthrough News. In this issue, you will learn some great stories and key lessons from successful communities we visited on a Vibrant Communities Road Trip, an emerging opportunity rooted in Germany, new GIS tools, modern-day lessons from the cold war, and a glimpse of Mother Russia. You won't want to miss it!

Best regards,

Mark Peterson
Professor – Community and Economic Development

Coming Events

January 11-12: Arkansas Campaign for Grade-Level Reading Action Summit, Little Rock. <http://www.ar-glr.net/actionsummit2013>

January 23: Arkansas Regional Coalition for the Ouachitas Workshop, featuring charrette results from three counties from Team Cromwell, Mena. For more information, go to www.arcostrong.org

March 3-5: Governor's Conference on Tourism, Hot Springs. For more information, go to www.Arkansas.com/industry-insider

European Christmas Markets Will Warm Your Hearts (as They Freeze Your Toes)



Photo courtesy of Ed Levy

"Developing a Christmas Market for your community can dramatically energize and enliven your community's Christmas season, boosting sales for local vendors while creating a seasonal experience that can be enjoyed by young and old alike," stated Ed Levy, a partner with Cromwell Architects Engineers and a Breakthrough Solutions Partner. "Christmas Markets often include musical performances, nativity scenes and re-enactments, plays, carriage rides, bonfires, children's areas, caroling, children's rides, carousels, and the town Christmas tree. **You are only limited by your creativity regarding ways to make your Christmas Market a special experience people will never forget and want to come back to each year.**"

Levy was speaking at a charrette in Waldron on October 17, as part of the Partners Creating a Vibrant, Sustainable Region initiative, sponsored by the Arkansas Regional Coalition for the Ouachitas, Rich Mountain Community College, and the U of A Division of Agriculture. You can learn more about

European Christmas markets

here:http://www.europeanchristmasmarketsontv.com/european_christmas_markets_travel.html. There are now at least 20 Christmas markets in the U.S. now – see www.christmasmarkets.com/USA.html.

Vibrant Communities Road Trip Took Place November 27-28



Vibrant Communities Road Trip Participants

If you want to get a first-hand look at vibrant communities, hit the road! That is exactly what a group of community leaders from the Arkansas Regional Coalition for the Ouachitas (ARCO) did on November 27-28. This is part of a Partners Creating a Vibrant, Sustainable Future initiative for Montgomery, Polk, and Scott Counties, co-sponsored by ARCO, Rich Mountain Community College, and the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture. This was a unique opportunity to learn how five successful communities and two regions engaged their communities, leveraged their assets, and made real strides to realizing their dreams of becoming vibrant, sustainable communities and regions.

New Harrison C.O.R.E. Video Now On-line

You can now hear the story of Harrison C.O.R.E. from several individuals directly involved in the process. Just go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=39Uldup82No&feature=youtu.be>. Thanks to the

C.O.R.E. for their participation and Extension Videographer Kerry Rodtnick for his excellent work in making it happen.

**Here is a WOW – the Flinthills
Discovery Center, Manhattan KS**



Flinthills Discovery Center

A delegation from Manhattan KS came to Harrison to share their story about how they created the Flinthills Discovery Center (FDC - <http://www.flinthillsdiscovery.org/>), a major facility that became a catalyst for downtown revitalization. The presentation was led by Bruce Snead, team leader and former mayor of Manhattan.

Key lessons:

Timing is very important. This initiative arose shortly after a major study described the flinthills region of Kansas as an area that had marketing potential, and before some laws were changed that would have made it more difficult.

Establish your brand: Although the Flinthills cover a sizable portion of eastern Kansas, this center established the Flinthills brand and connected it to Manhattan KS.

Be creative in branding: Manhattan KS created a partnership with New York City (The Big Apple), and created the brand for Manhattan of “The Little Apple”.

Create a legacy for future generations – their goal was to inspire

people to celebrate, explore, and care for the Flinthills.

Work with and benefit your region: the Flinthills Discovery Center showcases assets throughout a 22 county region, creating a larger destination and close ties to the rural area surrounding Manhattan. Every county contributed to the FDC time capsule and painted two panels on-site.

Embrace technology: visitors to the Discovery Center first encounter an interactive kiosk that enables them to search the 22 county region for restaurants, antiques, native prairie sites, and much more.

Involve local government in downtown revitalization: a city staff member who used various financing tools to work with private developers stated: “Without our involvement, the developers would have gone out and bought a cornfield.”

Be creative in your financing: The FDC team used several funding mechanisms, include TIF districts, Kansas Star bonds, and private investment. Only 15 percent of their total cost came from local sources!

Engage your whole community in an open and public process. FDC leaders even sought out citizens who were opposed to the project to serve on committees!

Find your cheerleaders and develop the best team.

Create a big WOW so that people will want to come back. The big WOW at the FDC is an immersive experience, in which visitors hear, see, and feel the wind, the cold, and the fire of the Flinthills.

Develop political will and leadership. You must be willing to work through expectations, politics, finances, timing, and zoning. There will be push back, no matter what you do.

Ride the wave: key drivers of change are very powerful, and you can harness them. Outdoor tourism and eco-tourism are huge, and the FDC taps that power.

“Remember that you are in this for the long term – for 20 or 50 or 100 years. Together we can do more than we can individually,” stated Snead. “You have to have the passion and vision and perseverance and hard work to make it happen.”

Let's Do Lunch in the Harrison C.O.R.E. District

Harrison C.O.R.E.

Revitalizing the Heart of Harrison and Boone County

“When we started in July of 2009, we had just lost our Main Street Program, downtown had a lot of vacancies, and the downtown mood was sort of grouchy,” stated Layne Ragsdale, Harrison C.O.R.E. facilitator and local business owner. “We decided to strengthen our downtown to support the region, and discovered a lot of government buildings in the area.”

Restaurants attract people: “Now downtown has become a place to come and eat,” stated Ragsdale. “There is a variety from a coffee shop to diner fare, to a more elaborate tea room and steakhouse.” This represents major progress for Harrison C.O.R.E. – to create reasons for people to come downtown. Another major success has been the establishment of 32 new businesses (net) in the C.O.R.E. district.

Change the conversation, and you change the community: “I have noticed a change in the psychology in the last three years,” stated Dave Fitton, Harrison City Councilman and a leader in C.O.R.E. “People were convinced we were going downhill. The main thing I have seen is a change in the psychology of the community – to be more positive.”

Develop an open organization that works: “John Paul (Hammerschmidt – former congressman) emphasized that everything must be transparent,” stated Ragsdale. “We became a leaderless organization – John Paul is the convener, I became the facilitator, and we had champions of spoke groups.”

Bring in outside expertise: “Breakthrough Solutions brought in structure that allowed our group to continue, a process to go through, and a gazillion resources, including Cromwell Architects Engineers. It helped to bring in experts, to confirm what we were doing.”

Measure impact: “Sales tax has increased since we started,” states Terry Cook, Executive Director of the Harrison Convention and Visitors Bureau. [Due to the road diet,] sales tax has increased, and we have reduced accidents and speeding by 87%. We took back our Main Street.”

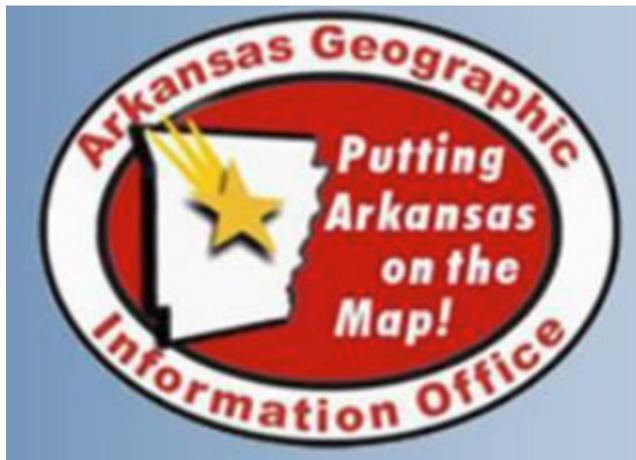
Engage your community college: “I can think of many ways that North Arkansas College can be involved, such as internships, new programs, and student involvement in community projects,” stated Dr. Jackie Elliott, President of Northern Arkansas College.

Involve your youth:

“We wanted to find out from our youth – what do you want in the C.O.R.E. district?” stated Nita Cooper, Boone County Extension Agent Staff Chair, describing her interactions with a youth leadership program in the county. “Kids are brutally honest, but you see some great ideas as well. In less than ten years, they could be back here, looking for something to do.”

Seek long-term sustainability: An award-winning community development initiative, C.O.R.E. has become an advocacy group under the auspices of the Harrison Regional Chamber of Commerce, and continues to push for things in the strategic plan. To learn more about Harrison C.O.R.E., go to <http://coreofharrison.org/>,

More road trip stories will be in the next issue of Breakthrough News.



New GIS Tools Available for Community and Economic Development

Geographic Information Systems are powerful tools to portray and analyze information useful for community and economic development. Here is the latest in Arkansas: “Our State’s Tax Parcel GIS database continues to be developed”, states Shelby D. Johnson, Geographic Information Officer with the Arkansas Geographic Information Office (and Breakthrough Solutions Partner). “This database is

an essential weapon in the hands of a Community or Economic Developer. See this article <http://agioar.wordpress.com/2012/07/24/dream-coming-true/> In order to help user access this information anywhere we have developed a mobile map. This document tells you how to download the app and find the map. The instructions are written for iPhone but will also work on Android and

Windows Mobile 7 devices. Here's that link:

http://www.gis.arkansas.gov/Docs/ArcGIS_iPhone.pdf.

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- Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas
- Ken Hubbell and Associates
- U of A Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service
- UALR Institute of Government

Story of the Month – The Russians Are Coming

A few months ago, we hosted Alexander Gabuev, a columnist with Kommersant newspaper in Moscow, and Miroslav Toda, a foreign editor with SME in Latvia in our home. Latvia is a country in eastern Europe that was once a part of the U.S.S.R. They came here as guests of the Arkansas Council for International Visitors - <http://arkciv.com/>.

In discussing the cold war, my wife and I described duck and cover drills in school, in which all of the students were told to duck under their desks and cover their heads because **THE RUSSIANS ARE COMING**. Alexander the Russian replied that they too had duck and cover drills, in which they were told to duck under their desks and cover their heads because **THE AMERICANS ARE COMING**. Miroslav from Latvia then stated that they were **HOPING THAT THE AMERICANS WOULD COME**, but they never did.

This gives us a glimpse into the cold war and how people experienced it differently, based on their perspectives and location. **Our nation is now experiencing great divides – social, economic, racial, and cultural. We cannot bridge these divides unless we begin to understand how other people see the world.**

Website of the Month: A Russian Wedding Dance – You Can Just Feel the Energy

Speaking of Russians, this Youtube video gives us a glimpse into Russian life: <http://www.youtube.com/embed/KgoapkOo4vg?rel=0>. It has also garnered over 9 million hits on the Internet! **Can you create something in your community that would attract 9 million people? What if you only attracted 1 million hits?**

Visit Our Community and Economic Development Unit at:

<http://www.arcommunities.org/>

<http://www.facebook.com/UACommunityDevelopment>

How to Strategically Impact Your Community:

If you want to impact your community in a powerful way, forward this e-mail newsletter to other individuals in your community or organization, so they can benefit from the resources, insights, and strategies covered in Breakthrough News.

More About Breakthrough Solutions:

Recipient of the Outstanding Program Award and Innovative Program Award by the international Community Development Society, Breakthrough Solutions is a program of the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service, with partners in the public, private and non-profit sectors. For more information: www.vworks.org, vworks@uaex.edu, 501-671-2253.

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