

YELLOW WOOD NOTES

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

Summer 2003

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We Welcome Your Comments

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Update On Our Work

Measuring Social Capital in Minnesota

The University of Minnesota Extension System is seriously interested in social capital as a building block for community development. Two programs at the school, Leadership and Civic Engagement, and Business Retention and Expansion, have hired YWA to develop tools to measure social capital.

The focus of Leadership and Civic Engagement is on social capital, including trust, norms of behavior, and networks in communities. The focus on Business Retention and Expansion is on networks among community leaders and among businesses. YWA is working with a team of professionals in each program area to create customized approaches to capturing information concerning levels of trust and the strength and diversity of networks that exist before and after program involvement.

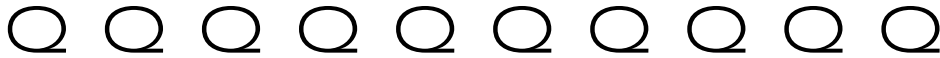
Donella Meadows Fellowship Program

Shanna Ratner has been selected as a member of the first class of Donella Meadows Leadership Fellows. Donella Meadows was a world-renowned systems thinker and co-author of Limits to Growth and Beyond the Limits. The fellows program will train a group of 16 environmental and social leaders in systems thinking and organizational learning over the course of two years.

The first workshop was held at Cobb Hill, a co-housing development in Hartland, Vermont, and home of The Sustainability Institute. It included a visit with Peter Senge, author of The Fifth Discipline, and numerous exercises exploring systems dynamics. The learning has begun! Stay tuned for more in future issues.



Update On Our Work



Green Community Technologies Project

We are completing our research on our Green Community Technologies Project. Since last fall, we have been working with the town of Richmond, Vermont to investigate alternative technologies that can be used to repair and improve their municipal infrastructure.

Through this process, we have identified a number of technology providers that have agreed to assist us in this project by providing information on the benefits of their services and basic cost projections. Acting as a liaison between the town

and technologists, we have helped facilitate technology transfer by setting up local meetings to share information, developing a range of options for the town to consider, and are now working on reports to be shared with municipal officials and residents.

We will present our findings to the Richmond Planning Commission and the community in early fall. From this work in Richmond, we plan to develop a model to assist other rural communities in making similar choices about infrastructure improvements.

About Yellow Wood Associates & 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 economic 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; nonprofit organizations; federal, state, and county governments; foundations; and the private sector.

Yellow Wood Associates are Shanna Ratner, Principal; Mary Nieman, Office Manager; Elizabeth Golden, Associate; John Hoover, Associate; and Melissa Levy, Associate.



Update On Our Work

On the Road with You Get What You Measure®

Within the past few months, we've criss-crossed the country with You Get What You Measure®. From a diverse group of over 60 community leaders in Iowa to a staff team at the Northwest Area Foundation in Minnesota; from town, county, and tribal residents of Navajo County, Arizona concerned about forest health and the threat of catastrophic wildfire, to staff and community leaders engaged in community revitalization in Miner County, South Dakota... folks are finding You Get What You Measure® works for them.

We even had the rare opportunity to introduce You Get What You Measure® to groups of immigrants and refugees in suburban Seattle with the help of five translators speaking Vietnamese, Cambodian, Spanish, Russian, and Bosnian. (Needless to say, the frequent flyer miles are adding up!)

Here's some of what participants had to say:

"I liked the process of getting to workable actions while building consensus"

"This got strong-willed people working together"

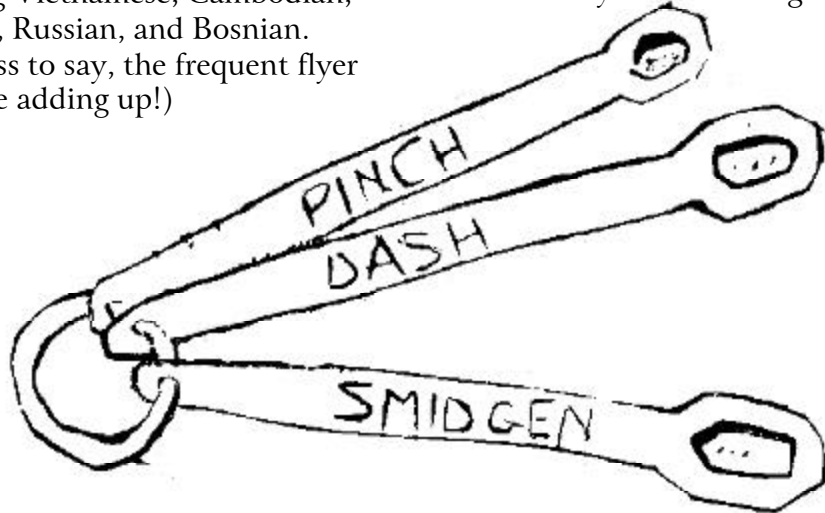
"It helped narrow us down to leverage points"

"The process was already in place, allowing group members to focus on the issues"

"I would recommend this process for future strategic planning."

From a Russian immigrant, "Use more examples!" – always good advice.

For more information on You Get What You Measure®, contact us. Please visit our website for information... www.yellowwood.org.



Update On Our Work

Community Group Unveils Arts Exhibit in ME

Every year, through the National Community Forestry Center, Northern Forest Region, Yellow Wood Associates works directly with a number of organizations and/or communities to support local research projects that focus on issues related to communities and forests. One group, the Middle Ground Collaborative, recently unveiled its newly expanded interactive arts exhibit at the Bethel Historical Society in Bethel, Maine.

The exhibit, entitled Finding Middle Ground, is a traveling, multimedia, interactive arts exhibition which includes drawings, images, three-dimensional displays, information and questions about the value of forests for humankind. In a society that wants both "wood and woods," wood for consumed products

and woods for renewal and environmental values, the exhibit encourages reflection on how people can find a balance between these opposing aspirations.

The purpose of the project is to promote public dialogue and understanding about how our lifestyle choices connect to and impact our local forest resources. The comments, viewpoints and visions that are collected from each venue will be instrumental in documenting how art can be used to help people separate themselves from the often contentious debate that surrounds "wood and woods" and reflect on their personal connection to each.

The exhibit will be housed at the Bethel Historical Society until October 2003.



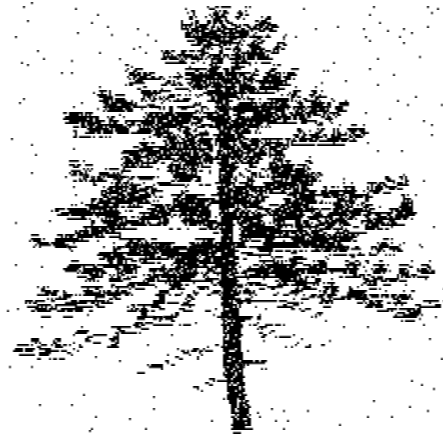
Artwork by Bruce Towl.

Update On Former YWA Clients

Vermont Forum on Sprawl Planning Course

The first offering of the Vermont Forum on Sprawl's (VFOS's) new community planning course has been completed with a great group of participants from all over the state. The group included a wide range of citizens, from development review board and planning commission members, to recent college graduates and college professors, and a nonprofit executive.

The course was based on the forum's publications and an innovative website which offered participants opportunities to interact in their exploration of the material. Course content included community assessment, best site planning, community involvement in planning, planning for economic development, and planning and regulating for smart growth. Yellow Wood Associates created the planning for economic development portion of the course for VFOS. Read more about the course at www.vfos.org.



Huntington Conservation Commission Supports Agriculture and Forest Industries

The Huntington Conservation Commission has come a long way since its work with YWA on See the Forest®. They are now on their second printing of the *Guide to Huntington Forest and Wood Product Users*, which was an outgrowth of See the Forest®. The directory has been such a success that they have decided to create a companion guide for agricultural users.



Plattsburgh-North Country Chamber Wins Award

The US Department of Commerce has selected the Plattsburgh-North Country Chamber as this year's recipient of its prestigious "Excellence in Economic Development Award," placing them first in the nation for excellence in rural economic development. US Senator Hillary Clinton, who nominated the chamber for the national award, expressed her heartfelt congratulations and pointed to the chamber's work "as a great example of the innovation and dedication that is critical to the economic future of New York." The nomination cited them for

their "long, successful initiative to help the Plattsburgh-North Country region realize the full advantage of its strategic location near the US-Canadian border."

Yellow Wood Associates began our work with the chamber ten years ago by developing and implementing a methodology for measuring the economic impact of Canada on Clinton County, New York. We have replicated the study for the chamber every two years since. We are currently completing our fifth replication. The chamber uses the results to influence policy, obtain development resources, and encourage residents of Clinton County to appreciate their "Canadian connection." The findings can be viewed at <http://www.northcountrychamber.com/canam/canamep.html>.



Answer to Puzzler

The little creatures are the five vowels: A, E, I, O, and U. Jonathan Swift called them airy because they are actually made of air -- the air that comes out of your throat and makes the vowel sounds.

Changing of the Guard

Farewell to Debra

Sadly, Debra Mason is no longer a Yellow Wood Associate. Debra made many valuable contributions to Yellow Wood Associates during her nearly six years of employment with us. Deb's passion for rural development, gifts as a co-facilitator, and commitment to lifelong learning will be missed. We wish her the very best in all her future endeavors.

Onward and Southbound

Our intern, Jesse McLean, moved to Texas to be married in June. We hope he's avoiding the hurricanes. Thanks, Jesse, for all your hard work on the demonstration forest and legislative databases!

New Staff at YWA



Hello! I am **Elizabeth Golden**, a new Associate at Yellow Wood Associates! I moved to Vermont two years ago, after

completing my coursework for a Master's of Community Planning and a Ph.D. in Geography at the University of Cincinnati in Ohio. My studies have focused on sustainable

communities, forestry, regional planning, and environmental policy.

While pursuing my studies, I worked for the Environmental Research Center and taught undergraduate courses in environmental planning, policy and geography. Last year I tutored learning disabled students at Landmark College in Putney, Vermont, and took courses at the University of Vermont in the geology of Vermont and land conservation. I am now working on my dissertation, which relates to the Northern Forest. You can understand why I am so excited about working with YWA, where I can assist communities and do research which promotes healthy, sustainable communities.

I spent my youth in Woodbridge, New Jersey and earned a combined B.A. degree in City and Regional Planning and Sociology from Rutgers College. After graduation, I moved to Boston to study architecture and construction management, and worked for ten years in that field. When my second child was born, my family moved to Acton, Massachusetts, where I worked for five years as a consultant and project manager to community, conservation, and historical preservation groups, and served on numerous committees.

I live with my two children, Robby and Chrissy, and my Aunt Ruth, in an 1850s farmhouse near Richville Dam, in Shoreham. My son and I farm 30 acres of hay and are

restoring our home and barn. I am active in the Shoreham Village Planning Task Force, Addison County Regional Planning Commission, Natural Resources and Transportation Advisory Committees.

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Hi! I am **Melissa Levy**, a new Associate at Yellow Wood Associates! I grew up in suburban New York and New

Jersey. After earning my Bachelor of Arts degree in Environmental Studies from the State University of New York at Binghamton, I spent several years in Washington, DC. At Co-op America, I worked with environmentally and socially responsible businesses to help them emerge and succeed. After that, I served as the Managing Editor at the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO), where I managed the production of *the Economic Development Digest* as well as numerous other publications on issues as diverse as telecommunications, geographic information systems, and the Census. At NADO, I also managed a rural brownfields research project with the

US Environmental Protection Agency, which sought to help rural areas to overcome the obstacles preventing them from dealing with abandoned and underused sites.

After my time in DC, I was ready to live in a place where I could settle in, appreciate the outdoors, and live and participate in a small community. As a result, I moved to Vermont and eventually settled into the town of Hinesburg. I already feel a great connection to Vermont and Hinesburg and its residents. I am especially interested in planning and conservation in an attempt to retain the rural character and working farms and forests that make Vermont, and Hinesburg, such a beautiful place to live. As a result, I joined the Hinesburg Conservation Commission. My previous work in educating and providing technical assistance to rural communities on sustainable community and economic development made me realize the importance of building the capacity of rural communities to make sensible decisions about their futures. This has become an important goal for my professional career. And Yellow Wood Associates seems to be a great place for me to pursue that goal.

I recently received my Master of Science degree in Natural Resource Planning from the University of Vermont.

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Developing Rules for Effective Group Work

How can a group of people create their own ground rules for group work without being told what to do?

When groups of people with diverse backgrounds are brought together for a common purpose, such as developing plans or organizing an event, there are a variety of ways that people can interact that can help move along the process and contribute positively to their work.

In our work as facilitators, we have learned the importance of asking the group early on to reflect on their past experiences in workshops and to list those things that worked well and those things that did not work so well when working together as a group. We feel that it is crucial to have the group develop these lists themselves, which we believe leads to greater awareness of the potential pitfalls and key ingredients of success as they begin their work together. In one of our most recent workshops, the following elements were identified by the participants:

- ***Works well:***
 - ~ be willing to change pre-conceived notions
 - ~ really listen to everyone
 - ~flexibility and humor
 - ~holding off on criticism

- ***Doesn't work:***
 - ~ being too specifically focused
 - ~ pursuing personal agenda
 - ~ complaining and blaming

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YWA Recognized in Small Foundation Directory

Yellow Wood Associates is proud to be the only Vermont consulting firm listed in the Association of Small Foundations' *Professional Directory for Foundations 2003*. This directory is accessible to the public online at <http://foundationinabox.org/directory>. The listings are organized and searchable by professional category and state. The Association of Small Foundations is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping small foundations find efficient and effective practices and the best services available. The *Professional Directory* is made up exclusively of professional advisors nominated by members and nonprofit colleagues in philanthropy. It is the only national directory of its kind. Thanks for the nomination!

Summer Puzzler

Jonathan Swift, who wrote *Gulliver's Travels*, also wrote this clever puzzle-poem:

We are little airy creatures,
All of different voice and features;
One of us in "glass" is set,
One of us you'll find in "jet,"
T'other you may see in "tin,"
And the fourth a "box" within.
If the fifth you should pursue,
It can never fly from "you."
Can you guess who or what the
five "little airy creatures" are?



What We're Reading

The Botany of Desire: A Plant's Eye View of the World by Michael Pollan investigates the concept of whether plants use humans as much as we use them. Pollan takes a look at the human relationship with four plants: the tulip, the apple, the potato, and marijuana. Pollan's look at the apple using the history of Johnny Appleseed, the tulip using Holland's tulipmania, and the potato looking at genetic modification are intriguing. ~ Melissa

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