Work is an increasingly important part of our lives. The average working American spends the majority of his or her waking hours on the job. Some of us live and breathe our work. Others of us work to pay our mortgages. Either way, the workplace has become an important source of social capital for millions of Americans — a center of meaning, membership, and mutual support. More than ever, we find our close friends and life partners on the job, we serve our communities through work-organized programs, and we use the office as a forum for democratic deliberation with people different from ourselves. Countless studies show that a workplace with strong social capital enhances workers’ lives and improves the employer’s bottom line.
At the same time, growing numbers of us feel that work, with its grueling hours and traffic-snarled commutes, is taking over our lives and depriving us of time with family, friends and community. Recently, nearly two-thirds of American employees said they wanted to work less than an average of two hours a day. If possible, the dual-power couple with kids and pets accounts for the growing decline of down-time, as home-maker, empty pagers, and cell phones have created the expectation that frazzled workers should be constantly on call.

The workplace plays a dual social capital role – nurturing it in some ways, draining it in others. Social capital simply cannot re-engage citizens civically without working through employers and job-based communities to ease the acute tensions between our personal, professional, and civic lives. To do so, however, will require a wholesale shift in the way we think about work.

As the new millennium dawns, we call on workers, employers, and policy makers to lead a mass social movement to change the outdated laws, norms, and assumptions that have allowed our work culture to exacerbate national and local pain. Two decades ago we began to recognize that our private lives affect our professional lives. Now we must recognize that the structure of modern work profoundly shapes our communities. People cannot compartmentalize their private, professional, and civic lives. The job-related decisions that employers and employees make have serious consequences for society as a whole. The norms and structures of professional life are a public issue.

Since the beginning of the century, America has moved from a single-minded focus on the needs of employers to a broader focus on the needs of employees and workers. We now need to think even more broadly. We need to focus on the needs and interdependence of employers, workers, and policy makers. We must recognize in fundamental ways that people are more important than the work they do.

Periodically throughout our history, we have had an employment crisis. Now, amid unparalleled prosperity, we have an employment crisis. Worker anxiety, stagnating wages, and diminishing perceptions of political inclusiveness are in part because the American workplace is undergoing radical changes of a magnitude not seen in more than a century. Proponents of work-based social capital strategies must figure out how to turn the new economy and the new way of work to advantageous ends.

Unlike churches, schools, and arts institutions, most employers are not inherently inclined to build communities because they see it as outside the scope of their objectives. Most employers focus on generating financial capital, not social capital. There is, however, a compelling “business case” to be made that employers would benefit by assuming a larger role in civil social capital helps employ the right people in the right way.

The Role of the Workplace in Building Social Capital

The workplace plays a central role in nurturing social capital and can do more. Places of employment – what could be called “work-based communities” – are composed of tens of millions of Americans who would have found their primary communities elsewhere fifty years ago. Today, nearly three-quarters of adult men and nearly six in ten adult women are employed at least part time. It is possible – and press accounts have documented the success of doing so – to make the workplace more family-friendly, to reduce the number of workdays lost, to create environments where the workplace helps to sustain family life.

Workplaces as communities. Because record numbers of Americans are employed, the workplace has become the forum where many people meet their closest friends. White-collar, pink-collar, and blue-collar workers alike put in long hours together, eat meals together, and sometimes travel on business trips together – creating fertile soil for friendships. Surveys in the 1980’s found that nearly half of employed Americans had at least one close friend from work. Nearly one in five said that at least half of their closest friends were co-workers. And nine out of ten people feel a part of a community at work and look forward to being with co-workers each day.

Thoughts have found that the workplace, more than neighborhood or even voluntary associations, provides the prime location where Americans discuss important issues, including politics.

The workplace is an especially important source of social capital in an increasingly fragmented and diverse society. As growing numbers of people lack the comfort of a nuclear family, a religious or ethnic or community, or even a tight-knit neighborhood, the job sheet has become a place to build stable, long-term relationships. One study even suggested that, for some Americans, the workplace serves as a sanctuary from the strains and stresses of marriage, child rearing, and household maintenance. In addition, workplaces are among the most integrated settings in our lives. They are more diverse than ever, on average, than our neighborhoods, houses of worship, and voluntary organizations. It is on the job that one is most likely to encounter, and work closely with, someone of a different race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, social class, political ideology, or heritage.

In short, American workplaces represent the richest forum for “bridging social capital” in which people connect across social divides. This is the form of social capital that is scarcest and perhaps most important as the nation expands and fragments.

Workplaces as Networks. Besides offering a place to build friendships, the workplace offers useful networks for life outside the office or factory walls. Recent surveys suggest that the workplace is an important but under-appreciated source of volunteer labor. Roughly one-fifth of Americans were recruited by a work colleague to give time to a good cause, and places of employment were second only to houses of worship as organizational sources of volunteers for non-profit groups.

A recent in-depth study of several hundred volunteer concluded that Americans, especially young adults, “increasingly find their volunteerism at the site of their work organizations and perform volunteer activities with co-workers outside of work.”

Workplaces as Communities. Workplace social capital is valuable both in its own right and as a potential reservoir for building community and promoting civic values elsewhere. Beyond serving as organizational networks, businesses often give back to their communities through formal philanthropic initiatives. Corporations donated $11 billion in 1999, or 6% of all charitable giving. “Equally important but harder to quantify are the countless hours that corporate executives, non-profit leaders, and small-business owners spend annualy serving on the boards of community organizations, spearheading fund-raising drives, and populating the commissions and task forces that do so much of America’s civic work. More than 90% of corporate executives surveyed recently said that they encouraged their employees to become involved in community service. Fully 50% of executives said they had made a specific contribution as part of their corporate mission statement, and 90% said volunteerism builds teamwork, improves morale, and attracts better employees.”

Over the past 20 years, American businesses have contributed in yet another way through “work-life” programs aimed at helping employees to take care of family and civic obligations. The programs – everything from flexible leave time to on-site child care and elder-care assistance programs – were created because corporations recognized that stressed-out employees are not productive employees. In a recent survey, two-thirds of employees said it was fairly easy to take time off from work when they needed to take care of a family or personal issue, and nearly half said they had some flexibility in their work schedule. In addition, most employees get direct help in meeting family needs: 20% said their employer provided information and referral for elder care; 20% said their employer offered a child care referral service; and 11% said they had access to day care at or near the place of work.
Changes in the Social Organization of Work

As the workplace has become an important community for growing numbers of Americans, the American economy and economic institutions have been undergoing revolutionary changes in scope and management roles. These changes are multifaceted, and their effects on our nation's stock of social capital have yet to be understood or assessed. The "new way of work" has the potential either to decimate or to revitalize norms and patterns of participation. Whether the result is positive or negative depends largely on how we as a society mitigate the problems and channel the opportunities that these structural and economic changes are creating. In short, we need to grapple with the fact that the choices we make in our work lives, and the choices imposed on us, have social (as well as personal) implications. The movement of women from voluntary community work to paid employment, the proliferation of free-lance jobs, the computerization of office workforces, and the lengthening commutes hastened by suburban sprawl -- these developments and others affect not only the individualinvolved but the larger social fabric as well.

Women in Paid Work

The most notable change in the American workplace over the past generation or two is demographic. Since 1970, roughly one-third of homemakers have moved from kitchens to offices, as millions of women discarded their mothers' lives of domestic labor and community volunteering in favor of a paid career outside the house. The movement of women into paid employment has dramatically affected both their lives and the patterns of family and community care.

For many of these women, work is a choice, from which they derive economic, psychological, and emotional rewards. Working women gain access to new and important stocks of social capital, especially professional networks and co-workers. However, for many women work is not a choice. Growing rates of divorce, single motherhood, and late marriage, to say nothing of rising living costs, have created economic demands on women that were far less pronounced a generation ago. Whether out of choice or necessity, joining the paid workforce places new strains on these women's time, and on extension of the families and community organizations that traditionally have relied on unpaid female labor. Entering the paid workforce has not kept women from serving civic organizations in roles such as scout leaders and Chamber of Commerce committee members. But the nation has not designed suitable remedies for the time bind that is squeezing waitress mom, corporate mom and soccer mom alike. And while men strive to pick up some of the slack -- taking kids to the doctor, attending PTA meetings, and so forth -- family needs still seem to exceed available time. The time crunch has been exacerbated by the aging of women's "loved ones."

In any given week, one in seven workers is caring for an elderly relative or friend. In fact, the Families and Work Institute reports that one in five American workers belongs to the "sandwich generation" -- simultaneously caring for children and elderly relatives.

The Service and Information Age

One hundred years ago, the economy was dominated by farmers, factory workers, and shop owners. Today, the fastest growing segments of the economy are in personal services and technology. In principle, these lines of work afford greater flexibility in terms of work hours and location than did the assembly line or office jobs of old, and that flexibility holds both advantages and disadvantages for building social capital.

In part because the nation is moving toward an economy based on services and information technology, our labor force is dramatically affected both their lives and the patterns of family and community care.

As the homogeneous corporate employment of old yields to a more flexible one, social capitalists must ensure that trust, camaraderie, and civic engagement do not suffer. Over both the short and long term, therefore, we must engage in a nationwide project of fundamentally rethinking the institutions that govern work so that they reinforce social capital in our families, our networks of friends, and our communities.

A Historical Precedent

We are mindful that cultural "clicks" do not happen overnight. It took decades for U.S. society and laws to catch up to the realities of the industrial revolution. Just as our Progressive Era forebears did, we first must identify the nature and consequences of the suburbanization, many civic and government leaders have begun seriously to explore innovative ways to replace sprawl with "smart growth," including everything from creating town centers in new communities to rehabilitating the housing stock in distressed older ones. As the homogeneous corporate employment of old yields to a more flexible one, social capitalists must ensure that trust, camaraderie, and civic engagement do not suffer. Over both the short and long term, therefore, we must engage in a nationwide project of fundamentally rethinking the institutions that govern work so that they reinforce social capital in our families, our networks of friends, and our communities.

Sprawl

The rising demand for "flex time" and "flex space" among workers is a partial consequence of the suburbanization and "suburbanization of the psyche" over the past three decades. Like so many of the everyday problems identified in this report, sprawl looks like a private struggle to find time to speed with family and neighbors actually reflects deliberate choices we've made as a society. For example, largely to make homeownership more affordable, we have chosen to pave highways and build spread-out housing developments far beyond the core cities, and in the process we have created a car-based culture that deprives us of quality time with our families and precariously points the sort of casual interaction that characterizes tight-knit urban neighborhoods. Each additional 10 minutes of commuting time cuts all forms of civic engagement (such as attending public meetings and volunteering) by 10%. As Americans have become led up with the unintended consequences of suburbanization, many civic and government leaders have begun seriously to explore innovative ways to replace sprawl with "smart growth," including everything from creating town centers in new communities to rehabilitating the housing stock in distressed older ones.

According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the movement of women from voluntary community work to paid employment, the proliferation of free-lance jobs, the computerization of office workforces, and the lengthening commutes hastened by suburban sprawl -- these developments and others affect not only the individualinvolved but the larger social fabric as well.

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In the business world, some cutting-edge companies subsidize volunteer time for individual workers and sponsor team-based service projects in the community. Other companies have focused on building social capital within the office walls—for example, by encouraging the physical layout to encourage social and work-related interaction and by eliminating “executive-only” areas that hinder the productive flow of information between layers of the corporate hierarchy. Many employers are also becoming friendly to flexible work arrangements, allowing employees to set their own hours and take “personal days” for family reasons. At least one quarter of Fortune 500 companies say they allow employees regularly to telecommute, or work from home.65

At the government level, policy makers have begun to introduce legislation that would ease the time bind on workers. The signature piece of legislation to date is the Family and Medical Leave Act, a 1993 law requiring large employers to let most workers take up to three months of unpaid leave to recover from health problems, to care for a new child, or to look after an immediate family member in need. Recently, the Clinton administration has moved federal labor regulations to allow states to provide up to 12 weeks of unpaid, non-health-related leave for workers in companies with 50 or more employees. Other proposals at the federal and state levels have included offering income-tax credits for people providing long-term care to aging or sick relatives; requiring that contingent workers receive pay and benefits commensurate with their contributions; and requiring employers to allow employees to take unpaid time off for children’s medical appointments, teacher conferences, and so forth.

Challenges to Work-Based Strategies for Building Social Capital

As the nation begins to invent new ways of living and working, considerable challenges remain between the lofty promises of workplace re-engagement and its realization.

The first challenge is to provide a compelling economic rationale to employees. Privately, many employers may be sympathetic to calls for increased social capital, even as they are understandably skeptical about whether such efforts serve the corporate bottom line. The business of business is business, after all. A few tantalizing studies from a variety of academic disciplines suggest that social capital building is a profitable endeavor. Studies have shown that businesses with an “open culture” are more innovative. For instance, the World Bank has found that high-performing employees are more likely to stay with a company that is “open.”

Finally, some of the most promising strategies to regenerate social capital in the workplace may face substantial political hurdles. Traditionally, and particularly in recent decades, the federal government has been reluctant to impose programs on business that are designed to achieve socially desirable ends. Small businesses and non-profit organizations, which together make up the vast majority of employers, would likely find government attempts to impose new rules or requirements on them too onerous to bear.

We call on all employers to commit themselves to building a more civic America. Although workplace attempts to rebuild social capital will need to consider employers’ economic interests, workplace transformations, and political limitations, these obstacles can and must be overcome. Building social capital is a means to the ends that both employers and employees value: trust and teamwork among co-workers, cooperative relations between workers and management, and a more efficient and productive labor force.

**Principles of Building Work-Based Social Capital**

Good workplace approaches to re-engaging Americans ought to be guided by several principles:

**Principle 1: Bridge Occupational Divides.** Programs to encourage deeper civic involvement should be designed by and for all levels of the hierarchy—top executives, mid-level managers, receptors and mailroom clerks, and part-time and contract workers. Ideally, projects should ensure that the well-paid and powerful work side by side with those struggling to ascend from the occupational bottom rung. It is a sad reality that the higher you go in many organizations, the less

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**NEW YORK, NEW YORK**

"One of the earliest groups that got me interested in doing this was called Web Girls," says Sara Horowitz, Executive Director of Working Today. "It was for women interested in technology. You would go to a loft in SoHo and there was just a bunch of chairs. You would get up and say your name to face and I can give information about tech and fork, and what I need is So and So." People would all sit there and take down your need and then they would get back to you. It was face-to-face and then it was online. Social capital, even though it’s a crucial piece of democracy, is not a product. It’s a by-product... of doing something. We sometimes say, ‘Oh, social capital, it would be so wonderful to build some,’ but really it’s ‘this insurance. And that’s an immediate thing that people can understand and you can build the social capital if you start from a place of need. What kinds of things would you like to come together on?’" Horowitz believes

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racing and gender integration you find. It follows that social capital building that crosses functional divides will bridge cultural divides, as well.

Principle 2: “Legitimate” Social Capital From the Top. Workplaces offer a splendid opportunity to create bridging social capital, but no effort to engage the firm or its employees can realize its full potential without the supporting apparatus of the top person. Organizations take on the values of their leaders. Top officials ought to provide both the financial resources to facilitate workplace engagement and the political capital to ensure that civic values become a true corporate goal. Top executives provide instant legitimacy to projects that are novel, risky, or otherwise do not conform to standard operating procedures.

Principle 3: Make Social Capital Pay. Employers, including those in the non-profit and government sectors, well understand the logic of the market. Market incentives motivate and channel action in the economic sphere. Likewise, incentive structures motivate and channel action in the civic sphere. Thus, firms and agencies should provide tangible, meaningful opportunities and rewards for employees, departments, divisions, and branch offices to become socially and civically engaged. Efforts to increase America’s stock of social capital should be actively encouraged, rather than greeted with apathy or suspicion. If employees make social capital pay, they will be rewarded with more engaged, more committed, healthier, and better networked employees.

Principle 4: Boost the Civic Potential of the “New Workforce.” As they make policy decisions, employers and legislators should ensure that the growing ranks of non-traditional employees are included as they provide a bridge to their professional and geographic communities. It is ultimately up to employers and policy makers to design norms and regulations that will effectively govern the new economy while not harming social relations.

Guided by these principles, we recommend that employers, employees, and government policy makers focus on making economic institutions the engines of civic renewal.

Recommendations for Building Social Capital Through Places of Employment

We have developed nine recommendations, falling into three broad categories. These categories are: building social capital within the workplace; helping employees to build social capital in their families and neighborhoods; and putting firms at the center of civic renewal. Our recommendations involve both voluntary measures and legislative measures. Some will be quite easy and non-controversial to implement; others will require a longer period of planning and building political support. Happily, many recommendations will be mutually reinforcing.

Recommendations for Building Social Capital Within the Workplace

Much as we like to complain about our jobs, most of us actually enjoy the social environment at work. Important social capital building is taking place every day at people’s jobs. The challenge is to find ways to expand the opportunities for forging meaningful and lasting connections, and to leverage that energy for civic ends. We ask employers to think of themselves not merely as administrators at places of economic enterprise, but also as managers in places of civic enterprise.

Recommendation 1: Create Workplace-Based Civic-Associations. Employers should encourage employees to form office-based chapters of national voluntary organizations, such as the Red Cross, the League of Women Voters, or the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Just as the United Way collects funds under the stewardship of workplace-based committees, so too might non-profit civic associations recruit members, hold meetings, and sponsor projects under the auspices of an employer or a geographic cluster of employers (such as high-technology zones). Many major voluntary associations have had trouble finding members in recent years because traditional recruitment networks have frayed and the sons and daughters of yesterday’s volunteers now spend much of their time at work. Allowing civic groups in the office door will help today’s harried workers to participate in their community through networks and physical spaces that are convenient for them. Using job-networks for civic organizing fortifies our “Recycling” principle.

Recommendation 2: Use the Workplace as a Civic Forum. Offices, factories, and other institutions almost inevitably have conference rooms and other large public spaces that go unused for part of the day. We urge firms to think creatively about how to use those spaces for civic events. For example, a company might introduce a Friday speakers’ series where community leaders discuss their social and political work or lead employee discussions of pressing community and national issues. During election season, candidates for public office might be invited, or a non-partisan bias, to speak to employees or to debate one another. Companies and agencies could let workers reserve rooms for meetings of civic organizations with which the worker is involved.

Recommendation 3: Turn Workplaces Into Sites of Civic Education. Recent research suggests that people are far more likely to take part in community work if they have civic skills—the ability to organize and run meetings, speak in front of large audiences, write persuasively, and so on forth.” Many professional people learn such skills in the course of their jobs, but such on the job learning should not be limited to managers. Just as companies now frequently sponsor health and exercise classes to improve employees’ physical fitness, so might firms sponsor courses to improve employees’ civic fitness. Such courses might cover everything from public speaking and letter writing to community organizing and event planning. To increase social capital within the workplace, employees willing to share these civic skills could teach co-workers, in keeping with our “C2C” principle. Furthering civic skill-building, more companies should switch to horizontal, team-based structures, which allow organization and leadership responsibilities to be distributed to more workers than was possible under old-fashioned hierarchical structures. Of course, developing speaking, writing, and organizing skills would benefit not only America’s civic infrastructure, but employees’ job-performance, as well.

Recommendations for Helping Employees to Build Social Capital in Their Families and Neighborhoods

Over the past generation, more and more employees have instituted policies and programs to help employees become better family members and better citizens. We applaud those enlightened employers that have understood the moral and business case for helping employees to manage their multiple obligations. We urge all employers to follow the lead of these companies. At the same time, given competitive pressures on employees and their lack of education about the value of such programs, we also believe that the necessary revolution in the social organization of work could be catalyzed by state and federal legislation.

Recommendation 4: Expand Leave Benefits for Parents. Companies should expand legal requirements to allow new parents to collect unemployment payments during unpaid parental leave. We urge all 50 states to pass the required law to turn that concept into a reality. We also recommend that the Family and Medical Leave law covering leaves of absence in family emergencies be expanded to cover certain classes of non-emergencies, such as taking one’s child to a routine medical or dental check-up. Of course, we also endorse state proposals, such as one that passed in Massachusetts in 1990, that achieve the same ends.

In addition, we back proposals popular with organized labor to provide flexibility to employees facing crises. For example, we recommend that state or federal legislation be introduced that would allow workers to reduce their work hours by a set amount over a period of months without losing benefits or seniority. We support creating “leave banks,” in which workers can donate their unused sick leave to fellow employees who have expended their own allotment of days off.

Recommendation 5: Give Time Off for Community Service. Several companies—including Timberland, Briggs, Hasbro, Brickell Pines, and Sony Music Entertainment—have instituted policies allowing employees days off with pay to volunteer in their communities. The Home Depot’s “Team Depot” initiative organizes employees around charities the company supports, providing community service, building parks, or offering other assistance. Many other companies have instituted volunteer leave as part of the “Employee Promote” campaign for kids. These initiatives are a terrific start, but they are only a start. We recommend legislation requiring employers to grant unpaid leave to employees who wish to serve their communities (say, up to 48 hours per year). We also endorse allowing employees who work overtime to convert their overtime pay into time off. We recommend that if an employee takes a personal, vacation, or “comp” day to serve the community, only a half-day should be deducted from the time ledger. And we urge companies to allow employees flexibility when they need to leave early to attend a PTA meeting, for example, or to arrive late because they are busy planning a community event. For example, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City provides 58 hours a year of employee “banked” time that can be used as desired for public purposes. In any given workplace, diverse teams should decide what sorts of civic work qualifies for such programs.

Recommendation 6: Institute a System of Individual/Unit Contracts. Flextime, whether for family or civic purposes, is only a first step—one that has not been fully incorporated into the everyday work culture. A recent study suggested that, while many companies formally allow flextime, most have not made the necessary structural and attitudinal adjustments to allow employees to take advantage of such programs without worry. Corporate leadership is vital in ensuring that these programs are designed to succeed. And so we urge chief executives to create a culture in which it is clear to all that they will be evaluated on the quality of their work, not simply on the regularity of their “face time,” while recognizing that some face time is integral to many jobs.

Ultimately, however, we would like the nation to move beyond the limited promise of flextime and to usher in a radically new way of organizing Americans’ work lives. Where feasible, each employee should be allowed to negotiate an individual work contract with his or her employer that would cover the number of hours of work expected per month, with the specific
work schedule left up to the employees to the extent possible; such employees would retain full benefits. Companies should make it as easy as possible for employees to work from home, except in cases where the employees’ work ties them to a physical plant or must be done in concert with others. We hope that such a flexible contracting becomes a cultural norm and that businesses explore new technology that can make this radically more flexible type of scheduling possible. Government might play a role in providing some venture funding for businesses to explore the development of such technologies.

These changes do not have to occur wholesale. Smaller victories toward this larger vision of radical flexibility work are important. For example, an early version of flexible contracting is already in place. In Philadelphia, a Teamsters local negotiated a contract in which some soft-drink company workers are allowed to compress their workweek so that they will till longer hours on fewer days. For example, some workers are allowed to work their traditional 40-hour week in three consecutive 13.5-hour days, with the other four days off. We hope that non-unionized workers and organized labor will be able to negotiate such contracts with employers with increasing ease.

Recommendation 7: Provide Incentives for Community Service. There are all sorts of creative ways that employers can reward good works by employees and encourage them to do more. In Oklahoma, for example, the family-owned First Bethany Bank and Trust N.A. ties its charitable budget to the number of hours that employees donate to non-church charitable causes. As the number of hours volunteered goes up, so does corporate giving. The bank also considers volunteer hours as a factor in employees’ merit raises. Such incentives should be extended and expanded by all good corporate citizens to their employees and communities. Good community citizenship could be made a factor in "employee of the month" determinations and in decisions about who serves on grant-making boards within companies. Employees who organize and coordinate office softball or other sports teams should receive something tangible for their efforts — a gift certificate to a bowling lane, on a charitable contribution in his or her name to a favorite cause. We applaud employers that rely behind the good works of employees. Such support not only enhances our stock of social capital, but it also enhances the sense of community spirit within the workplace.

Recommendations for Putting Firms at the Center of Community Building

Many businesses have long recognized the value of giving back to their communities as "good corporate citizens" or practicing "business social responsibility." We call on non-profit groups, government agencies, and large and small businesses to redouble their efforts to be good, active citizens of their communities in the following ways.

Recommendation 8: Put Social Capital Formation at the Center of Corporate Giving. Because companies give away billions of dollars a year, they have enormous leverage in urging grant recipients to build community ties as they provide community services. For nearly two decades, private philanthropies, notably the Ford Foundation, have successfully used their grants as leverage to get non-profit groups to recruit more racially diverse boards and staffs. We suggest a similar strategy for corporate grant makers by including as a criterion for support a grant recipient’s commitment to increasing community participation and strengthening relevant social networks. This recommendation flows from our "Social Capital" principle.

Recommendation 9: Forge Community-Building Partnerships with Other Sectors. Although there has been little systematic research on the extent to which such partnerships have succeeded or failed, we endorse such partnerships in principle, and we urge that the financial and human capital of businesses be focused on expanding opportunities for participation among people currently excluded from civic affairs. Bridging the social chasm between the well-to-do and the excluded should be a major goal of public-private partnerships. Business people and professionals in the private and public sectors can serve as "advisers and "vouchering agents" for nascent community organizations, allowing them access to networks and resources that would otherwise be out of reach. Numerous studies over the years have documented the critical importance of networks and connections — is it is, in fact, in — economy-wide growth and company success. Social and civic entrepreneurs who can’t connect will be severely handicapped as they try to reach their potential. Conscious efforts to reach these people redound to everyone’s benefit. Likewise, such partnerships benefit people of privilege by expanding their circle of relationships and allowing them to understand the community from different vantage points. These recommendations follow our "Bridging" principle.

Businesses have always had an important role in civic affairs. In many ways, the recommendations above represent merely a new twist on old ideas. But the experience of the late 1980s and early 1990s reminds us that we should not take corporate social responsibility as a given. Businesses that provide incentives and resources for community building should themselves be rewarded. Local chambers of commerce, civic organizations, grant-making foundations, and universities should create award programs for especially community-minded businesses and promote these businesses’ achievements. As they have already begun to do (for example, with Paul Newman’s line of food products), individual consumers should make a point of patronizing stores, restaurants, manufacturers and other concerns that are exceptional corporate citizens — even if that means paying a little extra for a cheeseburger or a bag of soup.

Concluding Thoughts

Strategies that build social capital "inside the workplace" will surely lead to fraternities "outside the workplace" and vice versa. Within each of these general approaches lies a great variety of potential ideas, concepts, projects, policies, programs, and initiatives that firms can pursue. We have suggested several among the many. Even as the range of social capital building opportunities is virtually limitless, some are likely to be more fruitful and realistic than others, given the economic and political constraints on different firms and agencies and the varying values and needs of different communities. How a firm might best engage itself and its employees, then, is ultimately a matter for internal deliberation and community consultation.
Czech president Vaclav Havel, a renowned playwright whose artistic voice became a resounding voice for democracy and civil society, has observed that the arts offer a unique means of connecting us to our common humanity. Whether visual, musical, dramatic, or literary, the arts allow us to “create together” and to discover shared understandings. The creation and presentation of art often inspires a raft of civicly valuable dispositions—trust, openness, honesty, cooperativeness, tolerance, and respect. From museums to open-air amphitheaters to dance studios, arts spaces are, at root, civic spaces. The arts are a superb means of building social capital.
It is tempting to see the arts as playgrounds to rebuild community. After all, art exists for its own sake — valuable for what it is as much as for what it does. In part because artistic expression abides by such a lofty ideal, leading cultural organizations sometimes have held themselves aloof from the communities in which they are located. As a recent National Endowment for the Arts report observed,

TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND

Liz Lerman Dance Exchange

Liz Lerman likes to talk about a Dance Exchange residency at the Portsmouth Shipyard in New Hampshire. One evening, six and some of the dance company members met with a group of Navy wives, and one of them described how she had kept her submariner husband up to date on her pregnancy. “Since a month,” she said, “I would measure my belly with a length of string and tie it to the tip of the string at the inside of his toe, and one day a baby of his came along hanging there and asked about them.” “That,” said her husband, “is my baby.” “The Dance Exchange took that idea, as well as some movements the woman had made when she was still in, and used them in a dance piece presented on the last performance of the season.”

Lerman, “I’ve been a welder on these ships for five years, but until I saw your dance about the baby and how the strings get longer and shorter, I never made a conscious connection between the people on the boats we build. Now I can.”

Lerman reflected on how the dancer’s response to this dance was in a long series of social capital connections. A man on a submarine had responded to his friend’s display of the strings; his wife related that to the dancers who performed it; and now a welder returned to his job with a new awareness of and connection to his work.

Lerman has been pondering the nature of connections and the meaning of community. “The company was in a nursing home in Portland, Oregon,” she says. “Our sponsor, with some funding from an HMO, had put six into fourteen nursing homes in one week. All of them, she said, had the same problem: Identities were disappearing. So we had a workshop where we get people to talk a little about their lives and then it is part of the performance that night. We get them to talk about a specialty, and then that specialty has spoken that night for the first time in seven years.”

“In enshrining art within the temples of culture – the museum, the concert hall, the proscenium stage – we may have lost touch with the spirit of art: its direct relevance to our lives, (and) we may have stressed the specialized, professional aspects of the arts at the expense of their more pervasive participatory nature. In the process, art becomes something that we watch other people do, usually highly skilled professionals, rather than something we do ourselves.”

But a growing body of research suggests that the arts can be a valuable engine of social mobility, both for individuals who enjoy them, and, increasingly, for more arts institutions are directing substantial resources to that cause. The arts can nurture social capital by strengthening friendships, by helping communities to understand and celebrate their heritage, and by providing a safe way to discuss and solve difficult social problems.

While we are spectators, performers, or producers, the arts provide a uniquely enjoyable way to build our stock of informal social capital. Two people who attend a Monet exhibit and later discuss the works over coffee have built social capital through a shared artistic experience. Doctors and lawyers and students and retirees who sing together in the community chorus, or perform in a local symphony production have built social capital through a shared artistic experience. The conductor who leads the town band and the choreographer who stages a dance performance have built social capital through a shared artistic experience. Social capital can be built among spectators, and performers, as well as across those groups.

Beyond the individual effects, the arts allow for public celebration and expression of the meaning of community, for public artists engage civic pride, thereby uniting us in our appreciation of what we have collectively produced. For example, some artists who organized the Vietnam Memorial on the Mall in Washington, D.C., is a graceful piece of art that captures Americans’ powerful and complex memories of the war and serves as a space for contemplation, connection, and dialogue. In inner-city Houston, an Episcopal priest, working in partnership with the city’s Museum of Fine Arts, helped poor kids paint a joyful mural next to a mass of gang graffiti – evoking commentary on the poignant mil of hope and hopelessness among neighborhood youths.

Participation in the arts also strengthens democratic institutions. A major study of Italian regional government found a startling strong relationship between the number of local choral societies and the effectiveness of government institutions. “The importance of that finding is that showing peer that community that together literally metaphorically better achieves the government they desire. In recent years, mounting evidence shows that arts programs improve the challenging work facing government agencies, whether it is keeping kids healthy and safe, preventing crime, or beautifying disheveled neighborhoods.”

Finally, and especially appropriate in these unsettling times, the arts “build braids to weave the sausage bread” for courses from the English Shakespeare William Congreve. Scholars who study the emotions have found that dancing, playing music, and engaging in other artistic activities bring more joy than do many other leisure activities. That joy in turn enhances our willingness to reach out and connect with others. At least one study has suggested that involvement in the arts, including as a spectator, can pruning your life.”

In sum, cultural endeavors offer social capital effects both direct and indirect, immediate and long lasting. The arts provide a powerful way to transcend the cultural and geographic boundaries that divide us and to find deeper spiritual connections with those like us. To see our prizing, the arts create both “bridging” and “bonding” social capital.

Traditionally, however, arts institutions have done far more bonding than bridging, and it is rare for the same artistic production to do both simultaneously. Like neighborhoods and churches, many arts and cultural institutions are unified but unnecessarily segregated by race, by socioeconomic class, and sometimes even by gender. This is in part because people naturally seek out those who are like them, and in part because the system of financing and presenting the arts traditionally has reinforced entrenched patterns of exclusion.

Fortunately, in recent years, the cultural world and its philanthropic supporters have begun to change. Many long-established arts institutions are taking steps to create more meaningful community connections and to broaden their reach. In Missouri for example, the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra transformed itself from an elite institution into one that offers music classes in impoverished areas and performs with inner-city church choirs. These “bridging” activities have strengthened both the Symphony and the surrounding community alike. As a 1996 study found that more than half of all major-city arts agencies were involved in activities related to AIDS, about the same fraction were involved in environmental protection, and a significant percentage were involved in crime prevention; roughly nine out of ten were involved in helping at-risk youths; and about the same percentage tried to raise cross-cultural awareness. “With help from philanthropic foundations, arts organizations are increasingly being found with an explicit aim to bridge inner-city groups. The arts have the potential to promote such bridging social capital precisely because they can provide a safe space to shore political and ideological differences, or at least manage those differences in ways that are constructive.”

Trends in Arts Participation

The arts contribute greatly to our stock of social capital, and America boasts more cultural organizations today than ever before. Americans participate in the arts in countless ways, formal and informal, public and private, collective and solitary.

On the formal side, the United States is home to some 21,750 non-profit arts, culture, and humanities organizations, according to federal government estimates. These officially recognized organizations hold an astonishing 85.8 billion in assets and spend
These organizations include small-town volunteer-led preservation societies, big-city art museums, and everything in between. And their numbers are growing faster than ever. These sit alongside the work that we do with adults who have lived with domestic violence. We've been here for those who need to talk to someone about what they faced and ask questions. We've been here for those who need to listen to stories, or merely to be heard. We've been here for people who want to share their stories.

In 1998, the Roadside Theater conducted a residency at HOPE House, located across the state line from HOPE House in Whitesburg, Kentucky. It is a nationally and internationally recognized theatre company more in its twentieth year.

John Smith-Biggs, Executive Director of HOPE House, says, “I wanted to do the project because I saw the potential for getting the message out about domestic violence, using the stories of the women who have lived through it, or not survived it. And I wanted to empower the women to help tell their stories in a safe atmosphere. But when we read the first draft of the script called Voices from the Battlefield – it didn’t sound significant. These were just the stories we hear every day. We didn’t realize what we had created. And then we heard the audiences’ reactions, and realized what we had created. And then we heard the audiences’ reactions, and realized what they meant. We were just the stories we hear every day. We didn’t realize what we had created. And then we heard the audiences’ reactions, and realized what they meant.”

Joey Smith-Biggs: “We saw that the play’s audience came to understand their story as a problem, and a complex one, and they looked at it with a greater empathy and understanding. In a story circle, we do after each performance of the play, you need to tell your story as well as listen to others. A story circle isn’t inciting science, you know. People listen to each other, they learn.”

Dudley Cocker, Roadside Theater’s Director, remembers in particular two comment from story circle participants after they saw Voices from the Battlefield.

A police officer said, “My father was very violent, and beat my mother regularly. I told my father and me when I was four years old. Now I tell that she that she would kill her. If she would take me, I would have hung me down. Either way, I would have hung her.”

A judge said, “We’ve often considered these women’s complaining trivial, didn’t take it seriously enough. It often starts, and it sustains. It has to be more careful weaving out the trivial from the substantial.”

According to Smith-Biggs, these were just the stories we hear every day. We didn’t realize what we had created. And then we heard the audiences’ reactions, and realized what they meant. We were just the stories we hear every day. We didn’t realize what we had created. And then we heard the audiences’ reactions, and realized what they meant.”
Convening The Community.

The institution and many of the people it wanted to reach had little stories they told themselves about each other.

“They don’t live far away, and admission is free. They must just prefer to watch TV.”

“We’re not welcome there, and theos who want to put on a show and try to go look at some paintings.”

“You think they’d encourage their kids to come.”

Children aren’t allowed in a place like that.”

“The exhibit is about their cultures, and we put ourselves over their community. Why aren’t they here?”

“They look down on you if you don’t have a college degree in art.”

“They won’t know, and [move] out to people they knew, and to…people of many different kinds have come to the Museum. We are seen in a different light in town. The Transit Agency asked our advice about how a new system should look. We gave them a tour of the Museum, but had never been there. Then, 9/11, the Museum began a three-year initiative, funded by the Lily Wallance-Reader’s Fund, called Connecting The Community. But how do you convince people you don’t know?”

“Went” was Nancy Mulvehill, the Museum’s Manager of Outreach and Community Development, “you must people and you get to know each other a little. We were interested in people from neighborhoods, not as codes; interested in individuals, not numbers. We wanted to talk to communities, not individuals. So I just started to talk to people, in lots of different neighborhoods and homes, I start with someone you know, and [move] on to people you know, and ‘people’—they knew, I went out and met more than one hundred people—librarians, ministers, political leaders, social service providers, neighborhood artists—and I’d ask them ‘tell me about your community, what kind of life do people seem to want, how do they see their tolerance tree’? We ended up with about 20 people who each [knew] their community as well as [had] some kind of authority and some kind of social or personal power. Then we asked him to be on a Community Advisory Council. This Council now informs almost everything we do. They help us design the labels for the art, they help us re-design the map and guide to the galleries. Without their pushing we would probably not have had Spanish-language labels and audio tours for the Diego Rivera exhibit. We began to see them as intelligent and sensitive collaborators, and began to see the Museum as another organization, like the church or the PTA, with goals, standards, obligations, and moral and legal commitments. In other words, we were much more part of each other’s ‘life understanding.’

“Everybody’s eyes have opened to what a museum can be. We make an informal video introduction to the Museum, hosted by the then Manager of the Cleveland Indians, Mike Hargrove (and, in the process, became a coached baseball fan). Our staff that meets visitors has become more open and understanding of how to treat people. Many more people of many different kinds have come to the Museum. We are seen in different light in town. The Transit Agency asked our advice about how a new light rail system might run our into our area. A local school asked us to help out with an after-school program. I overheard someone tell a friend that another cultural institution ‘only cares about the elite, but that Museum…”

We recognize that artists need never leave the studio or stage to contribute to society, and we do not wish to force artists to be social workers, teachers, community organizers, or public servants. However, we know that artists possess an invaluable repertoire of skills and sensibilities that can breathe life into tried programs. Artists’ touch could increase both the fun and the effectiveness of everything from English-as-a-second-language classes, to health-and-healing programs for hospital patients, to economic-development projects in depressed areas.

Recommendaition 2: Create Opportunities for Collaboration Between Arts Organizations.

We call on cultural institutions and unincorporated groups of artists to find innovative ways to support the community-building work of other organizations. For example, members of quilting bees often stitch for local charities and organizations. In San Francisco, a quilting bee that meets for free at a police station repair the hospitality by stitching quilts to be carried in squad cars and used to comfort traumatized children. Such efforts connect quilters to their communities, imbue their product with deeper meaning, and allow art to better the human condition.

Concluding Thoughts.

In an exploration of how arts projects can animate democracy, Americans for the Arts observed that art is a “powerful force for illuminating civic experience” through its ability “to create indelible images, to express difficult ideas through metaphor, and to communicate beyond the limits of language.” “We agree. Sadly, in an age of 500-channel television and individualized entertainment, America has begun to forget the civic value of community arts. Our forebears knew how viewing together and performing together strengthened social bonds. Americans for the Arts need to connect itself to creating new and exciting opportunities for shared cultural experiences — opportunities compelling enough to lure us away from ‘Who Wants to Be A Millionaire?’ We need to find the modern-day equivalent of the opera house or the dance hall: an entertainment venue that doubles as a community space. Cultural institutions are eager to re-invent themselves, and all of us need to join them in finding new and innovative roles for the arts to play in building social capital.

Recommendaition 4: Incorporate the Arts Into Social Problem Solving.

The arts are intrinsically worthwhile, but they also have instrumental uses. We call on government and non-profit leaders to find creative ways to tap artists as partners in educational, social, and faith-based programs. We believe that programs to lift people up must raise their spirits and spark their imagination. The power of the arts to do so is clearly evident. Witness the runaway success of the Jesse White Tumblers, a Chicago acrobatics group that recruits youths from the city’s toughest housing projects and provides them with a positive alternative to gangs — or witness the Arts-in-Corrections program, which uses writing and music among inmates to lessen the social isolation within jails, and also reduces recidivism when the inmates get out. Recently, the President’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities profiled more than 200 extracurricular cultural programs — from a Cambodian dance troupe in Massachusetts to a poetry league in Washington, D.C. — that are improving the lives and skills of at-risk kids in neighborhoods all over the country (see www.communityarts.org).

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Africa-American quilt-making, traditional pottery and basket-making, and a Museum of Southern Cultures, and "a community area where folks can "All these projects," continues Kimbrel, "came out of — and continue to building rents space to the Board of Education and sponsors adult community college. A third building is for the Arts Council's Youth Program two black cast members of Swamp Gravy "with the goal of keeping kids building on the square in the center of town, contains four low-income apartments and a crafts, folk art, and antique mall. In development is a fifth building, dubbed the New Life Learning Center, which is "designed as a training center for people on public assistance. We have programs in African-American quilt-making, traditional pottery and basket-making, and hospitality — skills such as waiting, hosting, cleaning, and reception. Tourism in Georgia's number two industry, and besides, the Arts Council also owns a big bed and breakfast in town.

"All these projects," continues Kimbrel, "come out of — and continue to be nourished by — our coming together as a community to make Swamp Gravy. We have all these things as part of our mission. We're in the richest Congressional district in the US; our poverty is obscene. As an organization, we are a little old. Other arts councils sometimes look a little distorted when we describe our activities,And the other side, I have to say, I was a drop-out from the Georgia Economic Development Community Center. They gave me a kind of a job there, but I didn't have much of an escape route, and it's too narrow for a cruiser to get through. Help us so that alley.

"Well," says Staszczynski, "we cut through the red-tape of the fifty-one companies involved in the closing of an alley. Neighbors and civic groups and businesses donated labor, sod, seed, fencing, lights, benches, and plants, and it's now sealed at the ends and functions as a safe and pleasant neighborhood park.

In addition, Shepherd Community Church received a city park maintenance contract after being employed to chronically unemployed local residents. Says Reverend Height, "we can offer employment and competitive wages and on-the-job training for most of the year, and we can provide shelter for the workers when they need it. Also, due to our city contract, we get a contract from a local bank to help maintain its branches. We hire neighborhood young people to do the work, and — profit from the contract is intended to support our children's programming."

Contact: 912-223-7095

INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

The Front Porch Alliance

"We don't go into a neighborhood unless we're invited," says Bill Staszczynski, former Policy Director for Community Renewal in the Office of the Mayor. "Then they tell us what they need, and we help them get it." The PFAs attempt to address social problems from the "inside out" instead of from the top down. While it makes small grants for programs and projects, it acts primarily as a " civic switchboard" — an agent to facilitate connections and remove hurdles, so that neighborhoods can more easily solve their own problems. "What works," says Staszczynski, that "Government meets many people who normally never meet each other. So this job is to introduce people, to act as a catalyst for social capital, to get people talking and working together, and to encourage their continued relationship. Programs are much more sustainable when they depend on involved local people rather than an infusion of outside money. Cooperation, neighborhood, and shared values are what make programs work."

The PFA set up a Community Outreach Team to hold a continuing series of local roundtables that focused on local issues. It's new programs were created, but over a thousand partnerships have been formed with more than 400 religious and community organizations. Several years ago, the PFA Outreach Team and the inner city Shepherd Community Church held a series of meetings. The church's Development Director, Reverend Jay Height, told the PFA that what the Church Center most needed from the government was help in organizing the daily storm-front services in the church's immediate neighborhood. PFA staff agreed to partner with the church and offer them space to become a neighborhood coalition. Eight of the forty further agreed to contribute a monthly amount of money to maintain an office.

At the official announcement celebration of the partnership, says Staszczynski, "we asked what else we could do to help. What were the priorities of the new organization? They pointed to a group of people across the street and said 'those guys? They should work there. Nobody can really catch them. If the police come, the dealers run down that alley; it branches off into several escape routes, and it's too narrow for a cruiser to get through. Help us so that alley.

Well," says Staszczynski, "we cut through the red-tape of the fifty-one companies involved in the closing of an alley. Neighbors and civic groups and businesses donated labor, sod, seed, fencing, lights, benches, and plants, and it's now sealed at the ends and functions as a safe and pleasant neighborhood park.

In addition, Shepherd Community Church received a city park maintenance contract after being employed to chronically unemployed local residents. Says Reverend Height, "we can offer employment and competitive wages and on-the-job training for most of the year, and we can provide shelter for the workers when they need it. Also, due to our city contract, we get a contract from a local bank to help maintain its branches. We hire neighborhood young people to do the work, and — profit from the contract is intended to support our children's programming."

Contact: 317-810-5724

* We are indebted to the Lilly Foundation — Reader's Digest Fund for enabling us to consider the relation between the arts and social capital.

1 See among other writings, "Post Modernism: The Search for Universal Laws" by Vaclav Havel, a speech delivered on the occasion of the Liberty Medal on December 7, 1993.
2 Data from the National Center for Charitable Statistics, Washington, D.C. Based on charity registration data supplied by the Internal Revenue Service.
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4 Data from the National Center for Charitable Statistics, Washington, D.C. Based on charity registration data supplied by the Internal Revenue Service.
5 Data from Jason Edward Kaufman, "Introduction to the arts and social capital in America." (Cambridge, Mass.: The Saguaro Seminar, 1999), p. 3.
16 Data from Jason Edward Kaufman, "Introduction to the arts and social capital in America." (Cambridge, Mass.: The Saguaro Seminar, 1999), p. 16.
The United States of America, the world’s oldest and most esteemed democracy, is experiencing serious and pervasive problems in its politics and government. For the last half-century, Americans have become more disgusted with elected officials, less trusting of political institutions, and increasingly indifferent toward democratic participation. This disaffection is particularly surprising given that the economy is booming, educational levels are high and rising, and the nation has enjoyed nearly uninterrupted peace for more than a quarter century.

Despite the harmony and prosperity, levels of civic engagement and trust in government are at post-War lows. Voting, attending public meetings, writing letters to the editor, contacting elected representatives, paying attention to current affairs, working on campaigns, going to protests or rallies — all of these activities, upon which successful democracy depends, have dropped precipitously over the past two generations. Large numbers of citizens believe that politicians lie and pander to suit their own ambitions, that rich “special interests” get their way at the expense of everyday working families, that partisan elected officials refuse to work together or lead on important matters, and that government is too big and remote to solve problems. Meanwhile, serious discussion of the big issues — race relations, the gap between the rich and poor, the health-insurance crisis, even declining civic participation itself — seems to have gotten lost in the cacophony of partisan sniping and interest-group alarmism.
A neighborhood, called Wallingford, in Seattle, Washington, said Ms. Chris MacKenzie, "we use e-mail a lot, makes them both feel more safe. Now the feelings are warmer."

"In 2000, to the shock of political pundits, nearly 20 million voters supported the third-party candidate of the iconoclastic Texas billionaire Ross Perot after he used television infomercials with his now-famous graphs and charts to call attention to issues, such as the then-stagnating budget deficit. But the major party candidates were weaping of the edge."

"In 1988, a no-nonsense former professional wrestler named Jesse Ventura stunned the political world by capturing the Minnesota governorship, the highest office ever won by a non-traditional candidate. With his charisma and his raw-nerve populist appeal -- and of his television ads had a Jesse Ventura action figure selling "Special Interest Man" -- the presidential race managed to excite young people and new-voter, who gave him the margin of victory over two requested major party candidates."

And yet, for all their distance and disenchantment, Americans are not ready to walk away from their neighborhoods. They are nearly unanimously in believing that democracy is the best form of government, even if it does need a tune-up at the hands of a good civic mechanic. And recent experience shows that Americans eagerly respond to straight-talking, energetic, non-conventional leaders with new ideas for making democracy work again. For example:

- In 2000, to the shock of political pundits, nearly 20 million voters supported the third-party candidate of the iconoclastic Texas billionaire Ross Perot after he used television infomercials with his now-famous graphs and charts to call attention to issues, such as the then-stagnating budget deficit. But the major party candidates were weaping of the edge."

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As reform-minded leaders have noted, we cannot fix America's problems unless we change the way politicians and government govern. There is a nice balance between the "input" (politics) side and the "output" (government) side for increasing civic engagement and social capital. There is much work to be done.
proportion. In sum, out of every 100 voters who voted in the polls in 1960, only 75 do so today. The decline is especially puzzling given that, since the 1960s, barriers to voting have been raised and factors associated with higher voting rates, such as college education and wealth, have become more widespread. Some political theorists claim that increasing the quantity of political expression, whether voting or speaking out, would not aid our democracy. Their argument dates to Aristotle’s time, when governance was considered the wise and virtuous people. While we agree that knowledge and other forms of political communication is a problem precisely because it leads to confusion over what the powers, at times can threaten social capital. The 1950s “slum clearing” projects are a regrettable memorial to the damage of political expression, whether voting or speaking out, would not aid our democracy. Their argument dates to Aristotle’s time, when governance was considered the wise and virtuous people. While we agree that knowledge and other forms of political communication is a problem precisely because it leads to confusion over what the powers, at times can threaten social capital. The 1950s “slum clearing” projects are a regrettable memorial to the damage of
...officials are crooked" increased from about 25% in the late 1960s to about 45% in the mid-1990s. The phenomenon is age-sensitive: trust in government is highest among people under 30, and lowest among people over 60.

MINNESOTA, MINNESOTA

The Neighborhood Revitalization Project

Not only are some neighborhood leaders now toned down, but the neighborhood has also become a more vibrant place. The sense of community has increased, and people are more likely to interact with each other.

The Neighborhood Revitalization Project began in 1987, when Minneapolis neighborhoods were in crisis. The Mayor and City Council said: "Maybe people don't care enough. Let's find a way to make people care." The goal was to develop an arts center and to bring together people from different backgrounds.

The neighborhood was in decline, with many residents feeling isolated and disconnected from their community. The arts center was seen as a way to bring people together and to provide a sense of hope and renewal.

The project was a huge success, with the arts center becoming a hub for community events and cultural activities. The center became a place where people from all walks of life could come together and feel a sense of belonging.

The Neighborhood Revitalization Project was a great example of how arts and culture can be used to revitalize neighborhoods. It showed that by working together, people can overcome their differences and build a stronger community.
and national organizations, once prevalent in the United States, that unite people across class and identity in coalitions of democratic deliberation and civic activity. Such organizations include state and local arms of the major political parties, federated voluntary associations such as the PTA and the Lions Clubs governing council, and even temporary structures such as community meetings and civic forums.

In recent years, there is some evidence that the local political parties have begun reviving the grassroots efforts of old. We must take care to provide continuing incentives to bolster the local work in the field. And we must find ways to tip the balance from capital-intensive “air war” strategies that dominate our national politics and toward the volunteer-reliant grassroots strategies that characterize election activity in early primary states such as New Hampshire.

We further endorse using public policy, whether tinkering with the tax code or changing the lobbying rules, to encourage the revival of cross-class federated voluntary organizations, which represent the moderate middle Americans who have lately been AWOL from American political activity. These organizations represent an important forum for furthering our “Bringing” principles.

Finally, we wholeheartedly support the efforts of cities such as Portland, Oregon, and St. Paul, Minnesota, to create neighborhood councils with real decision-making power. Government officials have long seen political points by creating advisory groups and espousing neighborhood input, but too often these efforts have amounted to little more than half-hearted political gestures. These local governments have made good-faith efforts to use real control over zoning changes, planning decisions, and financial resources, and where local governments provide neighborhood councils with real control, the results have been impressive. According to an important study by political scientists Jeffrey M. Berry, Kent E. Portney, and Ken Thomann, citizen participation in such neighborhood councils had a soft of good results. It enhanced the participants’ sense of community, knowledge of local affairs, and tolerance toward difference; brought important issues to the fore; and reduced power imbalances that had worked to the detriment of everyday citizens. Such neighborhood councils also provide forums for training leaders who otherwise would never have realized their potential for civic contributions.

Grassroots involvement can work on a national scale, as well. In Canada during the 1970s, Minister of Health Marjorie Benn secured massive health insurance reform even though the debate was just as polarized as it has been recently in the United States. Benn believed that Canadian citizens would favor health care reform if they understood the proposals and the stakes. She also knew that, without broad public deliberation, special interests—insurance companies, doctors’ associations, etc.—would hijack the debate. Benn secured public funds to rent halls for public meetings, hire facilitators, and notify the public about the events. The press and Parliament immediately heard from the grassroots. From the perspective of broadening civic engagement, the United States could learn by following Canada’s example, regardless of what substantive policy proposals emerged from the citizen deliberations. Suppose, for example, we sought solutions to the Social Security dilemma through broad-based, carefully prepared public deliberation, rather than merely “fluffy” commissions of professional politicians.

A revival of mediational institutions, whether at the local, state, or national level, will mitigate the deleterious and alienating effects of modern, technology-based politicizing. They also have the potential to improve the functioning of government itself. But this will only happen if government officials dare to share their power and everyday citizens dare to care about their own civic obligations.

Recommendation 2: Reform Political Campaigns to Encourage Broader Participation. Polling, advertising, focus groups, direct mail—all of these methods of political communication are here to stay, as are the legions of professional campaign generals who deploy them. We therefore urge civic-minded politicians, and perhaps private donors, to turn these campaign practices to good use. Instead of exploiting voter psychology to keep people from participating, campaigns must dare to find methods and messages that excite people about democratic engagement.Visionary campaigners from John F. Kennedy to John McCain have shown that there is no degree to dormant voter minds: there are only incentives.

Just as modern campaign technology is a permanent feature of politics, so too is money. Campaigns and political parties cannot function without the bucks to pay the bills. Clearly, however, financial capital is playing far too great a role, and social capital far too small a role, in determining who gets heard. Most Americans believe that only the wealthy interests count, and that money has increasingly corrupted and warped political making. We therefore endorse efforts, such as those being launched by the National Voting Rights Institute and Public Campaign, to limit the role of money in politics. For example, we support constitutional challenges to the “wealthy primary,” the system by which only those with access to big money are able to prevail in primary elections, and the ballot proposals in Maine and Vermont, that provide public funds to state candidates who reject special-interest money and agree to campaign spending limits. At the national level, we advocate expanding the current public financing system, which only covers Presidential candidates, to Congress for

as well. Finally, we applaud the local legislatures that have allowed unlimited “soft money” donations to political parties. We recommend that contributions to parties—both the source of the funds and the amount—be limited just as the law already limits contributions to candidates.

While not every one of us would give the same enthusiastic support to every one of these initiatives, collectively we believe that these recommendations will increase participation for three reasons. First, by reducing the influence of wealthy interests, Americans might again believe that participation is worth their while and decide to get involved as campaign volunteers and letter writers and voters. Second, by making it harder for parties to rely on a relatively small cache of wealthy donors, these reforms will force parties to reconnect with everyday citizens by soliciting small donations. Third, by making television advertising and other costly technologies harder to afford, these reforms would, ideally, provide incentives for the parties to revile good, old-fashioned, inexpensive shoe-leather organizing.

Recommendation 3: Offer Civil Society Support Without Coercion. We endorse a broad range of efforts, many already in place, that use the comparative advantages of government to strengthen voluntary institutions. Such efforts include government agency liaisons to voluntary groups; Mayor’s, Governor’s and President’s awards for community-building initiatives; and Internet access to government information and decision-making bodies. We also urge that government agencies and non-profit organizations seek innovative ways to develop “civic spaces” where deliberation can occur. This might mean opening school cafeterias after hours to accommodate community meetings or building parks where dog walkers can congregate during their pets exercise. Although some liberals have criticized such inexpensive government programs as mere window dressing, we believe that “little things” can map large rebates. We believe that government can play a key role, at little cost, both in facilitating local engagement and in enlarging its scope and psychic rewards.

Recommendation 4: Broaden the Role of Citizens in Restructuring Government. Most political debate involves around questions of government spending and regulations. Should the government provide more money for K-12 education? Should prescription drugs for seniors be available for Medicare? But this question fails to ask fundamental questions: How should government be structured (i.e., highly centralized, or highly decentralized), what responsibilities of different levels of government should be, and what processes should govern political decision-making.

Because these questions receive inadequate attention, we endorse formal and regular re-evaluations of local, state, and national government structures along the lines of the charter-review commissions recently empowered to rethink the governing structures of the City and County of Los Angeles.

As happened in Los Angeles, such reviews should tackle a fundamental question: Which level of government should fulfill which functions? While some programs can be effectively provided only by the national government, as components of community well-being, we are concerned about the concentration of power in larger and larger entities. When policy decisions and delivery take place on a plane far above local capacities, then ordinary people tune out, figuring they can’t make a difference. From the viewpoint of increasing social capital, smaller is better than large, and local is better than national. To the extent possible given the imperatives of equal treatment and program effectiveness, governmental decision-making authority should be pushed downward so that citizens believe they can have an influence over the policies that affect their lives.

Recommendation 5: Root in Suburban Sprawl. Increasingly, government and civic leaders are recognizing that the pace and design of new construction poses a threat to the quality of community life. Therefore, more state governments should follow the lead of Maryland and Georgia by designing comprehensive “smart growth” strategies. And more local governments should follow the lead of Memphis and surrounding Shelby County, Tennessee, to enact regional planning principles and procedures. These and other pioneering development strategies are wide ranging, but most have several features in common: restoring existing buildings rather than constructing new ones ever farther away; coordinating zoning and development decisions across city and county boundaries; and reducing traffic flows and commuting times. As the Partnership for Comprehensive Community has observed, “achieving a regional identity depends upon the combined efforts of these once-disparate sectors of society: business, the government, and nonprofits.” Although the “new regionalism” requires collaboration, only government has the authority to steer development in such a way that encourages positive interactions among neighborhoods and stronger neighborhood cohesion.

Recommendation 6: Develop Participatory Citizens. Government agencies and elected officials can create the background conditions that allow everyday citizens to take part in community affairs. Readily accessible childcare, mandatory civics courses in public schools, and government internship programs make civic participation easier and more habit-forming. Consistent with our “Bringing” principles, non-political community activities, required by non-political community activities, have been shown to create greater political awareness, and perhaps even to spur political participation in many young people. We believe it is time for political leaders to stop fearing the broadening of political participation and start encouraging it.
Recommendation 7: Enact a “Cyber Morrill Act” to create a market for community-friendly cyber-innovations. Just as government played an important role in encouraging public innovation during the Industrial Revolution, so too in today’s Information Revolution public policy needs to supplement private commercial demand for technological innovation. In 1862 and 1890 Congress passed the Morrill Acts, giving the states millions of acres of federal frontier land and other federal grants, the proceeds of which were used to create institutions of higher education. Modern state agricultural and engineering schools were established under the Morrill Acts. These so-called “land grant colleges” represented one of the most productive investments in American economic history; for they rapidly expanded both educational opportunities and locally relevant applied industrial and agricultural research and development. We propose a modern-day “Cyber Morrill Act,” under which the federal government would auction off the analog broadcast spectrum (which commercial television stations are abandoning for the digital spectrum) and use the proceeds to foster community-friendly cyber-innovations.16 Rather than direct government subsidies for R & D, we propose that these funds be distributed to local governments and civic associations for the purchase of innovative information technology. In effect, these funds would create a market for community-friendly cyber-innovations, thus providing a market-based incentive to lure innovative researchers and information technology firms into this area.

Recommendation 8: Learn from Our Mistakes. In keeping with the “Hippocratic” and “Social Capital” Impact principles, we urge government agencies, elected officials, non-profit groups, and other public institutions to study their past activities and programs to assess how they helped or hurt community social capital. In addition, we urge government and non-profit leaders to put pending decisions under the social capital lens. Such analysis should attempt to understand the creation and destruction of social capital.

Concluding Thoughts
In making our recommendations, we are cognizant of the fact that not all of them will be easy to implement successfully. Policy recommendations always have hidden costs and unanticipated consequences. Therefore, the goal becomes to craft recommendations whose benefits outweigh the costs and to anticipate as best as is humanly possible the perverse effects that might flow from well-meaning reforms.

It is an especially fruitful time for political and governmental reforms, but it is a challenging time, as well. The major challenge facing reformers stems from the lightning-fast evolution of communications technology. The Internet, a seductively curious bill that Clinton was elected President, has become in less than a decade a powerful resource for conveying information about politics and government, and, perhaps, for delivering and debating public issues. Already, fascinating cyber-experiments are exploiting the potential of computer-mediated politics. Although their long-term impact is by no means clear, these experiments deserve broad public support.

For example, we endorse initiatives such as Grassroots.com (www.grassroots.com), which provides information about issues, including schedules of events, links to interest groups, and position statements by candidates and elected officials. We also support the League of Women Voters’ “Democrator” (www.democrator.com), which provides state-by-state information about elections, dates, and voter registration. Democracy.com’s “issues database” empowers citizens to raise important issues for debate, and pressure candidates to post in-depth policy statements. We hope that new state will follow California and Minnesota, which have pioneered the use of Web sites to convey information about state and local politics and issues. For example, the California Voter Foundation publishes an online voter guide to state candidate races and provides behind-the-scenes information on the sponsorship and financing of of state ballot propositions. In 2000 the foundation’s Web site even broadcast “The Proposition Song,” a whimsical summary of the state’s 20 ballot initiatives and referenda (www.calvoter.org).

The Minnesota Electronic Democracy Project (www.e-democracy.org) provides links to candidate Web sites, runs online “issues forums” in which citizens can discuss policy concerns, and sponsors online debates in which candidates for major offices respond to questions, with the answers posted on the Internet and emailed to interested citizens.

While these experiments have almost certainly made it easier to find information about issues and politics, the Internet is by no means a panacea. Like any other innovation, it may exacerbate existing problems or create new ones. We must be aware of this potential and try to blunt any negative effects. For example, we are concerned that democracy by modem may deepen problems such as the disproportionate representation of the “haves” among the participating public (at least until the “digital divide” has been bridged), the loss of real deliberation and persuasion, and the tendency of like-minded people to talk exclusively among themselves. At least until these problems are mitigated, the Internet should be considered a complement, not a substitute, for direct face-to-face political communication.

Americans are ready for top-to-bottom reform of their democracy. They want government can influence and elected officials who respect them. Citizens are looking for visionary leaders who will inspire the many, not pandering to the few. Fixing democracy will require that we create new, meaningful opportunities for participation and that we give citizens reason to believe, once again, that their participation counts.
Houses of worship build and sustain more social capital – and social capital of more varied forms – than any other type of institution in America. Churches, synagogues, mosques, and other houses of worship provide a vibrant institutional base for civic good works and a training ground for civic entrepreneurs. Roughly speaking, nearly half of America’s stock of social capital is religious or religiously affiliated, whether measured by association memberships, philanthropy, or volunteering. Houses of worship run a variety of programs for members, from self-help groups to job training courses to singles’ clubs. Houses of worship also spend $15- to $20-billion each year on social services, such as food and housing for the poor and elderly. Regular religious services attenders meet many more people weekly than do non-worshippers, making religious institutions a prime forum for informal social capital building.

At the same time, religious faith provides a moral foundation for civic regeneration. Faith gives meaning to community service and good will, forging a spiritual connection between individual impulses and great public issues. That is, religion helps people to internalize an orientation to the public good. Because faith has such power to transform lives, faith-based programs can enjoy success where secular programs have failed.*
In this chapter, we have two overarching messages. If religious institutions, we urge radicalization to the project of reaching across congregations, denominations, and religions to promote a larger sense of community—that is, to rebuilding our stock of social capital. It houses of worship explicitly emphasize social capital as much as they do spirituality, they will further both missions. To secular leaders, we urge you to suspend suspicion of faith-based organizations and to think creatively about apps to work with religious leaders and other people of faith in projects of civic renewal. We know from our own heated discussions that grappling with the role of religion in public life is not easy. But these discussions need to take place, and each of us—whether religious or not—needs to reexamine how faith organizations do and can create a more civil, social-capital-rich community.

Trends in Religious Social Capital

America has long been recognized for the breadth and depth of its religious tradition. The vast majority of us believe in God, and 30-40% of us report attending religious services weekly. This is large in part because America, which lacks a state religion, has provided fertile ground for the blossoming of a great many new faiths and communities of existing ones. One scholar notes that America is “the most religiously found country” in the world.

However, at the turn of the millennium, the Americas find itself at a spiritual crossroads. Participation in formal religious activities and organizations has been on the decline for nearly 40 years. Since peaking in the 1970s, the number of Americans attending religious services weekly has declined by roughly 25 percent. Most of the decline occurred in the 1960s and early 1970s, and it may have reflected a “market correction” after an unusual post-War religious boom. But it is important to note that, even after any purported correction, religious attendance continued in a slow slide throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, with at least 10 percentage points of the roughly 25-point decline in religious attendance occurring during those decades. Recent church evolutions have begun to gain members, but these gains do not compensate for the overall decline in church membership. Nielsen estimated that total church attendance in mid-1980s was 100 million dollars in 1969. The Cultural Ascendance of Faith

In politics, the Christian Coalition enjoyed enormous success in setting the agenda for local and national Republican party committees in the 1980s and early 1990s. The 2000 Presidential and Vice Presidential candidates spent days fielding questions about how their personal religious faiths can reduce tensions, but also increase them. This challenge is to find ways for religious leaders and institutions to fit safely and comfortably into a society made up of a virtual alphabet soup of traditions, from Atheists, Baptists, and Catholics, all the way toUnitarians, Unitarins, and Zen Buddhists.

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

As a leader in the Boston faith community, we have seen the beginning of a relationship. IfFrank and George knew each other’s stories, and Kenney’s story as well, they share for the beginning of an organization.

“One on one, people have to tell each other their stories,” says organizer Julia Greene, of the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO), “If you actually help each other find other things, you are people. You start to be willing to work together because you have shared personal histories that you recognize.”

Greene recalls one “Fish Bowl” conversation in a church parish hall in the city of Dorchester of an older Irish-American woman who had lived in Dorchester her whole life. The other was a young, South African woman who had come here as a teenager, then gotten married and stayed in the community.

“I like it here,” the man says, “I want to raise my family here.”

“I’m glad you’re here,” the woman says. And then she adds, “I really like this neighborhood. I don’t have to travel. I just walk everywhere.”

“When the conversation was over,” continues Greene, “I realized of the other people, when asked what she learned, said, ‘I’ve come to the conclusion that God lives here, because God has helped me to be here.”

According to recent research, between 1985 and 1995, only 24 percent of all adults participated in religious services at least once a month. In a move that would have been unheard-of even a decade before, CBS launched “Touched by an Angel,” a prime-time drama that revolves around the love of God and the redeeming power of his messages. The program ranks consistently high in Nielsen ratings, and its viewers seem to be unusually community-minded.

Mortgaging, religion and “values” weigh heavily on the minds of the American public. In the late 1980s, there was a strong, steady, and unprecedented rise among Americans who cited the “breakdown of family values” or “decline in morality as the nation’s most pressing problem. In virtually every poll, more people cited religious values as a top problem than cited drug abuse, the health care system, broken schools, or poverty.”

All the suggests that, as formal religious participation declines, Americans seem to be searching for a way to heal spiritual rifts within themselves and within their community. Many houses of worship hope to respond to this spiritual yearning by sponsoring innovative programs to attract the relatively unchurched post-Boomer generations and to lure middle-aged and older lapsed Americans back into the fold. The new “megachurches,” which blend spirituality, entertainment, and services for thousands of parishioners, and use corporate strategies to find these new “customers,” are a phenomenon of such magnitude.

As Americans and their religious institutions seek to reconcile after decades of growing alienation, the time is ripe to translate this increasing interest in spirituality into complementary work for community renewal.

Principles of Building Faith-Based Social Capital

Any effort to realize the potential of religious contributions to civic life must be guided by both principles and pragmatism. As pragmatists, we recognize that religion is both important and contentious in America. A nation founded by pilgrims seeking to escape religious tyrany, the United States has a constitutionally enshrined separation between church and state. After the rights-based social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, and amid the growing ethnic and religious diversity that continues today, many Americans have come to believe that freedoms of religion and speech are crucial to our future as a nation. There is no evidence that atheism is on the rise, skepticism or hostility toward religion seems to be more openly expressed now compared to 50 years ago. The historical abuses and misuses of religious faith—that is, the harmful consequences of religious social capital—have made many Americans understandably concerned about mixing private faith and public life. Taken to an extreme, religious impulses can be self-righteous, drive, and even violent.

Hence, the principles that guide religious involvement in civic renewal must recognize that such efforts hold both potential and peril. The challenge is to nurture religious work grounded in love, not hate, and in unity, not divisiveness. We endorse three such principles.

Principle 1: Strengthen Congregations as Civic Institutions. Americans (and the Saguaro members ourselves) are deeply divided over what role, if any, religion should play in public life. This is a controversial issue with many facets, and it will not be resolved soon, if ever. We strongly support the separation of church and state. Contrary to our collective memories, the doctrine of separation of church and state entitles two beliefs: a prohibition on the governmental establishment of religion and the
Given that religion is entangled with many of the public issues of the day, is there a role for religious institutions to play in helping Americans to overcome the anxiety, distrust, and animosity, and sometimes even violence that these issues have engendered? Can religious institutions help Americans find new ways of working through these problems with mutual respect and good will?

We believe that they can.

Religious leaders have always been at the forefront of efforts for local and national reconciliation. The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. brought together an inter-race, inter-faith movement to pursue the promise of a just society, a community where “the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at a table of brotherhood.” In many cities, including Boston, inner-city congregations have taken the lead in defusing tensions between rival gangs and, in the process, have helped greatly to reduce the rate of youth homicide. Across the country, religious leaders have been integral in bringing communities together in the aftermath of hate crimes. In 1993, for example, Billings, Montana, congregations helped to lead a community response to skinheads’ vandalism of Jewish homes and African-American churches during the winter holidays. In solidarity with the victims, white congregants attended services at black churches, and Christian churches displayed menorahs during Hanukkah. Meanwhile, Jewish groups have led the charge for anti-hate crimes laws at the state and national levels.

Bridge-building efforts need not take the form of ongoing educational or legislative programs. They might, instead, consist of occasional spiritually grounded rituals to bring communities together on days of special meaning, such as Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday or the anniversary of a particularly devastating natural disaster. Religious leaders are ideally suited to lead communities in non-sectoral rituals of celebration and healing.

Religious leaders can be successful bridge-builders because they have precisely the right set of resources. For one, they command community respect, and therefore speak with moral authority. Second, by dint of their profession, they counsel, exhort, and persuade audiences totaling tens of millions of people each week. Further, unlike other leaders, religious figures draw inspiration from scriptures that almost universally emphasize peace, fellowship, and altruism; their language is the language of social capital. Because several of us are ministers, we do not suppose to respect how pastoral, rabbinic, and clerical clergy members should communicate with their own congregations. However, we do recognize the unique role that religious leaders, including those of us in the Sagarro Seminar, can play in healing broken communities, in addition to broken souls.

Principle 3: Encourage Inter-Faith Collaboration on Social Issues. Houses of worship have always been houses of service, and religious workers have always been social workers. Since the earliest decades of the Republic, congregations and religious institutions have run orphanages, old-age homes, and community centers. These activities continue today, albeit at a reduced level. In any given city or town in the United States, one will likely find religious institutions running food and shelter programs for the homeless, self-help programs for the addicted, fellowship programs for new immigrants, classes for welfare recipients, housing developments for the working poor, social activism for singles, and exercise programs for the over-50 set.

Taken individually these programs serve a valuable purpose, but houses of worship sometimes have been more effective when they have worked together—although institutional jealousies and cultural differences among faiths have been known to get in the way. Houses of worship in many places have been able to circumvent such difficulties to spectacular ends. In New York, for example, two consortia of churches, using cut-rate loans from government and private sources, built nearly 3,000 units of “Netherlands” housing for the working poor, and in the process began the rejuvenation of blighted sections of the Bronx and Brooklyn. More recently, Jewish, Muslim, and Christian leaders in Minnesota have mounted diverse political and educational efforts to reduce gun violence, justifying their involvement with the spiritual adage that “all life is sacred.”

Religious coalitions are national, as well. Asserting the “fundamental dignity of each human life,” Call to Renewal, a network of churches and faith-based organizations, has launched a major initiative to reduce poverty and overcome racism by strengthening existing church-based efforts and promoting new networks of cooperation. We endorse such collaborative efforts, and urge that government agencies, foundations, businesses, and individuals take a closer look at the feasibility of supporting faith-based collaborations locally.

Recommendations for Building Local Church-Based Faith-Through-Group-Based Coalitions

In part because of our different perspectives on organized religion, and in part because America itself is divided on the issue, Sagarro’s members are reluctant to issue a blueprint for using faith to build social capital. However, we do not rule out the possibility that religious leaders, including those of us in the Sagarro Seminar, can play a pivotal role in this process.
On a local level, working through the Citizen Leaders program of Imagine Chicago, religious congregations and very pragmatic, point of view. "My main story is about a small town’s need to buy a big stud bull," says Grisham. Grisham began by convincing George began by convincing Tupelo businessmen to help invest in the community purchase of the highly cost of a good stud bull that launch the local dairy industry. "Listen, said McLean to a particularly resistant hardware store owner, you may not like me, but you need me. You took in $50,000, last year. You’ll never make more than that until you help increase the amount of money your customers make, and the average family income in this county is only $30,000 a year. McClean believed that our social fabric and our nation’s future are terribly tenuous. If we care enough to look for it, we can always find a thread that binds us. And, if you look at it, say that we have an obligation to help each other and it is actually a tradition of American and very pragmatic, point of view."

But he spent a great deal of time and energy telling the continuing story of Tupelo, Grisham believes "that the most breaks through social and economic development will not be in Tupelo. It will be somewhere else — and I’m looking for where that will be. But I do know that Tupelo will still be the model. Through the details will vary, community development will still hinge on several principles: community growth begins with individual growth; local people must address local problems; successful development begins with small tangible goals — pick the low-hanging fruit first; team building and its accompanying personal commitment are essential; the real test for leaders is to be social architects with bold, human infrastructure."

Concluding Thoughts
Beyond endorsing the broad principles or strategies above, we are reluctant to offer specific recommendations to houses of worship and their leaders on how to build social capital. As a religiously diverse group, we would not pretend to advise any religious organization about how to carry out its particular spiritual mission. Our major conclusion is that religious institutions have the capacity to make the most of their unique role, and that the American public ought to honor and support the role within the bounds of the Free Exercise and Non-Establishment Clauses of the Constitution. We are persuaded by surveys and anecdotal evidence that, in an age of unbridled prosperity, many Americans feel a spiritual void and a cynicism about their fellow citizens. We believe that religious organizations are naturally suited to uplifting our national spirit.

Recommendations
2. Foster Collaboration Between Faith Communities and Secular Service & Advocacy Groups. Faith communities have many resources to contribute to civic causes. These include both moral resources, such as values that inspire action, and organizational resources, such as denonational funds and volunteers from local houses of worship. Bringing secular activists together with religious organizations would follow our principle of building “bridging” social capital across lines of belief and greatly expand movements for social betterment.

For example, in 1993, leaders from four faith traditions (Catholic, Church of Christ, Jewish, and Evangelical) founded the National Religious Partnership on the Environment after prominent scientists called on faith communities to take on conservation as a moral obligation. Since then, the Partnership has helped local congregations to link church-based volunteers to local environmental groups, provided guidance on environmental sermons, and enlisted religious leaders to lobby for stronger environmental laws. "On a local level, working through the Citizen Leaders program of Imagine Chicago, religious congregations have nominated especially far-sighted parishioners to help design projects to strengthen their congregation and community. One of the projects, a "business health fair" held at a church in the Englewood section of Chicago, has evolved into a larger social improvement program for the entire neighborhood. The National Religious Partnership on the Environment and the Citizen Leaders program are two models for collaboration between faith communities and secular organizations that can be applied to a broader range of issues and geographic areas.

Recommendation 3: Promote Values in Secular Organizations. One Saguaro participant noted that religious group membership is a "code for values." Membership in faith groups is attractive because it gives members a moral compass and signals to others a commitment to shared values. The Saguaro members suggested that non-faith-based groups could do more to provide members with a moral compass and encourage a "values ethos" among them. We would like to see non-faith groups stop relying away from an explicit commitment to values. Such a commitment creates stronger bonds of trust and reciprocity.

In Boston, some area synagogues are substituting service for dues: Members can pay off their financial obligation with hours of volunteer service. One Saguaro participant offered an intriguing and expanded parallel. Congregations should encourage their members to put “social capital promises for the congregation and for the broader community” in the collection plate in addition to, or instead of, donations. For example, one member might pledge to read to a neighboring kindergartner; another might commit to watching a parishioner’s children when she wants to apply for a job. Transferring religious reciprocity into social service follows our principle of “Recycling” social capital, as well as our principle of building social capital “C2C.” As one Saguaro participant noted, “Time and talent precede treasure in a life.”

Contact: gyrode@brown.edu

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BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

The Freestyle Union, begun in Washington, DC, is primarily a product of the will and energy of Founding Director Toni Blackman. "Freestyle Union," she says, "was an end-run session that became a collective. Four people getting together for improvisational rap and poetry quickly turned into eighty participants. We are now an emerging artist development organization for rappers."

Freestyle's chief development tool is the Climate Workshop. A "climate," says Ms. Blackman, "is a circle, the circle in the circle of early in the hip-hop culture to which we belong. Hip-hop as an art culture includes dancing (tapping, locking, brackking); grafitti and other visual art; DJ's, with a disc jockey functions both as composer and musician; beat boxing (making music with your mouth); and rapping (which is what Freestyle Union is about). But we are not really trying to develop rappers who are aiming at the development of the committed artist, a writer and concept of 'community service," because if you're involved in hip-hop their outreach has been toward keeping their heads above water. The new workshops will continue to be performance," says Blackman. The new workshops will continue to accommodate the disabled, are mounted on an historic Herschell-Spillman making frames for mirrors and gargoyles before they could work on horses. People seem drawn both to the idea of a community-built toy — high quality and first-class." Volunteer carvers had to master carving class at the Missoula Vocational Technical School to begin making of their community, says Blackman, "people do not talk about a community."

MISSOULA, MONTANA

A Surviving For Missoula

A Missoula website says it is called "The Garden City, for its mild winters — relatively to the rest of the state — and in generally regarded by its residents, as a pretty good place to live. We hike, ski, fish rivers and ride mountain bikes. We talk politics and the most widespread and effective use of non-profits; the mechanical guys still come in once a week to make sure everything is running as it should."

It got better in 1991, when a local cabinet-maker named Chuck Kaparich, accompanied by a large hand-carved wooden horse, moved into Mayor Don Moen's office and offered to build a carousel and donate it to the city if the local government would provide the land. Dan Kemmis, sometimes referred to as "Mayor Moonbeam," agreed. Kaparich first set up a woodworking class at the Missoula Vocational Technical School to begin making of the "carousel-making-project. Word was out, and when registration was announced, Chuck's class filled to its forty-person capacity in fifteen minutes. People seemed drawn both to the idea of a community-built toy — high quality and first-class." Volunteer carvers had to master a large hand-carved wooden horse, moseyed into Mayor Dan Kemmis' office and offered to build a carousel and donate it to the city if the local government would provide the land. Dan Kemmis, sometimes referred to as "Mayor Moonbeam," agreed. Kaparich first set up a woodworking class at the Missoula Vocational Technical School to begin making of the "carousel-making-project. Word was out, and when registration was announced, Chuck's class filled to its forty-person capacity in fifteen minutes. People seemed drawn both to the idea of a community-built toy — high quality and first-class." Volunteer carvers had to master making frames for mirrors and gargoyles before they could work on horses. They had to use the old traditions, and in good weather, the carousel was not. And four nights a week for three years, ten to twenty people at a time would be there at Chuck's carving, painting, talking, and, sometimes, lions as one of them read aloud to the rest. Do one hundred thousand volunteers eventually went into the project, and the completed carousel has been open to the public every day since its first ride on Labor Day, 1995. Forty-one wooden horses, and two chariots to accommodate the disabled, are mounted on an historic Herschell-Spillman frame, and move around inside a building that can be fully opened in good weather and closed up in bad. Chuck Kaparich made four of the ponies. Four more were named and designed by the four elementary school classes that donated the most of the 1,000,000 pennies dropped into milk jugs all over west-central Montana. The additional thirty-three horses and the two chariots were named designed, and built by adopting individuals, families, and groups for $2,500 each.

We always say 'we' when we talk about the carousel," says Theresa Up, an early volunteer and now the Executive Director of A Carousel For Missoula, "because almost everyone was somehow a part of it. Blue collar people, university professors, unemployed people, retired people in their seventies and eighties, kids as young as eight, doctors, lawyers, and grandparents (our left-hand hoping). And people don't only support the carousel, they share ownership, and pride. The carousels still get together once a week, making animals for other carousels and for local projects and organizations that support the arts."

"The most important thing is that now, it is more than a bigger and more important. We plan in place for literally a thousand people to come in every six days to start and finish the playground. No, I would say the carousel has made a difference to Missoula."

Says Chuck Kaparich: "You could go into a town forty miles down the Clark Fork, and they might think a carousel was the dumbest thing for a community to be involved in. But, for Missoula, it makes the people here say, Yes, it could build a carousel just from scratch, think of all the other wonderful things that can happen."
To each generation of adults, the phrase “America’s youth” evokes powerful and contradictory images. On the one hand, we might think of gangbangers, couch potatoes, video game addicts, stoners, slackers, or even high-school gunmen. But we are just as likely to see soccer players, software entrepreneurs, environmental activists, hip-hop artists, Scouts, and workers in the family business. Whether bad or good, the prevailing images or stereotypes of young people often say as much about the communities in which youths are coming of age as about the young people themselves.
FULTON, MISSOURI

Willow Woods University

Dr. Lance Kramer, William Woods University provost, compares his students to campaign family today: “I recall John Kennedy's assassinations. I was in The Netherlands at the University of Wisconsin, watching TV with hundreds of other students. Today, if something like that happened, all the kids would go back to their rooms to tune on TV. They'd be by themselves, or with a side roommate. We don't have the kind of 'television culture.' If you will, that's what we do. Kids are spending a lot more time in their dorms. Four out of five of our incoming freshmen want a private room. "And if you go into dormitories today, you'll find an electronic palace—... elaborate stereo systems;... TV's; ... Nintendo sets... computers; and "Good old American capitalism," Kramer says. "The culture values money, its acquisition, utilization, and accumulation. And young people reflect these values, themselves. Here, there's been a long and continuing discussion about how to increase the intensity of campus life. We finally came up with a completely voluntary program that was very effective, that hooked into financial aid. We started it with our new students in the fall of '95. Now, another 185 of our new students, signed a contract to save up to $5,000 off their tuition for each of their next four years by fulfilling their role as targets of community-building work and as active leaders and participants in it. As we don't expect adult proficiency in any field without years of practice, we cannot expect young people to create a better community without first learning the skills and habits of the heart necessary to civic engagement. Sadly, however, children and teenagers are too rarely included in American civic life. We, either in decision-making or contributing roles. American youth-focused institutions, such as schools and after-school programs, are not generally designed to instill young people's input on issues of governance, program development, or problem solving. This laptop translates to thousands of squandered opportunities to prepare the next generation of social capitalists. It will take a major shift in attitude and practice to create a compelling pathway of civic engagement".

Schools, Youth Organizations, and Families in Building Social Capital

Most American youth are embedded in three types of communities: traditional, voluntary, and extracurricular groups which include religious communities, clubs and sports Magnas, and informal communities of friends), and their family is in these three categories of places that young people meet and associate with the most important people in their lives: parents, children, friends, coaches, and mentors. And it is in these places that young people learn what is expected of them and what to expect from others, especially adults. In short, it is these places that young people learn powerful lessons, both good and bad, about the role of the individual in society. These three communities contribute to social capital and depend upon it. A school, for example, teaches about public affairs and provides a springboard for volunteering in the community; the extracurricular groups, by contrast, are the third ranked as "very important" to social-minded activities as keeping up with politics, being involved in community action, or helping to clean up the environment. Young adults have also become more likely to trust other people, less likely to support charities, less likely to vote and less likely to feel guilty about avoiding the polls, less likely to attend community meetings, less likely to attend houses of worship, and less likely to keep up with public affairs. There are many theories for why the younger generation has dropped out of civic life: the rise in entertainment technology, such as television, video games, and computers, the selfish values allegedly
perpetuated by Boomer parents, the perception that America is humoring along and so we can turn our attention to private pursuits; and so forth. There may be truth to all these explanations, among others. But, whatever the reason for their apathy, we must not ignore the fact that young people are a reflection of us, and that the social capital is in decline. These youthful indicators should dampen our overgrown about increasing youth volunteering.

**BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS**

Martha Edisson

**Citizen Schools**

Martha Edisson says middle schools are “peeling through a window into this bigger world. It’s a critical developmental period for them; the hormones haven’t really kicked in yet, and they can just handle some adult skills. Any after-school programs they do have are scarce and meagerly funded, and lots of them have ‘gave up’ of the programs that are offered.” Those kids, 11-14, are the target constituency of the Citizen Schools program. Edisson, now Director of Communications for Citizen Schools, began as a volunteer teacher in its programs, in which adults offer “approachability” to groups of eight to ten adolescents, typically meeting them three hours a week for 10 weeks, guiding them in the completion of an active focused project. “So the kids can see results,” Edisson says. The projects are not about work; they are work. Teachers teach what turns them on, but with the focus on a project that is helpful in the larger community and works as much as possible with the middle school curriculum. “Range from cooking (which is set up to include math, writing, and social service), through political speech writing and data analysis, to civil law. Each program works with what Citizen Schools calls a “R Andersson” — a high-focus, problem, performance, or cause. WOWS have included publication of student journalism stories about local public education programs, children’s lives have improved dramatically among people under 35. People born and raised in the 1970s and 1980s were three to four times as likely to seek and find social services, and only one of many serious indicators. Among families with children aged 8 to 17, there has been a drop of roughly 20-30% over just 20 years in the fraction of people who volunteer together as a family, watch TV together, attend religious services together, and “just sit and talk” together—indeed, sociologists have found recently that the average American teenager spends more time alone than with family and friends.

Further, it is not merely civic indicators that are down. Young people are far less likely to seek and find social capital in informal settings, such as in the family home or the neighborhood, than were young people a generation ago. Surveys show that the major forms of family togetherness are in all decline. Most notably, the family meal is quickly becoming a thing of the past. In the past decade or two, surveys of both parents and kids have revealed a steady decline of more than one third in the frequency with which families eat dinner together. As political scientist Robert Putnam has noted: “Since the evening meal has been a communal experience in virtually all societies for a long time, the fact that it has visibly diminished in the course of a single generation in our country is remarkable evidence of how rapidly our social connectedness has been changing.” The demise of the family meal is only one of many serious indicators. Among families with young people in service to their communities, and in the process are instilling civic skills and an ethic of social responsibility. Youth who volunteer in service to their communities, and in the process are instilling civic skills and an ethic of social responsibility. Youth who volunteer in service to their communities, and in the process are instilling civic skills and an ethic of social responsibility. The AmeriCorps program, which engages more than 40,000 young people each year in 1,000 programs nationwide, has helped to make community service “hip.” The program has also provided organizational and psychosocial solidity to 150,000 (and counting) of the nation’s most civic-minded young people. Besides the effects on young people, the program has provided financial stability to youth-service corps and fueled the creation of state community-service commissions, which distribute much of the AmeriCorps funds. Both with and without AmeriCorps money, national non-profit organizations have provided the infrastructure to keep the youth-service movement alive. Among the strongest of these organizations are service corps such as City Year, Public Allies, YouthBuild USA and the local and state members of the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps; organizations that promote college-based volunteering, such as the Campus Outreach Opportunity League and the Campus Compact; traditional youth organizations, such as 4-H Clubs, Boys and Girls Clubs, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts; established non-profits that are staking their youth components, such as the Urban League and the American Red Cross, newer organizations that train teens for civic work, such as Youth On Board (which places young people on the governing boards of non-profit groups) and Magic Johnson places middle-school and high-school drop-outs in service to elderly and seriously disabled people; and umbrella groups like Youth Service America that helps conceptualize, mobilize, and shepherd this growing movement. Reaching audiences in the millions, organizations like 4-H and expanding and retrofitting their practices to engage suburban young people, while the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts are finding ways to appeal to inner-city teens or immigrants.

Agnosticate the community service movement are scores of other efforts, private and often informal, that have also found innovative ways to build social capital among young people. In many urban areas, for example, young people have organized poetry slams and hip-hop freestyle sessions, set up entrepreneurial youth mini-malls, and built skateboarding parks. In the suburbs, youth soccer has soared in popularity. On television, the video station MTV has covered politics and urged youth participation through campaigns such as Rock the Vote and Choose or Lose.

**Challenges to Increasing Youth Engagement**

School- and community-based service corps have demonstrated the potential for civic engagement of young people from all socioeconomic backgrounds. However, the practice of taking young people seriously has not yet become a standard operating procedure in schools, community organizations, or politics. Instead, the scattered efforts of visionaries who see young people as resources have run up against the assumption, valid or not, that young people are too cynical, materialistic, and apathetic to want to make a difference, or that the misperception that young people are too inexperienced, uninformed or unsure to be consulted on issues affecting them.

Re-engaging young people will involve surmounting several formidable challenges. First, leaders will have to make a compelling case — running contrary to everything young people think they know — that participation actually does matter. Leaders will have to provide tangible evidence, that contrary to popular assumption, American democracy still does respond to the wishes and needs of its citizens. The members of the Saguarlo Seminar believe that young people’s impulse to tune out is based at least in part on a reasonable assessment of democracy’s shortcomings. The challenge to adults and young people is to create opportunities for consequential participation. Second, to capture the fleeting attention of the TV-and-video-game generation, entrepreneurs will have to create or alter organizations so that participation is not only meaningful in the long term but also gratifying and fun in the short term. Endless meetings governed by Robert’s Rules of Order are unlikely to hold the attention of

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_Citizen Schools, Spring 2003_ 071-450 2003
Studies also have found that positive outcomes are more likely when young people feel like a natural woman. And suddenly I was less resistant to them, and another, and a mentally handicapped girl. One day, under the tent, I heard him say, "My wife was a co-creator of the concept, he dubbed it a "great idea," and I was there, listening to his music in the art studio, and "listening to the students talk to me," says Socoloff, "can’t see tangible benefits from their work, we urge that schools take these programs seriously by allotting money and staff hours to finding meaningful and well-run service programs, rather than leaving it to individual students to find opportunities on their own. We further urge that community service be built into courses to the fullest extent possible, with structured time for students to reflect on their experiences. Often, community service allows students to meet people with whom they would not otherwise interact, and for service organizations to benefit from the commitment of their volunteers. Some organizations even offer financial incentives to students who volunteer, such as reduced rates for college courses or graduation in exchange for service hours. The best opportunities for civic engagement are those that are sustained by adult support and a peer group with explicit positive values.

Recommendations for Building Social Capital in Schools

We urge at least three recommendations for increasing social capital and civic engagement among young people. We have organized these recommendations around the three categories of institutions that are most influential in young people’s lives: schools, community organizations, and families.

Schools. We urge that schools and school boards fund community service-learning opportunities for all elementary-, middle-, and high school students, create smaller schools within schools,” offer a broad array of extracurricular activities, start more programs to re-connect out-of-school youths with educational and community institutions; and expand civics education. We also encourage schools to provide for active student government that has a say in some aspects of school operations.

Community Organiz ations. We recommend fostering social capital by connecting people with organizations that are important to them, helping people know and trust each other. Engaging in problem-solving and program development together will reverse the sense of distrust and isolation that people feel in their current environments. An ethic of trust, participation, and mutual responsibility is difficult to instill in such settings.

To create the conditions for civic engagement to flourish, schools must be radically restructured as mini-communities, in which people know and trust each other. Engagement in problem-solving and program development together will reverse the sense of isolation and powerlessness and create communities in which students can learn and practice civic behavior.

Over the past decade, innovators have sought to create educational spaces in which students, teachers, and parents address issues together from their own perspectives, and collectively take an interest in the world around them. These efforts go by various names, such as "community schools" and "charter schools." Smaller schools have numerous advantages over their large, impersonal counterparts. Although small schools can be autonomous, face-to-face deliberative democracy is the far more likely norm of operation. Smaller classes diminish the emphasis on individual teacher control and discipline and increase the potential for learning and interaction. Smaller schools also reduce the principal's reliance on rules and discipline, allowing him or her to focus on relationships, curriculum development, teacher training, and community involvement. In the final analysis, small towns, small schools also are less likely than large schools to let students fall through the cracks, and are more likely to maintain high expectations for young people. It is in this sort of environment that students can most easily assume leadership and decision-making roles.
Afluent communities have tried to make up for... 

Schools might also work with civic organizations to carry out voter registration drives, something that can... 

Like wise, Do Something hopes to become a nationwide league... 

At the meeting, the students outline the goals from which they draw... 

We call on citizens to ask their local school boards to create smaller schools within schools. Resources on how to do this are... 

Recommendation 3: Restore Extracurricular Activities. Extracurricular activities are a vitally important source of... 

Recommendation 4: Make “Civics” Relevant. We need to invest substantially in all three legs of civic education creating civic... 

To increase both the quality and quantity of civic education in America is the mission of groups like the National Alliance for Civic Education and the American Political Science Association’s Task Force on Civic Education for the Next Century, and we... 

Recommendation 5: Reconnect and Re-engage School Dropouts. Almost one in every eleven students nation-wide dropped out... 

We need to invest substantially in all three legs of civic education creating civic skills, imparting civic knowledge, and developing civic values. Research shows that civic skills and civic knowledge are strong determinants of later civic participation; and while they can be learned by experience, both civic skills and knowledge (but especially knowledge can be taught). Civic-literacy programs provide young people with the knowledge and skills they need to be active citizens – and to have influence in community affairs. We need to reverse the gradual disappearance of civics from the standard curriculum of American high schools over the last several decades. To increase both the quality and quantity of civic education in America is the mission of groups like the National Alliance for Civic Education and the American Political Science Association’s Task Force on Civic Education for the Next Century, and we endorsement their activities. In the interim, teachers can build action into civics courses. Rather than simply learning how a bill becomes law, imagine a South Central Los Angeles high-school civics instructor working with students to bring about a change... 

More foundations need to take up this approach, and the federal and state governments should follow suit with dedicated... 

Most high-school dropouts who fail to find good jobs eventually further their education by earning a GED and/or by enrolling... 

In light of these staggering figures, it is important to make sure that strategies to build social capital among young people do not assume that they always can be found at the schoolhouse. Nor should we assume that only those in schools are capable of civic engagement. In fact, civic engagement can be a critical influence force for bringing young people who have dropped out of school back to a productive educational and occupational track.
PORTLAND, OREGON

Marv Welt/Portland Executive Corps

No, I didn’t start taking groups of kids…on field trips to Whitaker Pond. Here Casting Club, and would I like to go? (I thought, casting? What’s that? Is college. He then pursued a successful career in management consulting; his father’s abandonment. After fighting in World War II, he enrolled in college, drive their own cars, have access to global communications media, and expect to move out of state after high school. As young people become more independent, they increasingly find their communities of meaning outside the structures of school and family. For that reason, it is incumbent on government and non-profit organizations alike to create safe spaces for young people to learn about and to fulfill responsibilities to others. More than ever, leaders need to incorporate young people into the broader community. Such efforts can take many forms. Here are some recommended approaches.

Recommendation 6: Foster Intergenerational Mentoring. As a society, we generally have more leisure time than our predecessors did, even though it seems like the inverse is true. One young adult told the Sagamore Seminar that more American adults need to consider themselves a “bailout” in search of a “Robin” — thus extending mentoring relationships from the comic books to real life. But, he noted, save Robin from danger and encourage Robin to learn from his mistakes. Mentoring is clearly a concept that is hard to expand and improve these relationships. Small schools are one method, as discussed. Another idea for mentor organizations actually to recruit retirees, whose numbers are burgeoning and whose commitment to creating social capital is well documented. These people not only can impact a sense of civic responsibility, but they can also provide practical advice on everything from starting a small business to resolving disputes among peers.

Intergenerational mentoring also clears the way for “bridging” principle.

Recommendation 7: Support the Community Service Movement. We wholeheartedly endorse a national commitment to community service. Community service should be well-funded, well-publicized, well-organized and well-designed to make a tangible difference. Among us, we are divided on the question of whether all Americans should be required to perform a year or more of national service, whether in the military or a voluntary activity. However, we heartily endorse an expansion of non-mandatory programs such as AmeriCorps, the Peace Corps, and Learn & Serve America.

Grants made through these programs should open multiple sectors and be both accountable and entrepreneurial. For example, the current infrastructure for national and community service created first under the Bush Administration and expanded under the Clinton Administration, provides a healthy mix of public and private support. This network of service work is well-researched and something from that is still with me… last week, I remember thinking back and feeling, don’t I owe something? And I felt I did. I felt I owed it to Mr. Rogers, but mainly I think I owed it to myself. The things I love, whether it’s the painted turtle or the comic book, whether it’s Batman or Robin, these kids are going to decide what happens in our society…. You just lay the foundation and then, by proxy, lay the groundwork. You just do it in such a way that they sometimes we need to challenge assumptions. Enough if everybody could…just give a little bit, what a difference it would make.

Source: Adapted from Mr. Rogers, Pictures Are People, Houghton Mifflin and Kaplan/Harvard Business School (Boston, MA: 1997), pp.117-119.
L.A. is a true metropolitan jungle, and Andy Lipkis and TreePeople are the city’s foremost eco-tourists, leading the charge. They’ve turned an idea that would have seemed typical for a 1980s eco-movie into a reality. Through a combination of education, activism, and personal example, TreePeople has been able to create a movement that has inspired people across the globe to join in the fight against environmental degradation. The movement has grown exponentially, with TreePeople chapters sprouting up in cities all over the world. The organization’s success is a testament to the power of grassroots activism and the importance of education in effecting change.

In the past few years, TreePeople has expanded its mission to include urban planning and city design, recognizing the vital role that trees and green spaces play in creating livable, sustainable communities. The organization has collaborated with city officials and urban planners to design green infrastructure projects that integrate trees and other green elements into the urban landscape. These projects not only improve the environment but also enhance the quality of life for city residents.

Today, TreePeople is a leader in the field of urban forestry, and its success has inspired other organizations and individuals to take action in their own communities. The organization’s work is a powerful example of how individuals can come together to create positive change, and it serves as a reminder that even seemingly small actions can have a profound impact on the world around us.