

"No one person has the right answers but we have a better chance at finding the solution if each person provides the best information from their perspective and is willing to listen to others."

*Joe Crookham  
Musco Lighting*

"Companies are people—often we do not let people give what they are capable of giving."

*Herb Wilson*

## Private-Sector Investment in Community Improvement Convening held in March

This convening was a free form dialogue process where a number of clear messages emerged from the participants. The National Civility Center will use these findings to continue working as a catalyst in helping communities become better places to live. Each person's perspective of the correlates between community and corporate transformation were vastly different. What surfaced however was agreement on many of the commonalities and principles that exist in making their organizations successful and what needs to happen in making communities more effective.

We have summarized the major points that were mentioned numerous times and in a variety of circumstances.

- **Be patient and commit to the long haul.**  
Organizations/communities should not expect change overnight. Quick fixes and short-term solutions have little impact on the overall success of any effort. You

need to take small steps and build upon successes. Successes can take many unexpected forms but you need to take advantage when they occur.

Organizations/communities must prepare for change. You need to help participants in building their own capacity for working toward change. This process can be very slow and we may take a few steps backward before we move positively forward. The term "fail forward" was introduced to the group and made perfect sense in any transformation effort. You must commit to doing whatever it takes to make the changes necessary for improvement.

- **People make the difference.**  
The most valuable resource for any organization is its people. Building relationships and raising levels of trust is essential in creating a more effective environ-

ment. Create a participative environment that values and involves people. Diverse ideas help the organization become more effective and innovative. It becomes a cycle of empowerment. There is real value in personal growth. Therefore, helping all people grow enhances the intended outcome. People can rally around a shared broad goal and then be allowed to bring their unique gifts to the effort. Viewing people as positive resources is the first step in any transformation movement.

- **Have an intentional plan.**  
Find a means to prioritize, coordinate, and collaborate toward incremental improvements. Organizations/communities must commit to this planned process. You must have a clear mission and buy-in from everyone. There are a wide variety of ways to formulate your plan but it must be intentional. True transformation will not take place without having a group or individual in charge to make sure it continuously

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## Our Convening Participants

**Mike Barnes**—Internet Energy Systems, West Linn, Oregon  
**Jeanie Bieri**—Musco Lighting, Inc., Oskaloosa, Iowa  
**Martin Carver**—Bandag, Inc., Muscatine, Iowa  
**Jim Crawley**—IT Consultant, Colorado Sprints, Colorado  
**Joe Crookham**—Musco Lighting, Inc., Oskaloosa, Iowa  
**Jeff Fick**—HON Industries, Muscatine, Iowa  
**Donna Gaines**—The Phoenix Company, Chicago, Illinois  
**Dwain Kyles**—Attorney/Entrepreneur, Chicago, Illinois  
**Dick Maeglin**—The Support Fund, Muscatine, Iowa  
**Ann Meeker**—Bandag, Inc., Muscatine, Iowa  
**Paul O'Malley**—Heinz Co., Leamington, Ontario  
**Bill Reed**—The Forum of Greater Kalamazoo, Scotts, Michigan  
**Dick Stanley**—Stanley Foundation, Muscatine, Iowa  
**Beth Stroh**—Irwin Financial Corporation, Columbus, Indiana  
**Herb Wilson**—Retired Executive, Coralville, Iowa

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STAFF  
Beth Crookham  
Kent Roberts

"Involve as many people as possible because who knows it better than those who do it?"

*Dick Stanley  
The Stanley  
Foundation*

"You do not transform people, they transform themselves—start with the small stuff, pretty soon negative people have no audience and positive change becomes a chain reaction."

*Martin Carver  
Bandag, Inc.*

## Fighting the Good Fight with an excerpt from the *Boston Review*

We are constantly reminded that we are on the right path. Recent tragedies and global conflicts tell us that individual governments cannot solve the problems of today's world. In Eastern Europe in 1989 the non-governmental organizations played a major role in changing the economic, social and political systems. As an article in the *Boston Review* by John Tirman suggests, "Governments, our own in particular, should steadily and creatively employ the unique and vast networks, talents, and advantages of non-governmental organizations." Civil Society can offer sources of stability that governments cannot. When you couple this emerging phenomenon with figuring out how a market society and civil society mesh, we are looking at the possible solutions to our ever changing world. Quoting John Tirman,

"Corporations occupy a parallel universe adjacent to civil society."

Creating avenues of civil dialogue at the community level is crucial to the well being of any society. There is alignment between a successful economy and a stable society. Therefore, the private sector involvement will be a key in designing a systematic process that will improve our communities and neighborhoods. It seems as if everyday we receive a contact that supports our ideas and beliefs. We don't have all the answers but we are being encouraged to keep asking the questions. The journey we are on does not give us a clear path of what we might accomplish but it is nice to know that others believe it a journey worth traveling. We refer you to the John Tirman article "Forces of Civility" in the *Boston Review* (Dec98/Jan99).

## Funding Report

We would be remiss if we did not take a moment to thank our funders to-date. The Support Fund through the generosity of Dick Maeglin made it possible for the Center to operate for its first 18 months. We have also received a significant contribution from Martin Carver of Bandag, Inc. We are now looking to the future and hoping to find people willing to financially support our efforts. We maintain operations at around \$135,000 per year. If you or your organization would like to make a tax deductible contribution please make your check payable to National Civility Center, PO Box 497, Muscatine, IA 52761. Thank you for considering our work as the place you make your charitable contribution.

## Board of Directors Update

The Board met in November and established a business plan to guide the organization for the next 2-3 years. We enjoyed the attendance of each Board members' spouse and the opportunity to share time together in Muscatine. It is our plan to add at least two more members to the existing group and we are particularly interested in adding some female perspectives. If you would like to be considered for one of these positions please let us know.

## By the Numbers

We feel good about how things are going at the National Civility Center. In an effort to share our successes with you here are some facts:

Nearly 3000 copies of our book have been distributed in over 25 states in its first 5 months. This has been done by word of mouth and sharing our message.

Since our website was launched we have had over 1400 different users make contact and we have an average of 160 page requests per day. Over 25 people have placed their comments in our online guest book which can be viewed at our website.

We have visited 12 different states in the past year and shared with and learned from people in many more.

We now have available a tri-fold brochure. If you would like copies to distribute please contact our office.

And finally, we have authored a case statement discussing the way the private sector invests in community improvement. If you have contacts for publishing this article let us know.

## Director's Dialogue by Kent Roberts

Working everyday with the National Civility Center is a continuous source of joy and wonderment. The people we meet are extraordinary and are doing amazing things. We have accomplished much since we opened our doors a little over a year ago. We have firmly established ourselves and are considered a resource in the field of community betterment.

Specifically we have hosted three successful convenings, developed an attractive website, published a book that is in demand, have a highly involved

and passionate Board of Directors, created an effective business plan, written a case statement and this is the third issue of *The Dialogue*. More importantly we have a network of people who share in the same ideas and beliefs. This is what drives us. Our message is resonating with people. We are encouraged constantly to keep going and stirring the pot. The idea of promoting civil dialogue in the development of an intentional process and engaging the private sector in new and exciting ways has people buzzing.

Like all small not-for-profits, we struggle with long term funding but our hopes remain high. Our future plans include co-hosting two more private sector events in Michigan and Mississippi. We are looking to develop more materials and information. Our list of contacts grows on a daily basis. The list of to-dos grows as we listen and learn. We look forward to serving you as we work to make our communities and neighborhoods better places to live.

"This stuff doesn't happen by accident, come together with intention, find something to rally around and have intentional conversations."

*Bill Reed  
The Forum*

### Private-Sector Cont'd

happens. You can design methods and procedures to assure your commitment to the overall plan. Often the people in charge of this visionary plan must remain neutral within the larger organization. It is clear, nothing happens unless you plan for it.

- **Action and process are both equally important.** Organizations/communities can't sustain and impact broad goals and objectives without both action and process. People should be allowed to move in and out of both according to their interest levels. Action people will want to see results and the rewards. However, without a plan for the proper context to implement the action the products will not be as effective.

Process speaks to sustainable action and increasing

the capacity of individuals as well as the improved culture of the organization. Some people migrate to one or the other and that is normal. Take advantage of people's strengths and recognize their equal importance in generating planned action imbedded in a sustained methodology.

- **Negative forces are real.** Change is not easy. Turf protection and isolation are difficult to overcome. The ugly head of blame and denial are a part of the culture. Negative people exist everywhere and will continue to actively resist change. These forces are real but should not be seen as a reason to stop trying. You must believe in the common sense and general good of the masses. Give people the opportunity for growth and betterment. As real as the negative forces maybe, so is the reality of the need to make the necessary changes to be successful and effective in

today's world. What choice do we have?

Being flexible is the key. As organizations/communities benchmark outcomes you will modify your efforts. It is direction not destination. You must not rush into efforts you do not have the capacity to support. You must be aware of your strengths and limitations. There must be various entry and exit points for people. Not all people will be moved to commit the time and passion needed to bring about long-term change. However, if given the opportunity most people will give what they can to making their world better.

If you would like the full transcript or some quotes extracted from the event we refer you to our website [www.civilitycenter.org](http://www.civilitycenter.org) or contact a member of the staff. Stay tuned as we facilitate two more private sector convenings to be held in Michigan and Mississippi this spring.



"Common language is essential, it would revolutionize how people see themselves and their interactions."

*Dwain Kyles*

If you would like a full transcript of any of the convenings please contact our staff.

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excerpt from **Making the Case for Private Sector Investment  
in Community Improvement** by Martin Carver & Kent Roberts

Knowledge and leadership, in particular, are key resources that businesses can give back to their communities. In the last decade, many companies have reinvented themselves to become competitive in a global economy. They abandoned top-down management in favor of broad-based decision making. They empowered employees to participate in the process of managing the work, which reduced isolation and fragmentation across work groups and encouraged development of a common language.

Many businesses developed information systems that connected the work done within companies and across sectors of industry. They adopted quality standards and criteria, self-evaluations, and data-driven decision-making processes to measure their effectiveness, promote continuous growth and improvement, and guide actions. And business leaders began to envision their companies as integrated, comprehensive systems in which success overall comes from the success of each part.

These changes within the private sector underscored the importance of people as resources and as triggers for change. They highlighted the need to be intentional about transformation; it doesn't happen unless people plan for it and commit to it. And the private sector's improvements showed that individuals and departments working in isolation cannot achieve the powerful changes that come when groups work across boundaries to solve common concerns.