



North American Association of Christians in Social Work
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**OPERATIONALIZING THE CONTINUUM OF COMMUNITY
ORGANIZATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN A FAITH-
BASED INITIATIVE WITH MULTIPLE PARTNERS**

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Operationalizing the Continuum of Community Organization and Community Development in a Faith-Based Initiative with Multiple Partners

Presenter: Leonard Erb, Ph.D.



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FAITH-BASED AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

- ✘ President Georges W. Bush in 2001 by executive order created:
 - + the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives
 - + And Offices of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives in 10 executive departments.

FAITH-BASED AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

- ✘ This occurred after President Clinton signed into law the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996 (Wubbenhorst & Voll, 2003)
- ✘ Most significant welfare reform since the New Deal
- ✘ Both Liberals and Conservatives supported this effort of faith-based participation by the Federal government

THE PLAYERS IN THIS INITIATIVE

- ✘ **Grace United Methodist Church** and its Non-profit organization, **Grace Community Village (GCV)** under which the following services are provided:
 - ✘ Kids Café- for neighborhood children up to 12th grade, that includes meals, arts, music, drama, dance, chess
 - ✘ Wellness in our Neighborhood (WIN) – Organized under GCV
 - ✘ After school program for children in grades 1-6
 - ✘ Youth Empowerment Production Program
 - ✘ Deacons Table- A free community breakfast
 - ✘ Wears and Wearabilty- a neighborhood thrift store
 - ✘ In Stiches- sewing classes for adults and children

- ✘ **Roberts Wesleyan College** MSW faculty and student interns
- ✘ **Project URGE-** An agency composed of suburban, rural, and urban faith-based organization doing social ministry in Rochester
- ✘ **His Hands** Drop-In Nursing Center based in GCV – Provides health care management, disease prevention and education, and community collaboration
- ✘ **Maplewood Neighborhood Association** – Composed of leaders in this neighborhood

THE PLAYERS IN THIS INITIATIVE (CONT'D)

- ✘ **NIMROD**, a neighborhood association
- ✘ **Edgerton Neighborhood Associations** –
Composed of leaders in the neighborhood
- ✘ **City of Rochester Neighborhood Center**
- ✘ **Rochester Health Foundation** and its
independent consultant
- ✘ **Grace United Ministry** – A local agency that
provides emergency financial assistance

A BRIEF HISTORY

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- ✘ George Bush, 11 years ago
- ✘ Coupled the White House Office of Community and Faith-Based Initiatives with the creation of similar offices in 10 federal departments
- ✘ Helped mobilize partnerships across racial, ethnic, class and religious boundaries.
- ✘ This effort has remained with some changes under President Obama.

BRIEF HISTORY CONT'D

- ✘ This federal initiative helped create the social environment in which this local partnership developed
- ✘ Started with the placement of Roberts Wesleyan College MSW student interns in Grace United Methodist Church
 - + This predominantly white denomination placed a black pastor at Grace United Methodist Church
 - + The church reached out to the new comers in the neighborhood who were poor Black and Hispanics.
 - + Prior Church Composition: Primarily elderly White people who still live in the neighborhood or commute back to the church
 - + As staff were added to the church, they reached out to the newcomers (including new immigrant population from Burma)

BRIEF HISTORY CONT'D

- ✘ A few years later a suburban, rural, and urban faith-based group, Project URGE was formed that helped to develop the church outreach ministries
- ✘ Six years ago, an organization composed of community and university partners, Community and University Partnership Program (CUPP) was formed that received funding through Foodlink, the local food bank, from the U.S Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Children and Family Services
 - + to build capacity of 25 grassroots faith-based and community groups.
 - + Grace United Methodist Church was one that was chosen and formed its nonprofit, Grace Community Village

BRIEF HISTORY CONT'D

Purposes were:

- + To attract external funding and volunteer support
- + Provide a legal buffer for the church
- + Enable the church to attract more volunteers
- + Enable the church to attract government, foundation, business, and other external funding that would be hesitant to fund a religious organization.

MAJOR PLAYERS' ENGAGEMENT IN THIS CONTINUUM

- ✘ Grace community Village (GCV)
 - + The primary social and health care organization in the neighborhood – through the Wellness In Neighborhood (WIN) program, GVC began its engagement with the community through a strategy of community assessment that uses the “Asset-Based Community Development” model developed by Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) to overcome health disparities.

MAJOR PLAYERS' ENGAGEMENT IN THIS CONTINUUM

- ✘ The Kretzmann and McKnight Model,
 - + “Leads toward the development of policies and activities based on the capacities, skills, and assets of lower income people”

GVC'S RATIONALE FOR USING THIS MODEL IS FOUNDED ON,

- ✘ “Historic evidence indicates that significant community development takes place only when local community people are committed to investing themselves and their resources in the effort, (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

GVC'S RATIONALE FOR USING THIS MODEL IS FOUNDED ON, CONT'D

- ✘ The second reason for emphasizing the development of the internal assets of local urban neighborhoods is that the prospect for outside help is bleak indeed. The hard truth is that development must start from within the community and, in most of our urban neighborhoods, there is no other choice (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

THE OTHER MAJOR COMMUNITY PLAYERS

- ✘ Maplewood Neighborhood Association (MNA) – GCV is located on the dividing line between MNA and Edgerton Neighborhood Association (ENA). These associations are composed of important neighborhood people that include a county legislator and other civic leaders who grew up here.
- ✘ A number of large corporations within 1 to 2 miles radius
- ✘ Maplewood Library – In the Maplewood neighborhood
- ✘ YMCA satellite center

NEIGHBORHOOD DEMOGRAPHICS SUPPLIED BY WESTSIDE MEDICAL CENTER

- ✘ The Woodward center provides service to a predominantly African American population
- ✘ Brown Square Center serves a variety of races and nationalities that includes:
 - + Latino, Southeast Asian, African American, Eastern European
 - + Refugees from African Countries
 - + Approximately 59% of their patients are African American, 20% are Caucasian, 12% are Hispanic, and 9% are Asian

RECENT CHALLENGES OR THREATS TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

- ✘ Increased Unemployment
- ✘ More transience of residents
- ✘ More conversion of owner-occupied properties to rental properties
- ✘ Increased Criminal Activity: Open air drug sales, prostitution, home invasions, auto theft, shootings, murders
- ✘ Increased Poverty
- ✘ Increased number of vacant properties and defaults
- ✘ Closure of Wegmans Store
- ✘ Vacant Businesses

HOW IS THE NEIGHBORHOOD POSITIONED TO UNDERTAKE THIS PROJECT

- ✘ Grace United Methodist Church under its black pastor, Rev. George Nicholas, has opened itself to serve the community
- ✘ Grace Community Village has transformed the church's Deacon's Table by binding together the diverse populations, that include the homeless and those at risk of homelessness, into building relationships and recognizing their commonality
- ✘ Many residents who came for a free meal are now preparing and serving meals to others

THE ROLE OF THE HEALTH FOUNDATIONS

- ✘ The director convened a meeting of faith and neighborhood based organizations to present a concept that was not accepted in the traditional social service community
- ✘ Simply stated, he set forth the concept that neighborhoods could only improve if they were organized and led by people who lived in the neighborhood.
- ✘ He indicated that his foundation has prepared a proposal to fund neighborhood organizations in each of the four quadrants of the city of Rochester whose purpose was to organize their respective neighborhoods to address the social and health care needs

ORGANIZING THE NEIGHBORHOOD

- ✘ Grace United Methodist Church, through its non profit organization, GCV, submitted a proposal responding to this request that was approved and funded. A social worker employed by the foundation (Zappia) and an independent consultant provided support and guidance to the staff person from GVC, who organized and served as the director of the Wellness in Neighborhood Project that is composed of neighborhood people.

TENSIONS AMONG THE PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

- ✘ The Health Foundation cut the funding of GCV Wellness in Neighborhood Project that forced the GCV staff persons to be laid off
- ✘ The Wellness in Neighborhood Project pressed the church pastor to contact the Health Foundation
- ✘ The pastor felt that the foundation was racially biased and therefore refused to contact the director of the foundation. In the conclusion of an article by Potapchuk & Villarosa (2004) “As a proportion of total foundation giving, grants to communities of color have been falling...Predominately white organizations must think about how they partner with predominately people-of-color organizations and how resources are being shared in the community.”

TENSIONS AMONG THE PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS CONT'D

- ✘ Reasons given by the foundation for cutting the funds from GCV's Wellness in Neighborhood Project:
 - + Not realistic in scope
 - + Wasn't a year long resident-driven process
 - + More of a service model than the ABCD (Asset Based Community Development) model
 - + Concerned that GVC would not be able to get the number of volunteers they needed (a core group)
 - + Outcomes not as well defined as needed to be

TENSIONS AMONG THE PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS CONT'D

- ✘ Assessment by the presenter
 - + Lack of communication appears to have been a problem among the staff of GVC, the independent consultant retained by the foundation, and the staff of the foundation
 - + Race was certainly an issue
 - + Lack of understanding of how the 2 top leaders of GCV work with their neighbors, since they live in the neighborhood
 - + The director of Wellness in Neighborhood Project actually constructed an Asset Mapping instrument that was so well done that the city staff working in the neighborhood and other neighborhood leaders used the instrument in their neighborhoods