

YELLOW WOOD NOTES

An Occasional Publication
for the Benefit of
Our Clients, Colleagues, and Friends

June 1998

In This Issue

YWA Receives Small Business Innovation Research Grant

Options for Agriculture

Community Learning Teams

Participatory Tools for Information Gathering

Options for a Vermont Telecommunications Center

Right Brain Work-Out

Tom Says Goodbye

We Welcome Your Comments

95 SOUTH MAIN STREET

ST. ALBANS, VT 05478

PH 802-524-6141 FAX 802-524-6643

E-MAIL HN4402@handsnet.org

WEBSITE <http://www.together.net/~yellow>

YWA Receives Grant to Develop Training in Community-Based Forest Stewardship & Development

Yellow Wood Associates has received a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Small Business Innovation Research Program for a Phase I project to produce a pilot workbook and training program. Our pilot is intended to assist rural communities in integrating forests into their thinking about environmental stewardship and economic development.

We applied for this grant because we have found that, while many rural communities have begun to have conversations about the future role of agriculture in their landscape and economies, and about the role of community in supporting agriculture, far fewer communities are having similar conversations about their forests. Our proposal calls for working closely with two Vermont community conservation commissions in Westford and Starksboro to develop and ground-truth our ideas. Over the next eighteen months, we will be designing and testing five pilot modules:

- "Understanding Your Forest Resources," including: resource composition and quality, uniqueness, ownership and use patterns, contributions of the forest, and management patterns.
- "Understanding Your Forest Economy," including: public, private, and informal sectors and economic relationships with income, employment, resource value, and tax implications.
- "Understanding Institutional Relationships," including: local, state, and federal regulatory frameworks, planning processes, and innovative development/protection models and the role of the community.
- "Identifying Opportunities for Forest Stewardship and Economic Development," including case studies of community-based stewardship and development efforts.
- "Integrating Forest Resource Use and Protection Into Community and Economic Development Planning," including: connecting to other community initiatives, linking to key sources of information and funding, conflict mediation, and measuring progress toward community goals.

Continued on Page 3

YWA Awarded Grant, continued from Page 2

YWA will also conduct surveys of market potential in two states: New York and West Virginia. If there appears to be potential for marketing our products, we will be eligible for Phase 2 funding to help us bring the effort to scale and modify the materials to “fit” different states.

If you have materials you would like to share with us for incorporation in our work (with credit!), if you think there may be demand for this approach in your state, or if you are interested in partnering with us to deliver this service to communities you work with, please be in touch. We will use the newsletter to keep you informed of our progress over the next eighteen months.

Right Brain Work-Out

1) STAND
I

2) THINK

3) R
I
GHT

4) IN
MY HEAD

5) S
D
A
E
H

6) NIG SHIP HT
dIHS

7) OTHERINWORDS

8) BAKED

Answers on Page 11

About Yellow Wood Notes . . .

Yellow Wood Notes is a twice yearly publication of Yellow Wood Associates, Inc. Our purpose in publishing this newsletter is to maintain contact and share ideas with friends, colleagues, and clients. We appreciate your feedback and suggestions.

Yellow Wood Associates, Inc. is a private, for-profit firm specializing in rural research and training for community capacity building. We provide clients with customized analyses and models of successful intervention in rural areas around the U.S. and abroad. Our clients include small towns; non-profit organizations; federal, state, and county governments; foundations; and the private sector.

Adding Value to Fluid Milk

YWA is working with the Agricultural Development Council of Chenango County, New York to assess the feasibility of establishing a dairy enterprise to add value to the county's dairy industry. Phase I of our work, completed in April, identified all possible uses for milk from cows as well as more exotic dairy animals like yak, water buffalo, sheep, and goats. We explored a wide range of milk uses including food and beverages, pharmaceuticals, nutraceuticals, cosmetics, and non-food industrial applications.



Our research led us to divide the universe of milk into two product groups: those which involve the secondary processing of whole milk and those which require milk to be split into its component parts or fractions. We then assessed the viability of each product group according to market demand, market barriers, capital needs, short and long-term profitability, availability of learning resources, and compatibility with local resources.

Currently we are in Phase II of the project which includes assessing the quality of milk produced in Chenango and surrounding counties and estimating the potential for

participation in a new enterprise among the area's farmers. We are investigating the costs and benefits of distinct production and marketing scenarios and determining the regulatory context in which the enterprise will operate. Finally, we will investigate different organizational models for the farmer/community enterprise.

At the conclusion of Phase II, the Chenango County Agriculture Development Council will select 1-3 projects to be the focus of a complete feasibility study.

Key criteria for the selection will be the willingness of farmers and the availability of resources to implement each project based upon the feasibility study results.

The goal of Phase III is to transfer to Chenango County residents the capacity to conduct and/or manage full-fledged feasibility studies while building the relationships, knowledge, and experience necessary for implementation. YWA will work with the Agriculture Development Council to identify individuals willing to work on various aspects of the study, and provide direction, counsel, and feedback to ensure accurate and useful results.

Work: Options for Agriculture

Establishing New Partnerships

In 1996, YWA collaborated with the Essex County (NY) Farmland Protection Board to develop a Strategic Farmland Protection Plan for the County. We are pleased to have had the recent opportunity to help implement one of the plan's priority actions: to assist Essex County farmers in establishing contact with Vermont's farmers and marketing support services. The goal is to forge cooperative efforts which will benefit both Essex and Vermont farmers, specialty food producers, and food distributors.



In February, 22 people met at the Center for Sustainable Agriculture

at the University of Vermont in Burlington to discuss ways that the agricultural community on both sides of Lake Champlain could work together to achieve greater sales of their products. The discussion revealed potential demand for Essex County beef, hay, and organic grains among Vermont buyers, and for Vermont fresh produce and organic grains among Essex County buyers.

To support the momentum generated by this first gathering, YWA prepared a brief guide to Vermont agricultural organizations and resources. A follow-up meeting is planned for Fall, 1998.

Suggested Reading

"Places to Intervene in a System (in increasing order of effectiveness)" by Donella H. Meadows, *Whole Earth*, Winter 1997, pp. 78-83. A terrific short introduction to systems thinking and its applications in the real world. Will help you assess the relative power of alternative interventions in your work.

The Web of Inclusion by Sally Hegelson. Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc., 1540 Broadway, NY, NY 10036. 1995. Profiles of 5 organizations illustrate the potential for workplaces and other groups to adapt structurally and functionally in order to meet rapidly changing circumstances. Hegelson develops a model of process and structure based upon flexibility, fluidity, and relationships.

Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making by Sam Kaner with Lenny Lind, Catherine Toldi, Sarah Fisk & Duane Berger. New Society Publishers, P.O. Box 189, Gabriola Island, BC V0R 1X0, 800-567-6772. 1996. Facilitative mindsets, behaviors, and tools for assisting groups in moving through the decision making process in ways which promote effective action while building the capacity of the group as a whole.

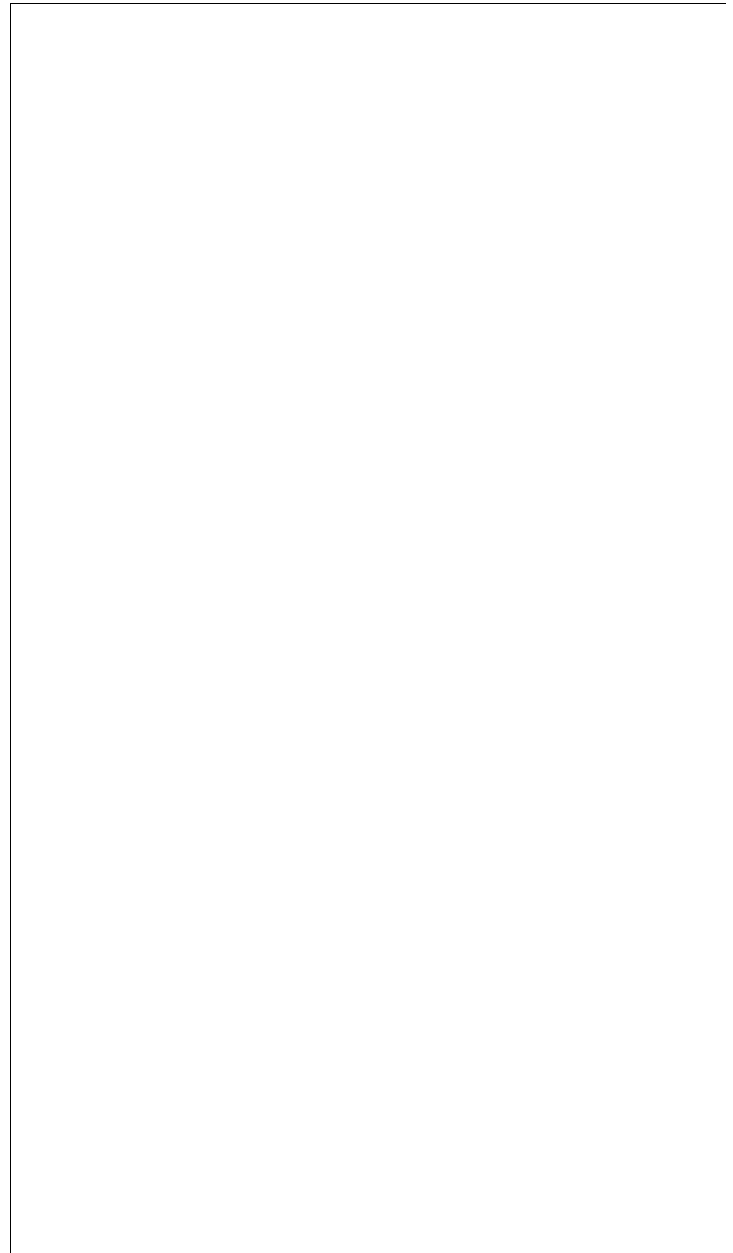
YWA Continues Work with Comm

Community learning teams are groups of citizens who come together to learn about one or more key issues in their community with the intention of generating new information that will lead to better decision making and positive change. The Community Learning Team approach is built around a ten step learning cycle (see box).

In March, the University of Tennessee's Community Partnership Center offered a three-day training for Community Learning Teams in response to interest generated by the Center's three-year Learning Initiative with three rural Empowerment Zones and seven rural Enterprise Communities.

Yellow Wood Associates' role in the training included focusing on what we need to learn and why, how we will find out about what we need to learn, and roles and responsibilities for action. Adapting our work on measuring progress toward community goals, we added an exercise to examine assumptions about how a change in an indicator will effect a goal. We experimented with identifying indicators using role-playing to incorporate the perspective of different stakeholder groups.

The March training, not restricted to EZ/EC communities, proved that interest in the community learning team approach is not



"Participation in community research is even more important than I thought . . . persuade others of its value." *Community Learning Teams Workshop Reactionr.*

Diagram courtesy of the Community Partnership Center, The U

Work with Community Learning Teams

confined to a single geographic region or type of community. Fifty people from Hawaii, Connecticut, Kentucky, Michigan, Illinois, West Virginia, Texas, Georgia, Washington State, Oregon, Newfoundland and Labrador, Vermont, Oklahoma, Washington D.C., and Tennessee participated in the three-day training.

Some participants were already working in community teams, while others wanted to learn more about the approach to see if it would be useful to them. Some were from rural communities, others from the inner city.

At the table facilitated by Shanna Ratner, some powerful learning took place about the fundamental similarities between rural and inner city America. Both groups identified the need for school reform as a high priority, and both also identified the power structure as a significant obstacle to effective community voice.

More information on UT's experience with community learning teams is available in a final report and a series of case studies produced by the Community Partnership Center. Contact the CPC Learning Initiative at 423-974-9030 for prices and availability.

is even more important than I thought . . . worth the effort to fight for and
Community Learning Teams Workshop Reactionnaire Responses

Community Partnership Center, The University of Tennessee/Knoxville

*Turn the page for
participatory tools used in the
learning team training!*

PARTICIPATORY TOOLS FOR INFO]

In addition to sharing our measurement work at the Community Partnership Center training, YWA shared specific participatory tools for information gathering including sacred places mapping (a technique first developed by Randy Hester), and graphic historical timelines. We were also introduced to some powerful tools, including the Margolis Wheel which we all experienced courtesy of John Gaventa.

"The struggle for public participation is across the board, rural and urban. New Haven is not significantly different from Eastern Kentucky."

Community Learning Teams Workshop Reactionnaire Responses

THE MARGOLIS WHEEL

Purpose: The Margolis Wheel is a technique for giving and receiving advice from many different people in a very short period of time. It is a leveling process in which each participant must draw on his or her own experience of the topic, rather than relying on titles or degrees. Everyone's input is equally valid.

Directions: To create a Margolis Wheel, set a small number of chairs (3-5) in the center of a circle, facing outward. Then set an equal number of chairs up around an outside circle facing in. The people on the inside of the circle are the "consultants". The people on the outside of the circle are the "questioners." Before you begin, give each participant a few minutes to think of a situation on which they wish to be advised. Next, have each participant take a seat around the circle. Allow each "questioner" one minute to ask their question and each "consultant" two minutes to answer. After each three-minute period, have the people sitting in the outer circle move clockwise to the next chair and ask the same question again. Once all the "questioners" have asked their questions of all the "consultants," have them switch places and go around the circle again.

Reflection: When everyone is finished, take a few minutes to reflect on the experience and debrief.

TOOLS FOR INFORMATION GATHERING

SACRED PLACES/SACRED VIEWS

Purpose: To determine the special places and/or views that citizens in your community want to keep and do not want to change.

Directions: Locate a black and white basemap of your community showing roads and physical features in reasonable detail. Ask participants to indicate the location of sacred places and/or views on the map and create a key to describe each of these places and/or views. Compile the individual maps into a community map, noting the number of people who value each place and/or view.

Reflection: Consider the activities your community is considering to reach its goals. How will these activities impact the sacred places and/or views? Is this acceptable?

CREATE A COLLECTIVE TIME LINE

Purpose: To graphically explore and capture the history of efforts relating to any community goal.

Directions: Post large sheets of paper on the wall or on the ground. Use several sheets for each time period. Divide into decades beginning as far back as anyone in the group can remember. Supply lots of colored markers. If you have a lot of people, divide up by decade. If you have fewer than ten people, work together. Identify major milestones during each decade and illustrate them on the timeline. Write in dates of significance. Be sure to include any changes in law and/or regulations that impacted your community. Create a picture of the activities relating to the goal that took place in the community during each decade.

Reflection When the timeline is complete, review the information it contains and discuss its significance for any current or planned activities. Are there good ideas that should be revisited? Are there lessons that can be learned?

Update On Our Work:

Options for a VT Telecommunications Center

Vermont's Northeast Kingdom, which includes three of the state's most rural counties, has an urgent need for quality jobs and a number of far-sighted business people, educators, and service providers. The area may be the site for a state-of-the-art telecommunications facility.

This spring, YWA helped the Northern Community Investment Corporation and the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund to identify options for establishing a telecommunications call center near Newport, Vermont. The proposed center would initially employ 60 individuals. The job opportunities would be targeted to those entering or reentering the workforce from public assistance programs. Training and other support services would assist in overcoming traditional barriers to employment and promote the creation of jobs which offer challenge and professional advancement.

Our work began by assessing the market demand for call center services among a core group of Vermont-based direct market firms and a sampling of in-state chambers of commerce, colleges, banks, cable TV firms, real estate firms, and financial services and insurance firms. We priced the technology required to

provide inbound and outbound services geared to a variety of clients, and prepared preliminary estimates of the initial capital investment and operating costs associated with a telecommunications center.

With preliminary information in hand, YWA evaluated different business models for the proposed center. We identified key issues that will affect the organizational and technological structure, and highlighted decision points regarding internal call center technology, local telecommunications infrastructure and long distance carriers.

Using the results of our research, YWA facilitated discussions with Vermont-based direct market firms to formulate a vision and strategy for action. YWA recommended that final design should be entrusted to a telecommunications consultant and committee of local telecommunications experts.

The Northern Community Investment Corporation is now developing a business plan for the center and is pursuing commitments from potential investors. Their hope is to have a privately owned, for-profit facility in operation by this time next year.

In late May, the U.S. Department of Labor awarded a \$3.1 million grant to the Northern Community Investment Corporation to help establish a call center in the Northeast Kingdom. The funding is one of several welfare-to-work grants targeted at economically depressed areas nation wide.

Goodbye Tom

Tom Thacher will be leaving Yellow Wood Associates at the end of this summer. After almost three years of dedicated service as our Research Associate, Tom's life is moving in a new and exciting direction. After one year of long distance courtship, he will be moving to the Pioneer Valley of Western Massachusetts to be with his fiancée and prepare for an April 1999 wedding.

*Thank you, Tom,
for all your hard
work. We'll miss
you!*

"My time at YWA has been one of great learning and clarification of my professional and personal goals and I thank Shanna for that opportunity. My work with YWA has taught

me that when a community clearly states its goals and pursues these goals unaltered by scepticism, they will succeed. My fiancée and I are taking this lesson to heart. Whereas the common path in our mobile culture is to uproot and go wherever a job opportunity exists, we seek to root ourselves in one community. We have chosen to settle long-term in the Pioneer Valley and are confident that we will find challenging and rewarding life work there. I hope to contribute my knowledge of community economic development gained at YWA to these communities. The southern Pioneer Valley also offers an opportunity to draw upon my Latin American experience and Spanish fluency in service to the communities."

Right Brain Work-Out

(continued from Page 3)

The word puzzles on Page 3 are designed to stimulate creative thinking, promote a better sense of spatial relations, and develop problem solving skills. For an advanced work-out, try to create new puzzles on the same model. Send us your creations and we'll share them in our winter newsletter.

Answers: 1) I understand 2) Think out of the box 3) Right angle 4) In over my head 5) Heads up 6) Ships passing in the night 7) In other words 8) Half-baked

Selected Publications Available from Yellow Wood Associates

Agriculture

Preliminary Analysis of the Economic Viability of the Essex County Fair, 1996. \$20

Community Capacity Building

Emerging Issues in Learning Communities, 1997. \$22

Forestry

Flexible Manufacturing Networks in the Maine Wood Products Industry, 1995. \$20

Community Economic Development

The Economic Impact of Canada on Clinton County, New York, 1996. \$15

YELLOW WOOD ASSOCIATES, INC.
95 South Main Street
St. Albans, VT 05478

Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage Paid
Montpelier, VT 05402
Permit No. 1