

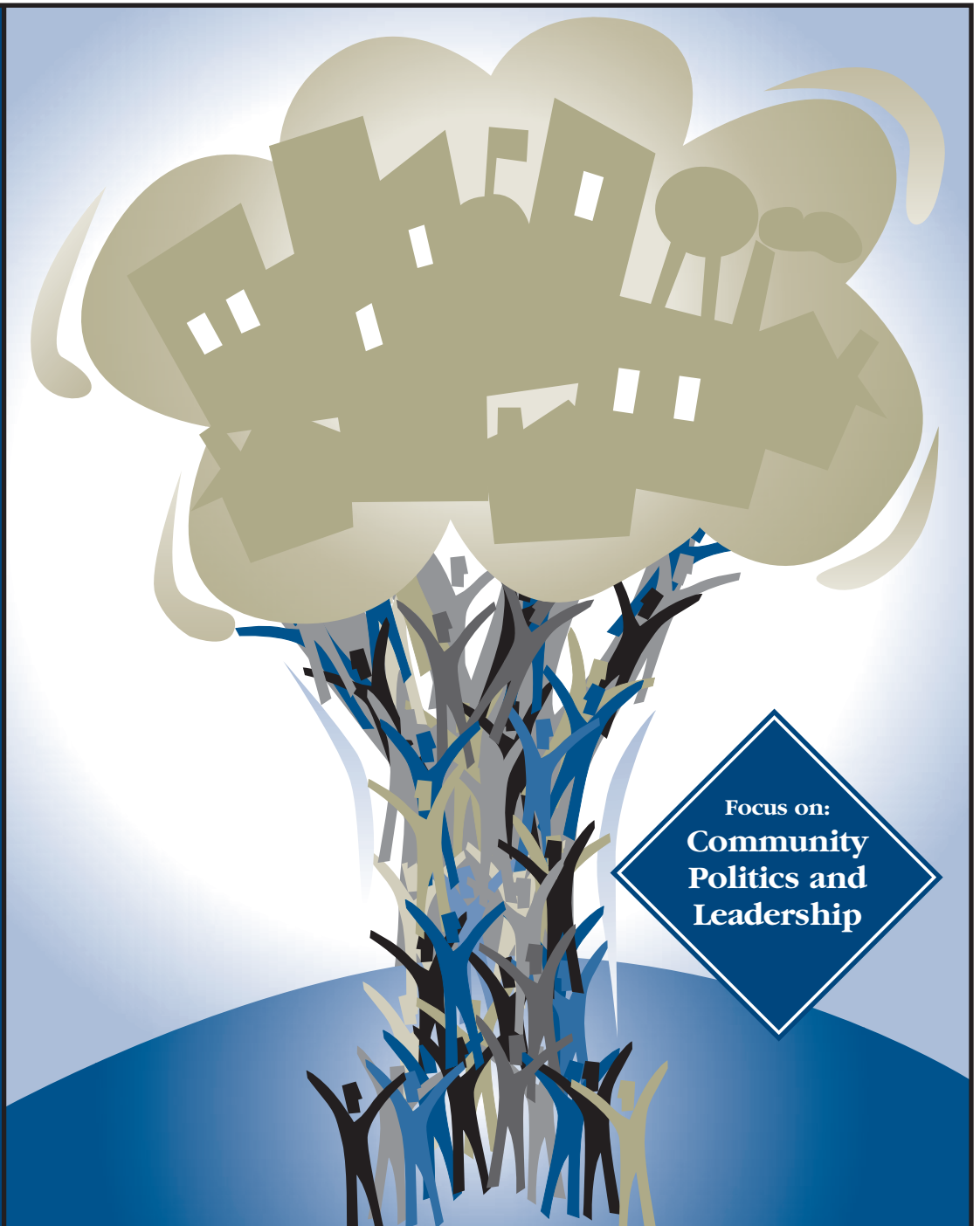
CONNECTIONS

VOLUME XIII

ISSUE 2

March 2003

- **The Little Republics of American Democracy**
.....page 2
- **A Question Revisited: What's in a Name?**
.....page 7
- **Reflections on the Practice of Community Politics**
.....page 9
- **Inactive Communities: Lessons from Rebuilding**
.....page 13
- **Shared Learning with Uniontown: Lessons in Community Development**
.....page 16
- **From Dialogue to Action in Tajikistan**
.....page 19
- **Catalysts for Change: Toward Leaderful Communities**
.....page 23
- **Make the Leap**
.....page 26
- **Books Worth Reading**
.....page 29



Catalysts for Change: Toward Leaderful Communities

By Maxine S. Thomas

Leadership is a topic that interests many people. Peruse any bookstore business section, and you will see books on developing leadership skills, others encouraging individuals to become leaders, and still others that confront the challenges of leadership. There are courses and workbooks and college majors in leadership. There are gurus and champions of particular styles of leadership. Even local municipalities and states provide leadership training to their employees.

The Kettering Foundation has also been exploring leadership over the past several years — leadership for communities intent on building a better democracy. We have also considered notions of “leaderful” communities. Our leadership work has focused on “catalysts,” people in communities who are seen as key partners in supporting democratic practices. Working with catalysts is important. Catalysts are usually quick learners and able to adapt new ideas about leadership to their own communities. They can spark change and determine the direction of a community, as well as share new ideas about leadership with other communities. For people to be able to assume their role as citizens and solve their own problems, it is important to engage these key people.

Networking, connecting with others, is essential, and leaders, or catalysts, are an important part of community networks. If community leaders develop democratic practices, it is much more likely that the community itself will become more democratic and more leaderful.

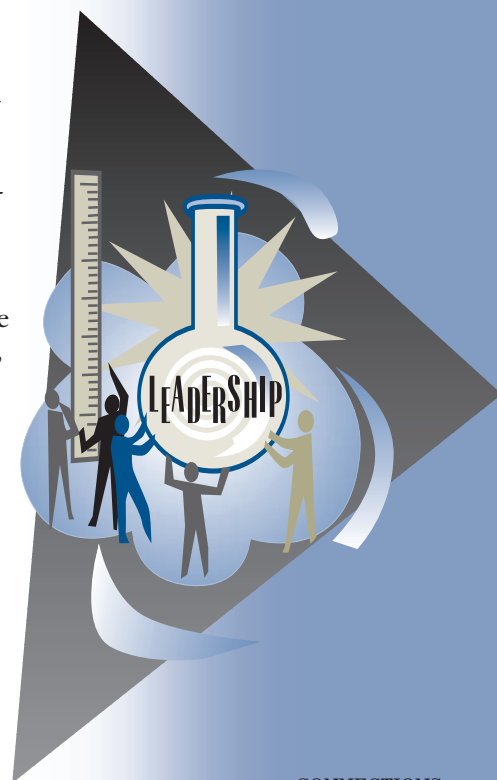
Our research on leaderful communities has focused on the work of getting people to tackle tough problems together

in their communities. It recognizes that citizens from all walks of life have an important role in making difficult choices for their community and that everyone has something to offer — individual knowledge, perspectives, and values — to the leadership of a community. A community cannot do its work with just a few people; it needs to be full of leaders.

Kettering has been engaged in research with groups as diverse as the Urban League of the Upstate, The Green Bay Area Chamber of Commerce Hispanic Advisory Council to the Mayor of Green Bay, the Centers for Disease Control, and a group called Turning on Youth with Gospel Music. The work of these groups is championed by people who often do not consider themselves leaders but, instead, are passionate about their concerns for such things as minorities in South Carolina, Latinos in Green Bay, Wisconsin, or new directions for youth. They are people who form coalitions with others, people like Lynn Camp of Snellville, Georgia, and Richard Rusk of Bishop, Georgia. The two became aware of a terrible wrong that had been done to blacks in a small county in Georgia and joined with others to find out what they together might do about this wrong.

Some of these citizen researchers are involved in politics in a traditional sense, like Sharon Pacheco, who directs Arrive With Five for People for the American Way. Sharon was part of a group that mobilized to get out the vote in Florida prior to the 2000 elections. The voting irregularities surrounding that election prompted the group Sharon was part of to connect with unions such as the Service Employees International Union

If community leaders develop democratic practices, it is much more likely that the community itself will become more democratic and more leaderful.



If communities are to become full of leaders, citizens must join together to bring their skills and knowledge to bear on the challenges that confront them. Catalysts are key to making this happen. They can point the way toward a new way of public-acting.



Members of the current Community Leadership group are, from left: Bob Kingston, William Whitney, Melanie Beauvy, Maxine Thomas, Sadie Flucas, Lynn Camp, Hank Allen, Monica Russo, Rich Rusk, Yolanda Lisowe, Ivy Cassell, Howard Hatcher, Jr., Sharon Lettman-Pacheco, Roger Bernier, Janice Lucas, Margaret Holt, Bradley Robinson, Mona Steele, and Carolyn Coleman.

(which includes the many nursing assistants who are associated with Florida's nursing homes) to engage people who previously had no voice. Carolyn Coleman of Jackson, Mississippi, uses her talents to connect with young people, helping them develop their leadership skills through music. These are the people we learn from.

And there is also other research. For instance, the Kettering Foundation has

commissioned the Harwood Institute to complete research that we hope will help us understand more about the nature of traditional leadership programs.

Our work so far indicates that traditional leaders may talk about democratic practices, public life, and engaging the public, but often they are slow to really embrace these ideas. Notions of democratic politics are antithetical to their understanding of their role in society, which many see as that of problem solver for their communities. They help lead the community to solutions but really do not consider the possibility of sharing leadership.

If communities are to become full of leaders, citizens must join together to bring their skills and knowledge to bear on the challenges that confront them. Catalysts are key to making this happen. They can point the way toward a new way of public-acting. When citizens engage in this new kind of politics, it results in better decisions for their communities and, ultimately, enables them to better carry out their responsibilities in a democracy.

Maxine S. Thomas is secretary and general counsel of the Kettering Foundation. She can be reached at Thomas@kettering.org or (937) 439-9808.



Community Leadership participants

Research being conducted by the Harwood Institute looks at the assumptions that underlie a number of key leadership programs and how these programs and assumptions align with the teaching of democratic practice. Following are some of the preliminary findings, as reported last December by Richard Harwood and Michael Remaley.

- ◆ *Most programs pursue a limited definition of what it means to “know the community.”* Leadership programs vary considerably in how they define what it means for someone to “know the community.” For some programs, “knowing the community” simply means knowing the players and assimilating into the existing power structures through which issues get addressed. For others, exposing individuals to experiences in the community that will increase their knowledge and understanding of complex issues is the priority. For these programs, “knowing the community” is primarily an observational exercise — community learning occurs over a time-limited period through field trips, panel presentations, and data intake. Still others — mostly the “alternative” leadership programs — encourage participants to “know the community” by joining with others, especially leaders indigenous to the community who emerge as a result of personal experience with community challenges, to talk about issues and learn together. The emphasis of these programs is on developing leadership traits in individuals. Indeed, none of the programs name “community deliberation” as an important practice for learning about communities or allude to such practices in their programs.
- ◆ *Many programs focus on “skills” but not explicitly on democratic practice.* Leadership programs focus almost exclusively on building “leadership skills” (such as conflict resolution, working with media, moving issues through government channels, etc.) and knowledge of community challenges. Democratic processes, to some very limited degree, may be embedded in the ideas these programs present to participants, but they are definitely not discussed in any explicit way or afforded dedicated time for practice and learning.
- ◆ *There appears to be an inward/outward split among leadership programs.* Leadership programs, both traditional and alternative, seem to fall into one of two camps — either engaging participants primarily in an *examination of the self* (notions of self-awareness, service to the community, stewardship, and contacts with other leaders) or engaging participants in a closer *examination of the external* (notions of understanding community capacity and strengths and how to tap into community strengths).
- ◆ *There is an emerging group of programs that challenges visions of leadership.* These programs pursue a different vision of leadership that is distinct from, and often oppositional to, traditional leadership programs. They are working to expand awareness of “who is a leader,” who has capacity in communities to lead, and how community challenges should be addressed. The emphasis of these programs is on bringing new voices to the table. These programs generally have strong feelings about the perceived inadequacies of traditional leadership programs and are designed to provide avenues to leadership for those who are often overlooked by the traditional leadership programs.
- ◆ *Most programs stay at Leap One. (See “Make the Leap,” p. 26.)* They are not deeply transformative, though many describe themselves as such. They promote themselves with testimonials by participants who proclaim how significantly the programs impacted their lives. Other programs, on the other hand, are aware of their more basic role — that of simply helping people “open up” to new ideas. They point to the limits that time constraints and program structure place on their ability to engage people in transformational learning. But, importantly, the research conducted to date suggests that virtually *none* of the programs engage in the kind of deep personal examination, assisted practice and reexamination, and ongoing support in the operating environment that would lead to personal transformation of ingrained reflexes and old working assumptions.

Kettering Foundation
200 Commons Road
Dayton, OH 45459-2799

Nonprofit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Dayton, OH
Permit No. 638

The Kettering Foundation, chartered in 1927, is an operating foundation — not a grant-giving foundation — rooted in the American tradition of inventive research. Its founder, Charles F. Kettering, holder of more than 200 patents, is best known for his invention of the automobile self-starter. He was interested, above all, in seeking practical answers to “the problems behind the problems.” The foundation today continues in that tradition. The objective of the research now — the study of what helps democracy work as it should. Six major Kettering programs are designed to shed light on what is required for strengthening public life. Kettering is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) research corporation supported by a \$250 million endowment.

How to Order Kettering Foundation Publications

To request a *KF Publications Catalog*, call 1-800-600-4060, send a FAX to 1-937-435-7367, or write:

Kettering Foundation
Order Department
P. O. Box 41626
Dayton, OH 45441

Name _____

Title _____

Organization _____

Street _____

City _____

State _____ ZIP _____

Phone (____) _____

For more information about KF research and publications, see the Kettering Foundation's Web site at www.kettering.org.

Connections is published by the Kettering Foundation, 200 Commons Road, Dayton, Ohio 45459-2799.

Unless expressly stated to the contrary, the articles in Connections reflect the views of the authors and not necessarily those of the foundation, its trustees, or officers.

Those who contributed to producing this issue include:

Editor...

Amy Harper

Editorial board...

Maxine S. Thomas

Carolyn Farrow-Garland

Graphic Design

& Desktop Publishing...

Long's Graphic Design

Art Director, Production...

George Cavanaugh

Copy Editor...

Betty Frecker

Assistant to the Publisher...

Valerie Breidenbach

Publisher...

Robert E. Daley

*Kettering
Foundation*

© Copyright 2003 by the Kettering Foundation

200 Commons Road, Dayton, Ohio 45459-2799 (937) 434-7300
444 North Capitol Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001 (202) 393-4478
6 East 39th Street, New York, New York 10016 (212) 686-7016