



**THE STATE OF THE
COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT
INFRASTRUCTURE OF
CENTRAL NEW YORK**



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Mission Statement

The Onondaga Citizens League fosters informed public discourse by identifying and studying critical community issues affecting Central New York, developing recommendations for action, and communicating study findings to interested and affected groups.

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Onondaga Citizens League is a public service program sponsored by University College of Syracuse University.

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Table of Contents

Letter from the Co-Chairs	3
The Study Process	4
Summary Findings	8
The History of Community Engagement in Central New York	9
Citizen Engagement and Disengagement	11
Community Action and Engagement	17
Municipal Engagement	21
Private Sector Engagement	26
Media Engagement	29
How Other Communities Engage	31
Findings and Recommendations	33
Study Resources	35
Study Participants	36
Study Session Questions	37

Letter from the Co-Chairs

“The essence of community, its heart and soul, is the non-monetary exchange of value; things we do and share because we care for others, and for the good of the place.”

— Dee Hock, founder and former CEO of the Visa credit card association

Look around. You will see a woman picking up her neighbors’ kids from school. You’ll see people participating in a community spring cleanup day. You’ll see people attending a listening session or roundtable discussion about lead abatement, I-81 or any of a dozen other community issues. You’ll see people marching, petitioning or simply talking with their elected representatives at a local festival. The ways that people engage with their community are as varied and diverse as our population. It happens a thousand times every day, in a thousand different forms, so you can imagine the challenge of trying to produce a study about community engagement that had some defined parameters and yet was still informative.

But we knew that if we were to ever complete this study, we would have to do just that. What we finally landed on is not comprehensive, but it is representative of a significant aspect of community engagement — the ways people attempt to make a positive impact on the wider community. This is in no way a reflection on the importance of volunteer activities like those available in scouting, in PTAs, with Meals on Wheels or coaching the local Little League. In fact, a strong argument can be made that this type of personal, one-on-one engagement can have a more powerful impact on the lives of people than many of the more “wholesale” forms of engagement. But for the purposes of this study we are focusing on those “big picture” types of engagement where citizens coalesce to advocate for change.

Even with limiting the scope of the study, we still had a daunting task. So many organizations, so many communities, so many voices — how would we ever begin to even scratch the surface of this behemoth?

Fortunately, we were blessed with an amazing group of dedicated, passionate, intelligent and hard-working volunteers

working on our steering committee for this study. The different aspects of our topic were divided into the chapters you will see in this report, and the study committee broke up into sub-committees to tackle each part. We cannot begin to thank the members of the committee enough, as the amount of effort they put in is astounding. They epitomized the idea of what community engagement is. This study truly belongs to them.

We would also like to thank the individuals who participated on panels, roundtables or listening sessions and shared their experiences and valuable insights with us. The fact that you found the time to spend with us is a testament to your commitment to making Central New York a better place.

Also, since this is a study about community engagement, we would be remiss if we did not thank the many people from the community who came to our sessions to hear what the panelists had to say, asked intelligent questions and took the time to fill out the surveys. We appreciate your input and hope you found the panels useful and informative.

We also want to thank Eileen Jevis and Carrie McDonald of University College of Syracuse University. How they manage to do everything they do for the OCL study and still fulfill their other obligations is beyond us.

Finally, we want to say a huge thank you to our study writer, Caroline Reff. Her comprehensive note taking, organizational ability and obvious writing and editing skills have made this report into something of which we can all be proud.



Tom Carlin and Patti Giancola Knutsen, co-chairs



The Study Process

“The Onondaga Citizens League fosters informed public discourse by identifying and studying critical community issues affecting Central New York, developing recommendations for action and communicating study findings to interested and affected groups.”

Each year, members of the OCL board of directors propose various ideas to pursue for the study topic. After careful consideration of what kinds of information might be the most valuable to the community and in keeping with OCL’s mission, the board reaches a consensus and moves forward in selecting study co-chairs to frame, design and facilitate the overall project. Preliminary research, followed by scoping and design sessions, result in a study prospectus.

This year, the OCL board decided that *The State of the Community Engagement Infrastructure of Central New York* was an issue of great importance to not only the city of Syracuse but every corner of Onondaga County. This topic was a challenging one, as it has many facets, definitions and interpretations, but through focus groups, public study sessions, anecdotal research, and interaction with various citizens and community leaders, the board was able to successfully make inroads into this

vital topic. We dug into our area’s history, held study sessions with young leaders, the media and community engagers; and surveyed and held conversations with citizens who represented a multitude of ages, races, genders and socio-economic backgrounds. We spoke to experts, as well as average people on the streets. We surveyed those who attended festivals, club meetings and neighborhood gatherings (see survey sidebar on page 24). We called upon politicians, Millennials, educators and those who operate and work with both nonprofits and for-profit organizations that serve so many in Central New York. Through this we’ve learned a great deal about what is happening in our community — both the good and the bad. We’ve heard conflicting opinions, new ideas, skepticism, pain, frustration, hope, fortitude, perseverance and, of course, stories of challenges, failures and triumphs. Through this study, we’ve highlighted Central New York’s successes, as well as worked to identify and recommend changes necessary to fill the gaps in community engagement.

Why is this study needed? The OCL’s original proposal stressed that understanding the infrastructure for community engagement is important for several reasons, not the least of which is that the health of a community is increasingly linked to

meaningful opportunities for engagement. Research suggests that communities with strong foundations of engagement have better levels of equity, government efficiency and trust, as well as higher tax bases, better management of public finances, less corruption, and public expenditures that are more likely to benefit low-income citizens and reduce poverty. Generating a broader understanding and ownership of community engagement is not only important but necessary to improving and sustaining a community's infrastructure and reaping the potential benefits of the ideas stated above. The democratic principles that animate community engagement suggest that citizens should, as a matter of right, have a say in how their communities function. Finally, every community has a foundation of engagement — some are strong; others are weak. Some create opportunities, while others not only undermine potential benefits but have the ability to do harm. An assessment of the strength of the infrastructure community engagement in Central New York is critical to the way we live, work and prosper today and far into the future.

Defining Community Engagement

The first challenge we faced was defining the term “community engagement.” What is it? Would it be better to call it “civic engagement”? What about “citizen engagement”? Are these terms interchangeable? A second challenge was reining in such a wide and varied topic. What does it mean to be engaged in the community? Does engagement have to be big, loud and make an impact on a grand scale, or can it be small, quiet and create the sparks of better things to come? To some, engagement means monetary donations, grassroots movements to address community issues, or creating small nonprofits to help the underserved. To others, it means joining an organization's board, coaching a Little League team or organizing the neighborhood block party. As you can imagine, it was difficult to determine the boundaries of this study. After research and much discussion, the OCL steering committee decided to use the term “community engagement,” as that seemed to be the words with which most people best identified. We also made the decision to define community engagement as mechanisms that truly effect change in a meaningful and impactful way to better improve political, social, environmental, cultural and other important issues throughout Onondaga County. We've defined the infrastructure

for community engagement as the laws, policies, processes, institutions and associations that support regular opportunities for people to connect with each other, solve problems, make decisions and, best of all, celebrate community.

It should be noted that this is an anecdotal study, not a statistical one. Yes, we've done our homework, checked our sources, surveyed and spoken to many, and we will present various documented facts and figures, but many of our findings have been arrived at by speaking to people with “boots on the ground” — the people who are working every day to effect change in our community. This OCL study does not claim to present an airtight conclusion on community engagement in Central New York, but it does intend to shine a brighter light on the successes we've seen and the work that still needs to be accomplished.

Survey on Community Engagement

The OCL made it a priority to reach out to groups and individuals that might not always attend its traditional study sessions while conducting this study on community engagement. To that end, a brief survey was created that could be shared for online completion or utilized in paper form for outreach at community events or meetings of citizens in CNY. During the study process, 423 surveys were completed. Survey questions, while not scientific, were formed by questions on civic engagement used in surveys by the Pew Research Center, the U.S. Census and the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement. The survey was administered between August and October 2017 and promoted widely to maximize representation across geographic and demographic subpopulations.

Survey Questions:

- In the past three years, have you worked with other people to fix a problem or improve a condition in your community? If yes, what types of things did you work on (crime, equal rights, health care access or a condition, physical improvements, political / campaigns, government issues, other)?
- In the past three years, have you attended any of the following events (community meeting, organized march or protest, school meeting, political meeting or rally, other)?
- How often do you attend meetings about community issues?
- Over the past three years, have you participated in the following (neighborhood organization, faith-based organization, community-based organization, as a volunteer in another way, other)?
- What makes you want to be involved in your community (crime in the community, equal rights, health care access; or a condition, physical improvements, political campaigns, government issues, other)?
- What stops you from being involved or more involved? (lack of time, language concerns, more important priorities, not interested in being involved, not knowing what to be involved in; safety concerns, other)?
- Tell us about yourself (zip code, gender, age, ethnicity).

Survey Representation: The following table compares the demographic distribution of survey responders to Onondaga County demographics. Most categories are representative with the exception of gender (the number of women being more than double the number of men) and persons under 18 years of age (22 percent below the county ratio). Geographically, city and non-city residents overall were fairly represented, with 40 percent of survey responders living in Syracuse and 54 percent living outside the city but within the county. In total, about half (34) of the county's 62 residential zip codes were represented.

		Survey Sample	Onondaga County	Difference
Gender	Female	74%	52%	+22%
	Male	26%	48%	-22%
Race/Ethnicity	White (non-Hispanic)	81%	77%	+4%
	Black/African American	13%	12%	+1%
	Two+ Races	3%	3%	0%
	Hispanic	2%	4%	-2%
	Asian/Pacific Islander	1%	4%	-3%
Age	Under 18 years	1%	23%	-22%
	Age 18-65	73%	63%	+10%
	Age 65 Plus	26%	14%	+12%

Survey Findings: Survey results were interpreted as reflecting the views of engaged, rather than non-engaged individuals, given that completing a survey in itself demonstrated a willingness to be involved at some level. Again, as the survey is not a scientific study, findings are primarily useful in identifying areas for continued inquiry and discussion. Note: survey questions do not total 100 percent as most allowed respondents to check more than one answer.

The following information resulted from the surveys:

- **Recent Engagement:** Seventy-nine percent of respondents reported that they had worked with other people to fix a problem or improve a condition in their community in the last three years. Twenty-one percent reported they had not. This is consistent with the assumption that survey respondents were largely those already engaged.
- **Types of Issues:** When asked about the types of issues that they are involved in, 32 percent said political campaigns, 29 percent said health care, 29 percent said public school issues, 28 percent said physical improvement to the community, 23 percent said equal rights, 20 percent said government issues and 19 percent said crime. Thirteen percent reported “other” issues, including housing (19 percent), poverty (18 percent), economic development (18 percent), environmental issues (12 percent), food accessibility (11 percent), immigration (9 percent), civic engagement (5 percent), zoning (4 percent) and parks (4 percent). That no one issue stood out significantly reinforces what we heard in small discussion groups and study sessions — people engage in a wide range of issues that are most important to them.
- **Types of Events:** The types of events attended most frequently were community meetings (83 percent), political meetings/rallies (47 percent), school meetings (40 percent) and organized marches for protests (37 percent). The significantly higher percentage of “community meeting” responses is consistent with input from small discussion groups regarding a preference to be active in one’s neighborhood or local community.
- **Frequency:** When asked how frequently they attended community events, the plurality reported at least monthly (35 percent) followed by two to three times per year (27 percent), one to two times per year (19 percent), very infrequently (18 percent) and not at all (13 percent). Additional analyses would help determine whether and how frequency varies by demographics and types of activity and issue.
- **Types of organizations/activities:** When asked about participation in selected organizations and activities, 76 percent voted in elections, 67 percent participated in community organizations, 46 percent participated in neighborhood organizations and 43 percent participated in faith-based organizations. Additional research would help understand the 24 percent who do not vote in elections and why, as well as how participation in different organizations does and does not vary across demographics.
- **Issues driving engagement:** Of the issues that drive respondents to be involved, equal rights (47 percent) was reported most frequently, followed by physical improvements (43 percent), health care (41 percent), public school issues (40 percent), crime (36 percent), government issues (32 percent), political campaigns (31 percent) and “other” (13 percent, including economic development, environmental issues, poverty, housing arts and immigration). Again, the spread of responses is consistent with input from small discussion groups and study sessions — people engage in a wide range of issues that are most important to them. Further research would help to understand whether and how the issues that drive engagement vary by demographic.
- **Barriers to Engagement:** The primary barriers reported were “more important priorities” (65 percent) and “don’t know how to be involved” (21 percent). Other responses (between 5 percent and 10 percent) included “can’t make a difference,” “no organizations that meet my interests,” safety concerns and lack of interest, as well as language concerns, not registered to vote, mobility, transportation and childcare (under 2 percent). A better understanding is needed of the 65 percent who reported “having more important priorities” if this group is to become more engaged. The other 35 percent reported barriers that can be addressed through education and outreach on how to be engaged and why (including voter registration) and by providing resources to address tangible barriers (language, mobility, transportation and childcare).

Summary Findings

We've learned a lot through our surveys and discussions, and while the information that follows will detail those findings, there are some that clearly stand out.

1. Individuals are far more likely to become engaged when others invite them. Few join a cause or organization from a notice tacked to a wall or an announcement through traditional media.
2. People help other people to engage. Word of mouth is a powerful tool in encouraging community engagement. Those brought up in a culture of engagement often continue to effect change throughout their lifetimes. Employers who foster a culture of community engagement — with or without personal incentive — also have a great influence on those who decide to engage.
3. Citizens tend to engage in issues that affect them personally, and many of these issues are controversial. Like it or not, controversy or perceived injustice can often spark engagement.
4. Those who want to engage must continue to be motivated and feel that their efforts are making a difference and that their input is valued. Those whose words or efforts fall on deaf ears are often quickly discouraged.
5. “Go to where the people are” was a strong underlying theme for increased community engagement. However, those looking to engage others must understand the need for a level of trust first. Even with the best of intentions, strangers are often ineffective in pulling others in, while those who live, work and communicate within a community are often much more successful.
6. Time, economics and apathy are clear factors in the various levels of engagement within the community. Many are busy with career, family and many other obligations. Others are working two or more jobs to make ends meet and simply can't afford to get involved. And for some, there is a certain apathy. A number of citizens are not concerned or educated about issues that affect them; others have become desensitized and simply do not care.
7. There is occasionally a redundancy of efforts and/or a lack of coordination and collaboration among different community action organizations, which can be detrimental to overall success. Sometimes, it is due to lack of research, but it is often due to groups with complementary missions not communicating or, in some cases, not being aware of each other's existence.
8. The media has changed in how it covers the news of our community. Economics, an age of distrust and “fake news,” and the predominance of social media have changed the way we as citizens find, absorb and interpret the news. At the same time, the media has developed a sense of “give the people what they want” in order to keep its doors open, which in turn has minimized the amount of community news covered.
9. Finally, assumptions should not be made about the engagement level in any community or neighborhood. A large number of people believe they are, in fact, engaged in their community, even though their efforts might not fall into the textbook definition of what others consider to be “community engagement.” Great care should be taken before outsiders make judgements of what level of community engagement exists within individual communities.



Jerry Rescue Statue located in Syracuse, NY

The History of Community Engagement in Central New York

According to information from the Onondaga Historical Association and other resources, Central New York has a long history of community engagement that has truly effected change, not only here but across the nation. There are many examples, but a few truly stand out.

Long before Onondaga County and the city of Syracuse were established, the Haudenosaunee, a Native American group, took great pride and responsibility in being the caretakers of the land that surrounds us. They provided a model of democratic self-governance that inspired our county's foundation.

Sometime later came community efforts that ranged from the fight for women's suffrage and the abolitionism movement to the beginning of community action agencies like ProLiteracy. Throughout our history, citizens of Central New York have pulled together to help others and work to make our area a better place to live.

From the early 1800s, citizens in the northern United States were building the momentum of the abolitionist movement, an effort

to end the scourge of slavery. It is well known that Syracuse played a key role, as it was a stop on the Underground Railroad, a network of routes and safe houses used to bring slaves from the south into free states and Canada. One of the best-known examples surrounds Rev. Jermain Wesley Loguen, nicknamed the "Underground Railroad King," who helped free runaway slave William "Jerry" Henry in 1851 from the Clinton Square jail in downtown Syracuse with the help of citizens primarily from the African-American community. Henry eventually made his way to freedom in Ontario, Canada. Today, the Jerry Rescue Monument, located in downtown Syracuse's Clinton Square, proudly represents this community's support of the abolitionist movement and the brave citizens who risked their lives for others' freedom.¹ While the birthplace of women's suffrage is not within the borders of Onondaga County, it is just 48 miles away in Seneca Falls, New York, so our area was part of this historical movement. Matilda Joselyn Gage, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony were the founding members of the National Woman Suffrage Association. Gage was, in fact, born in Cicero, New York, and her home in Fayetteville, New York, today stands as a museum of sorts. Its foundation supports educational resources

for human rights dialogue.² In addition, Susan B. Anthony made her first public speech at the 1852 National Women's Rights Convention held in Syracuse. While suffrage was not granted to women in New York State until 1917 and the 19th Amendment was not ratified until 1920, Central New Yorkers involved in the roots of this movement forever changed the lives of women in this community and throughout the country.

In 1917, Syracuse Mayor Walter R. Stone gathered together 100 area businesses to establish a "War Chest" with the idea of using half of the money to benefit charitable work in the city and the other half to use nationwide and overseas. Less than a month later, \$1,118,730 had been pledged — more than \$500,000 over the mayor's original \$600,000 goal.

In 1921, the Syracuse Community Chest was incorporated, and its fundraising efforts became a yearly event as volunteers and donors contributed their time and money. In 1972, the Syracuse Community Chest became a part of the United Way of Central New York, which continues this tradition of giving and collaboration today as it addresses some of the area's most pressing needs.³

One of the most outstanding examples of community engagement in Central New York, however, is the story of Ruth Colvin, "the mother of the adult literacy." In her 50s, she discovered that there were approximately 11,000 functionally illiterate citizens in our community, according to the 1960 U.S. Census. In 1962, Colvin began Literacy Volunteers of America

right here in Central New York, which has since transformed into ProLiteracy Worldwide, the largest adult literacy organization in the United States. Today, ProLiteracy is headquartered in the city of Syracuse. Its global network supports 1,000 member organizations in the United States and partners in 20 developing countries.⁴

Other community engagement movements include the Syracuse Peace Council, which was founded in 1936 as an anti-war/ social justice organization and is the oldest local, autonomous, grassroots peace and social justice organization in the United States.

Syracuse University has a long history of community engagement since its establishment in 1870. Many faculty and students were active in the civil rights movement during the 1960s. These efforts motivated some in Central New York's African-American neighborhoods, particularly those displaced from the 15th Ward, to protest discrimination related to urban renewal and the availability of housing and employment. Today, the university continues its support through scholarships for the underserved, collaborations with nonprofits and funding for the arts.

These are just some of the success stories that speak to the history of community engagement in Onondaga County. There are too many to count, but one thing is clear — from the very beginning, many of our citizens have made community engagement a priority despite obstacles, dangers, fear, discrimination, apathy and, in many cases, overwhelming need.



Harriet Tubman, full-length portrait, U.S. Library of Congress Prints

Citizen Engagement and Disengagement

The OCL held a study session on the Generational Perspective on Community Engagement with a panel of five individuals, including Janet Mallan, a member of the League of Women Voters; Debra Person, CEO and founder, Exodus 3 Ministries; John DeSantis, founder and executive director, Believe in Syracuse; Walt Dixie, executive director, Jubilee Homes, and the founder of the Alliance Network; and Donna Reese, outreach worker, Aurora of CNY, and the former president of the Syracuse/Onondaga NAACP. In addition, OCL held a number of discussion circles with groups throughout Central New York and also collected 423 surveys on community engagement at various locations and events during the fall of 2017.

“Go to where the people are.” If there was one theme heard throughout the OCL study on community engagement, it was this. However, there was a stipulation: “Go to where the people are – but only after you’ve earned their trust.” The majority of people included in the study were more than willing to contribute and share their opinions, but in many cases there was a certain level of skepticism of those considered to be from the “outside” swooping in, asking questions, making suggestions and then quickly leaving without any short- or long-term follow-up. This is a common occurrence in various Syracuse neighborhoods, particularly those in the inner city and/or areas attracting “new Americans” — immigrants and refugees new to Central New York.

Those on the panel were particularly passionate about our community — both the good and the bad. Several had lived through hardships themselves — from homelessness to depression and disability — which inspired their involvement as a means of redemption or giving back. Others were instilled from a young age with a sense of responsibility for their community that prompted them to take action.

Walt Dixie, executive director of Jubilee Homes, for example, grew up in the 15th Ward and was inspired by his mother and aunts who were very politically active in the 1960s. He called

them “warriors” and said his inspiration to become an involved citizen came from watching them, as well as from clergy members and “a body of folks who stood up for justice.”

Donna Reese, former president of the local NAACP and now an outreach worker at Aurora of CNY, said she used to “mind her own business” but became highly motivated when her nephew went missing for six months and was eventually found murdered in 1993. “I couldn’t get the community involved in helping us find him,” she said. Soon after her nephew’s death, she joined the NAACP answering telephones and learning from others. This eventually gave her a platform to become more involved in what was “going on in her own backyard.”

Reese talked about the importance of including people from all walks of life in order to improve community engagement and find a common ground. You can’t say, “It’s those folks’ issues.” People have to be brought to the table,” she said. “I never thought at 47 years old I could go blind and be hearing impaired. I speak from experience. Yes, I was a teen mother. Yes, I was evicted. I talk to people who have been through what I’ve been through in my life. I’ve been there and done that.”

The panel spoke frankly about the impediments that keep citizens from becoming involved. Janet Mallan, a member of the League of Women Voters, said, “People don’t realize the importance of becoming engaged... but (they) need to make decisions about those elected to local office. Many think ‘what does it matter?’ but (elected officials) make decisions about your daily, personal life.” She also noted a lack of civic education in our public schools, which she believes fails to educate today’s youth about the importance of community engagement.

John DeSantis, founder and executive director of Believe in Syracuse, noted that apathy and cynicism are intertwined. “Syracuse is very pessimistic and cynical — there’s a lot of dwelling on the negative,” he said. “Lack of civic pride is an impediment.” He added that it is essential to make people believe

in themselves and in their community, which is at the heart of Believe in Syracuse. “We try to inspire pride and that good things that are possible,” he said.

Debra Person, CEO and founder of Exodus 3 Ministries, emphasized the importance of “meeting people where they are at,” stating that the dinner table is where people have real conversations about real issues. “We need to open our doors and look people in their eyes. Not meeting people where they are at is crippling our community,” she said.

Before Person started Exodus Ministries, which provides holistic services and safe environments to women and children, she first visited people’s homes to see what they really needed. Often it was simple things like plates, furniture and help cleaning their homes. “There are so many gifted people in the city of Syracuse ... young boys and girls on the Southside with so many gifts, but we don’t want to come out from behind our desks,” she added. “That’s community engagement, up close and personal — rolling up your sleeves and meeting people where they are at.”

While several on the panel shared the hardships in the community, some also expressed hope for change. “We can always do better,” said DeSantis. “We are moving in the right direction with conversations like this. A lot of organizations and people care about this community, but we can do more to make people believe in themselves and in their community.”

“Syracuse is a vibrant city. There’s something for everybody, but that doesn’t mean we don’t have challenges,” added Dixie. “We do have good people, but we need to make the leadership know the challenges we face. We need to have solutions in our community. Our voices need to be heard.”

Extending Engagement in a Diverse Space

Through conversations, surveys and research, we gathered a significant amount of additional information about citizen engagement and disengagement. Not all was positive, but it was insightful. Organizations such as PEACE, Inc., the County South Family Resource Center in Tully and the Southside Family Resource Center, the Southside Rotary Club, the Near Westside

Community Impact Team and the Northeast Community Center were willing to distribute our survey questions. Members of the Haudenosaunee invited us into Skä•noñh: Great Law of Peace Center, and we also conversed with some of those who were new to our country and have settled within the boundaries of Onondaga County at “A New American Forum,” a roundtable held at public television station WCNY.

While it may seem obvious, the steps taken in this study shined a light on the great diversity that exists in our larger community — race, gender, ethnicity, economics, education, etc. Today, most of our neighborhoods are multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-generational. This is a positive, of course, but it also brings with it some challenges. How do we extend the message of community engagement in such a diverse space?

Another point that came out of this study was that as a community, we lack a unified message to help bring such a diverse population together. Clearly, that’s a difficult task, but it seems to again start with trust. People told us these messages need to come organically from those who are already a part of neighborhoods. It was clear that many residents of the inner city in particular, feel detached, invisible and undervalued by those living outside of their borders. Interestingly, however, inner city neighborhoods were where we found many citizens who considered themselves truly engaged, even if it wasn’t through traditional channels. These proud citizens care about their communities and the people who live there, despite the obstacles they are often faced with daily. They want to be involved. They want to effect change, and many are doing just that — fighting the barriers of inequality, lack of resources, violence, abuse and discrimination.

Still, there is a certain level of discouragement that creeps in, as these citizens often feel that their efforts go unnoticed. Leadership in inner city neighborhoods is most effective when it comes from inner city residents who are empowered to collect and share the voices of others and foster a greater sense of caring and community engagement that comes from a common experience. They are trusted, respected and listened to — both by residents of their communities and by those in county leadership roles — because they have typically been long-time

members of their communities. In contrast, a number of inner city residents expressed a general distrust of elected officials, noting that politicians often come into their communities saying they are willing to listen but, instead, show up with a pre-determined message.

Welcoming New Americans

OCL participated in a discussion group held at WCNY made up of refugees and New Americans who have been living in the U.S. for nearly ten years or more and are working to have their voices heard. Information was also gathered at the various study sessions held throughout this study process.

New Americans — some immigrants, others refugees — are a vital part of the fabric that makes up Onondaga County today, and their numbers are growing, particularly within the city and surrounding neighborhoods. According to the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, 9,538 refugees settled in Onondaga County between 2007 and 2016. They came from around the world — the top five countries of origin being Burma, Bhutan, Somalia, Iraq and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In 2016, 1,466 refugees arrived in our area — by far the greatest number in the past decade. (It should be noted that in 2017, only 416 refugees were sent to Syracuse, down 72 percent compared to the year prior. According to an article that appeared in *The Post-Standard* on January 28, 2018, this was a direct result of President Donald Trump's immigration restrictions. Still, the number of foreign born individuals in Central New York is growing.)

Often, those from other countries live near each other in order to maintain a certain comfort level through common language, background and culture. Still, these immigrants and refugees are striving to be engaged in the larger Central New York community. They are eager to assimilate, work, go to school, open businesses and pursue their own American dream. According to a study by New American Economy for CenterState CEO and the International Institute of Buffalo (N.Y.), immigrants are driving the economy in our area, contributing over \$2 million to both cities and filling housing vacancies and low-wage manufacturing job openings. However, they want more. They want a voice but

often feel voiceless because of language barriers, immigration status, poverty and a lack of opportunity to be heard. During our study, some told us how they have tried to get engaged in the community but often are intimidated or untrusting of meeting and talking to people who don't look like them, live where they live or speak as they speak. Too often, they believe native-born Americans don't know much about them, fail to speak to them directly and often discriminate against them. Others mentioned that there is little or no engagement between New American parents and their children's teachers, which is considered to be one of the reasons students fail or drop out of school. Most were grateful for the help that the area has provided to New Americans and applaud the various resettlement agencies that assist in acclimating those new to the community and the country. However, they firmly believe that they need to be able to speak for themselves and not have to rely on other people or agencies to speak for them.

A Somali man in the audience at one of the study sessions told the group how this pocket of the community has been "left by themselves," because they don't know how to speak out. "We have people living here like they are in third world countries," he said, noting that the city of Syracuse has one of the highest poverty rates in the U.S. "There are a lot of things we can fix, but we have to reach people."

In speaking to various groups that might be considered the underserved in our community, we found commonalities and differences, but a few things are clear. There is a true need to bring people of all colors, ethnicities and backgrounds together to build a shared sense of collective pride in Syracuse and Onondaga County. We must strive to be flexible and tailor our messages and methods of delivery to those we are trying to engage in a way that incorporates the cultures and customs of those around us, while at the same time open our ears to what they have to say. Everyone is entitled to the opportunity to be civically engaged and given the resources to enable them to do so. We must invite those different from us to engage, build a sense of trust and pride, foster organic leaders in the smaller pockets of our community, and acknowledge the contributions that all citizens are already making or seeking to make in the future.



CIVIC UPSELL: “WE CAN DO THIS IN OUR OWN COMMUNITY.”

OCL held a study session called *The Big Picture: Community Engagement in the Syracuse Area* featuring Tina Nabatchi, associate professor of public administration and international affairs at Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. Nabatchi, an OCL board member, authored the original proposal for this community engagement study and has focused much of her recent work on civic participation and the challenges in public administration.⁵

While much of this session revolved around asking the audience how it defined community engagement and what purpose it serves, Nabatchi did offer her perspective, noting that people are typically willing to engage in positive events in their communities and often to engage on issues about which they feel strongly. However, citizens tend to shy away from the more typical opportunities for engagement, such as those held by city and county agencies and officials, which are often attended by the “usual suspects” and do not reflect the true diversity of our community.

In addition to the challenges of recruiting diverse participants, Nabatchi also noted that it was important to consider the topics with which we are asking people to engage. For example, many Millennials are looking for engagement opportunities but tend to become involved in causes and issues that are more “worldly” or “impactful” than those they see through traditional channels at the local level. Like other groups, they not only need to be invited to participate but are seeking opportunities where they can have meaningful voices on meaningful issues.

Through the audience's many opinions and suggestions on community engagement, a clear theme emerged: the need for effective leadership. “In the political realm and in community organizations, some leaders are great motivators with their followers or staff, but it often takes a different kind of leader to work with the broader public or diverse groups,” Nabatchi said. She also noted two additional challenges. First, many leaders don't know how to design effective participation processes and are only familiar with the “three-minutes at the microphone” approach in governmental meetings. Second, there are a lot of organizations in the area that are trying to do meaningful work, but so many of them are vying for the same limited resources. This forces leaders to focus on the survival of their own organizations, instead of figuring out how to collaborate with one another and leverage shared resources.

Despite these challenges, Nabatchi remained hopeful. “As a community, we need to build networks and not reinvent the wheel all the time. We need to connect our structures and processes for engagement to provide regular, meaningful opportunities for people to participate on a host of important issues,” she said. Nabatchi noted the “civic upsell” as a tool that might help in this regard. “In restaurants, I don't want to sell you a glass of wine. I want to upsell you to buy the whole bottle,” she said. “In our community, I don't just want you to engage in a single activity or a single issue. I want to civically upsell so that you engage in multiple forums on multiple issues. We can do this in our own community.”



POLICE-CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT: A COMPLEX ISSUE

OCL could not complete an accurate study on community engagement without a mention of interaction between the police and citizens of Central New York. We realize, however, that this is a subject with few easy answers. With that in mind, we referenced the content of a recent study from July 2017 put out by InterFaith Works, El-Hindi Center for Dialogue called “Seeking a Shared, Safe Community: Police-Community Dialogue,”⁶ as well as interviewed Deputy Chief Richard Shoff and Officer Dennis Burlingame of the Syracuse Police Department’s Community Services Bureau.

Major findings included the following:

- Citizens, particularly those of color, those who live in underserved areas and New Americans, desperately want cooperation, trust and mutual respect.
- Police are frustrated by citizens who, for a variety of reasons, refuse to cooperate or adopt an “I didn’t see anything” attitude that can impede progress.
- Members of the Syracuse Police Department realize the importance of being a visible presence, not only when something bad happens but when there are opportunities for positive interaction, as well. For this reason, the department operates three community policing centers near local parks and eight walk-in storefront policing centers within the boundaries of the city.
- SPD’s community policing officers try to attend everything they can, including sporting events, neighborhood watch meetings, community game nights and school activities, as well as participate with

organizations like Tomorrow’s Neighborhoods Today, a collaboration that brings people together to make Syracuse a better place to live.

- A recent initiative by the Syracuse Police Department involves assisting New Americans, who are often vulnerable to crime, particularly robberies and burglaries. Sometimes, New Americans are reluctant to report crimes due to language barriers or experiences they’ve had with police in their native countries.
- The police continue initiatives like the Officer Friendly Program in city elementary schools, G.R.E.A.T. (Gang Resistant Education and Training), D.A.RE. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education), a program that addresses drug use, violence, internet safety and other high-risk behavior; Shop with a Cop, a program where officers take children living in poverty on a Christmas shopping spree; and recruitment initiatives aimed at bringing more women and minorities into the police force.

Despite these efforts, there is, of course, still crime, tension and a lack of trust that exist in the community. Clearly, this is a complex issue with no simple answers, but one thing is certain — continuing positive interaction between law enforcement and our citizens, as well as an open dialogue, can only help to better community engagement throughout the city of Syracuse and Onondaga County.



OCL BOARD MEMBER PERSONIFIES COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND THE AMERICAN DREAM



Jai Subedi is ethnically Nepali, but he was born in the southern part of Bhutan. His people were taken from Nepal to Bhutan for labor work, and the government allowed them to stay. However, in 1990, the government enforced a policy of “one nation, one people,” meaning every citizen

had to follow the same culture, religion and language. His family was forced to leave the country. From the age of 12, he lived in refugee camps in Nepal for the next 18 years. Life in the refugee camps was rough, and he suffered from hunger, lack of education and exhaustion. Eventually, he decided he needed to resettle in another place and passed all the screening processes to come to the United States. He arrived in the U.S. on Nov. 13, 2008, and was settled in Syracuse through the assistance of Interfaith Works, a “center for new Americans that provides resettlement and post-resettlement services to help refugees re-establish their lives and overcome barriers to successful integration in their new communities.”⁷ Immediately, Subedi began working on his own version of the American dream making sandwiches at Subway, but soon he was employed at Interfaith Works.

“I lived in a refugee camp for a long time,” he said “I learned how to help others, support teachers and be a part of the good of the community. When I arrived here, I felt I should continue to work helping people integrate.” He began working as an interpreter, then as an assistant case manager, and eventually a case manager and housing coordinator. His engagement with the community wasn’t limited to his employer, however. He has also been president of both the Butternut Community

Police Center and the Bhutanese Community in Syracuse, as well as a member of the Onondaga Citizens League board, the RISE board, the Citizens Cabinet for the city of Syracuse; and the chair of the New American Forum, a coalition of community leaders advocating on behalf of those who have resettled in our community.

Subedi worked very hard to overcome the difficulties he faced as a refugee in the Syracuse community, but he knows from his own experience that it is not easy. He cited many barriers like lack of transportation, language and communication skills, poverty, religion, culture, safety and education. He is certain that the majority of refugees wish to become more engaged in their new communities, but overcoming these barriers is “crucial” to assimilating.

“We need good representation in local, county and state government, as well as with nonprofit organizations,” he said. “We have the New American Forum trying to explore all the (barriers) to build a bridge and advocate on people’s behalf. We need to pull (new Americans) in for neighborhood meetings and encourage them to join such groups and empower their own ethnic-based groups.”

Subedi was laid off from his job at Interfaith Works in the fall of 2017 due to President Donald Trump’s immigration ban, which decreased funding to the agency due to fewer refugee arrivals, but that has not slowed him down. He is running a new business called TruCare Connections, Inc., a home care agency, and he is committed to continuing his work in order to help others like himself become fully engaged in the city they now call home.



Community Action and Engagement

The OCL held a discussion circle with four individuals involved in organizations in the Central New York community that foster community engagement through training, volunteerism, education and access to community leaders. These panelists included James Keib, executive director of FOCUS Greater Syracuse; Eric Ennis, steering committee chair of 40 Below (now called Adapt CNY); Pam Brunet, executive director, Leadership Greater Syracuse; and Melissa Menon, the public relations chair of the OCL board, and talent/community engagement manager, DARCO Manufacturing.

Central New York is rich with organizations targeting citizens, employers and leaders promoting community action through employee development training, volunteer activities, access to community leaders and decisions made through a variety of forums. So much so that often times these organizations overlap — or at least appear to — which can cause market confusion. Those seeking to get involved aren't quite sure what each group does and who its audience is. Even if they do, people often feel a sort of "tribalism" or pressure to choose one group over another. This can often lead to low attendance at events or the same people doing everything for one organization every time, which, in turn, can lead to burnout. For the most part, those interviewed believe an umbrella organization or clearinghouse would be

beneficial to differentiate between community action groups, so that limited resources of time, funding and people are best utilized.

This strategy also would be helpful in inspiring these organizations to take a critical look at their procedures, as well as methods of recruitment, engagement and outreach, to be certain they are still relevant in meeting the needs of their constituents and intended individual missions. Most challenging of all, organizations must be willing to take steps to change if the results of this introspection indicate that is what is necessary to remain viable. It's often a matter of "evolve or die" for many such organizations intending to remain engaged in the community.

A good example of this is 40 Below, an organization "dedicated to providing creative professionals with a platform to engage, connect and create within Central New York and empower individuals to pursue passions and promote our community as a vibrant place to live, work, learn and play." This organization made the decision to take a hard look at itself recently, in part because it was often confused with 40 Under 40, an annual awards ceremony sponsored by BizEventz. This end result for 40 Below included the decision to change its name to Adapt CNY and evolve in a way that "prioritizes community involvement

through education and volunteerism, building professional and social networks, facilitating public art and beautification of our city, and improving transportation options in the area.”

“It took taking a long hard look at this,” said Eric Ennis, who is now president of the newly named organization. “It was controversial, and some of our alums may not agree (with the decision), but we feel best about what we have moving forward.”

Moving forward also means paying close attention to the changes within the potential pool of community engagers. Many are eager to get involved but often don’t know where to start. Organizations like Leadership Greater Syracuse, FOCUS and Adapt CNY are eager to diversify by attracting and retaining members from varying ages, races, genders and socio-economic statuses. The plain truth is that it’s a struggle, but at least part of the answer seems to be “invite, invite, invite.” Those already entrenched must do their part to educate others about their particular organizations and, most importantly, ask others to tag along with them. Some may not respond positively the first time they are asked, so the solution seems to be: ask again. Often, one-on-one invitations prove to be effective, giving people insight to organizations and opportunities in the community while helping them feel comfortable participating in something new.

Of course, not everyone asked will respond positively. “You can’t force people to be involved,” said Pam Brunet, executive director of Leadership Greater Syracuse. “You share your niche and hope people align with you.”

So, what are some of the successful methods these organizations have used to get people engaged? As simple as it may sound, food, beer and wine, and a fun and relaxing environment seem to be keys to success. A lot of community engagement happens after office hours, and it appears that participants are more willing to give up their personal time if they are promised an enjoyable atmosphere. People prefer reciprocal dialogue like networking or Q/A sessions, rather than listening to a speaker or formal presentation. And, while many do care about the greater good, there is a definite need for community action organizations to show individuals how these events and causes benefit their individual goals, as well.

It should be noted, however, that while low membership or sparse turnouts at events can, of course, be demoralizing, numbers aren’t always an absolute indicator of impact. People tend to go to events because they have an interest in the topics presented or the overall purpose of the organization or cause. Sometimes those in attendance are not even familiar with the sponsoring organization, but, in the larger picture, that might be okay. It is nearly impossible to truly measure the take-away and how or if people are inspired to move forward with it.

Breaking Through Millennial Stereotypes

As part of the OCL study, we listened to a number of highly engaged Millennials at a Thursday Morning Roundtable session, a public service program sponsored by University College of Syracuse University with the purpose of discussing civic issues and problems. Panelists included Andrew Lunetta, executive director of Tiny Homes for Good; Captain Melissa Forsyth, comptroller, 174th Attack Wing; Gus Hernandez, a member of the Salvation Army Young Leaders Advisory Council; and Juhanna Rogers, Ph.D., co-founder of CNY Roots.

There are approximately 76 million Millennials in the U.S. today. Born between 1980 and 2000, Millennials are often labeled as apathetic, narcissistic and entitled with unrealistic expectations thanks to their “helicopter” parents who raised them with the sense that they were special. This is the first generation to grow up in a world of electronics and social media. They are often said to be unprepared for the demands of the real world, resulting in underemployment and job instability, and they are expected to be less successful economically than their parents. According to a Pew Research Survey, 50 percent of Millennials don’t affiliate with a specific political party, and only 29 percent consider themselves affiliated with some form of organized religion. They don’t seem to believe in the country’s institutions.

Much of the commentary from this panel counteracted the stereotypes often associated with Millennials, however. Those we listened to were inspired as young children to become engaged in the community through parents or other family members who led by example. That inspiration was contagious, which later led to friends, co-workers and/or employers who further fostered

them as engaged adults. Capt. Melissa Forsyth, comptroller, 174th Attack Wing, a unit of the New York Air National Guard, told the story of how her mother encouraged her to make a small donation to the United Way while working as a teller at a local bank. At first, she balked, but not long after she was pulled into the bank manager's office and told no other 16 year old had ever made a donation. It was at that point that she realized even small efforts can make a big difference, and it stuck with her.

Juhanna Rogers grew up in New Jersey around her grandmother, who ran a drug rehabilitation out of her basement. This, and the influence of other engaged family members and a group of female, African-American role models, set her on a life-long path. This path led her to Syracuse and the co-founding of CNY Roots, a nonprofit agency that works with "corporations, colleges and universities, and community agencies to help retain young professionals of color by creating social and education events and programs that will help young professionals acculturate themselves to Central New York."⁸ "Many of my peers are finding challenges in this community and unapologetically finding solutions," Rogers said, in contrast to the stereotypical idea of Millennials.

As a member of the Salvation Army Young Leaders Advisory Council, Gus Hernandez is another example of a Millennial whose early influences led him to community engagement.

He credits a neighbor who was involved in Big Brothers Big Sisters and often asked him to tag along as a child, which made Hernandez feel included in something special. As he got older, he began serving on various boards and with a number of associations and programs. "How could you not want to be a part of something bigger than yourself?" he said. "Once you've felt it, it's truly contagious."

While some of the negatives associated with Millennials may be true, they certainly don't apply to this panel. Instead, they represent the best that Millennials have to offer. According to whatis.techtarget.com, Millennials are the most ethnically diverse generation to date, so they tend to be more tolerant of others' choices in regard to religion, race, gender and sexual orientation. Like those mentioned above, they are confident and tend to be optimistic about their futures. Satisfaction in the workplace is more important than a huge paycheck, and a work-life balance is a must. Many are concerned with social justice, often choosing with what and whom they will support or engage based on social and economic equality. Clearly, the Millennials are a huge piece of community engagement in Onondaga County — today and well into tomorrow — and, to that end, we must continue to foster their enthusiasm for our community.





MILLENNIAL'S UPBRINGING SPARKED TINY HOMES FOR GOOD



Andrew Lunetta, executive director of Tiny Homes for Good, founded his nonprofit to provide safe, affordable and dignified homes for the homeless while fostering strong community partnerships to ensure resident stability. This type of work was not something new to Lunetta. It was

something engrained in his upbringing. His father, a former priest, met his mother while doing work at the homeless shelter she ran. Lunetta spent much of his childhood in Boston, where it was not unusual for him to see panhandlers and homeless people on every corner. They made him nervous, so one day he asked his mother if they could cross the street to avoid encountering a particular woman who was obviously down on her luck. His mother did not comply with the little boy's request. Instead she led him straight toward the woman and started a conversation. While he was too

young to remember all the details of this encounter, it made a life-long impact.

Years later, despite earning a master's degree in public health that could have pushed him toward a lucrative career, Lunetta felt drawn to help at places like the Oxford Inn, a Syracuse men's homeless shelter. There he formed a friendship with a homeless man named Dolphus. When Lunetta later founded Tiny Homes for Good, it was Dolphus who was always in the back of his mind, and every decision led him to ask, "Would this be good for Dolphus?" It took him a year to find a place to build his first tiny home — only 300 square feet in size but complete with all the necessary amenities — in part due to some push back from the community, but he knew he had to see his vision through. By the end of 2017, Tiny Homes for Good had built five homes with four more in the works and has recently focused on supporting homeless U.S. veterans. He noted Syracuse's "openness to make a real, tangible difference" and said that the city's size makes projects like his tiny homes "very tangible."



Municipal Engagement

The OCL held a public study session with four individuals active in government at the town, village, county and city levels, including Mark Nicotra, town supervisor, Salina; Peggy Chase, Ph.D., 9th District, Onondaga County Legislature; Mark Olson, mayor, Village of Fayetteville; and Helen Hudson, who at the time of the session was councilor-at-large for the Syracuse Common Council but has since been named president.

The members of this study session panel made it clear that community engagement is a struggle. People simply no longer prioritize the time to attend town board meetings, school board meetings or even to vote on school budgets. Opinions pointed to the idea that people don't engage in such activities unless it directly impacts them, even though the panelists agreed that as citizens it was their job to do so.

Mark Olson, mayor of the village of Fayetteville, noted the "90/10" rule: You're never going to hear from 90 percent of the people... and that's not good enough." He shared the story of the village's first tax increase in 13 years (2017-2018) where "nobody showed up" to the meeting to discuss such an important topic. However, when the same community had a discussion on deer culling due

to overpopulation, "We had to move the location because there were so many people in the room," he said.

People are busy, but they can also be apathetic. Many don't feel their opinions or their votes make a difference, so why add one more obligation into their busy schedules? There is also the belief that people become apathetic because issues are discussed ... and discussed, but no decisions are ever made. Mark Nicotra, supervisor of the Town of Salina, mentioned the I-81 renewal project as one example of an issue that many citizens have lost interest in because they don't expect it to be resolved. "There were public meetings, but many couldn't attend, and the information wasn't free flowing," he explained. "It agitated people and turned them off from the process." One audience member at this study session said the I-81 decision "won't be made in my lifetime."

Public officials acknowledge that the ways in which people communicate has certainly shifted, and many municipalities have become more dependent on social media, like Facebook and Twitter, which has proven quite successful in getting pertinent information out to constituents. Some towns and villages have

even begun live-streaming town board meetings, so people can watch from the comfort of their homes. Lost participation on the part of the media has added to the problem, according to municipal leaders, who noted that reporters no longer regularly cover local government, instead opting to call the day after a meeting for an update.

City of Syracuse Common Council President Helen Hudson said that social media is important but that she is the type of person who often jumps right out of her car to have conversations with people on the streets. She likes to attend sit down events in the city, too, and does a lot of listening and gathering of information from Millennials. “These are the ones moving us forward, so I do a lot of Millennial listening,” she said. “You have to bring the young folks to the table to get them civically engaged. We have a lot of civically engaged younger people. They ask questions. They care. They pay attention to social media.”

Hudson also noted that her job is about “listening, hearing and not making snap judgements about anybody.” Her comments also reflected earlier findings on trust issues among races and those from outside a defined community. “Folks have to not be afraid of people who do not look like them — safe neighborhoods, good housing, good education — everybody wants those things,” Hudson said.

Peggy Chase, an Onondaga County legislator representing the 9th District, agreed, noting that she’s found that “being everywhere frequently helps.” Chase makes every effort to be a familiar face at community events and neighborhood watch

meetings, and she writes welcome letters to people who move into the area letting them know how to get involved, how to get their voter registration changed, etc. “Some of my best opportunities to get ideas are from walking the neighborhood,” she said, noting that often the people she wants to hear from are the dog walkers or the people heading home from church. “Those types of interactions make people a lot more willing to talk to you personally about how they feel about things.”

Clearly there is a growing disconnect from the everyday goings-on of municipalities and their citizens. Some concerns certainly do fall on deaf ears or get tied up in committee, which often makes people blame their local governments. But, if we truly want an engaged community, then there is a real responsibility on the part of citizens to consciously choose to care about the decisions made by those representing them. Citizens must put apathetic notions aside and prioritize the time to at least stay informed of local government action, if not fully take part in the process.

To measure the engagement at formal municipal meetings, the OCL looked up the record of attendance at 2017 town board meetings for six towns in Onondaga County whose records were available on the towns’ websites. Regardless of each town’s population, the records show that anywhere between zero and 61 attendees from the public were at any single monthly town board meeting. Median meeting attendance was 10; average attendance was 12. This is far less than one percent of any of the towns’ populations.



FAYETTEVILLE CITIZENS USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO DEFEAT LIBRARY BUDGET

Social media like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are here to stay. Let's face it — we now live in a world where people get their daily news and information, at least in part, from some form of social media. This has become a primary means of communication and, when used properly, an effective tool in community engagement.

What started as an innocuous post on Facebook about budget concerns at the Fayetteville Free Library a couple of years earlier, led a small group of like-minded acquaintances to meet over coffee to air their concerns about lack of transparency, unchecked budget increases and leadership at the FFL. Two years after the first meeting, the group grew and called themselves a library study group. That later became the Citizens for a Transparent Fayetteville Free Library, which launched a Facebook page in early 2017. The group's goal: defeat the FFL's 4 percent budget request.

Utilizing its social capital and networks, this group ran a social media campaign to educate voters in the Fayetteville–Manlius School District about budget issues, including the facts that

FFL has the highest per capita costs in all of the Onondaga County public libraries, and the library director has the highest salary of all in the OCPL system. In addition, board membership was a revolving door, the number of active board members declined to meet the minimum per their charter, and there existed an overall lack of transparency as access to review board meeting minutes was repeatedly denied. With over 100 followers, some of the Facebook posts had a reach of nearly 2,000. Almost 2,700 people came out to vote on this issue. The campaign to reject FFL's budget request was successful as on May 16, 2017, voters rejected the library's budget by over 500 votes — remarkable as it is highly unusual for library budgets to be defeated.

Since the budget defeat, the FFL is making strides to improve the trust with the community and now has the requisite number of board members, including new co-presidents and a treasurer. The library plans on presenting a budget within the tax cap in 2018.

A SURVEY OF ELECTED OFFICIALS

In Onondaga County, a vast majority of residents felt most connected to their local elected officials — those serving in village, town or county levels of government — because they have greater access to them, see them out in the community daily and are often quick to respond. The number of elected officials at these levels is estimated to be about 200. The significant majority of these elected positions are part-time and low paying but still require a huge time commitment. The OCL steering committee sent out approximately 300 surveys with responses from only 28 elected officials — just under 10 percent. This extremely low response rate in itself is a strong statement on community engagement.

Survey questions ranged from “How would you rate the state of engagement in your community?” to “What examples of engagement have been successful and what have not?” Despite the low response rate, the following data was collected:

- 39 percent saw civic engagement as average, while 42 percent considered it weak or underperforming. A number of those who responded felt lack of time was a major factor and that unless a community was facing a huge crisis affecting citizens personally, most people did not get involved.
- Those surveyed agreed that most citizens weren't concerned with issues in their own communities unless they were “not in my back yard” problems or other agenda items of self-interest. Animals, taxes and local crime were some of the things that did, however, raise participation levels.
- Some stated that citizens were “sick of politics” and believed their opinions did not make an impact.
- The majority of respondents thought local government could do a better job communicating information about issues, meetings and gatherings. Face-to-face interaction was suggested as the best way to engage their citizenry. They want to engage residents more but weren't sure of how to do so. A number of officials noted that more coverage of local government by the media would make a difference.
- Respondents suggested that greater education on civic leadership in our schools was important to prompt the next generation of engaged citizens. Some said that the most engaged individuals in their communities today were the elderly.
- There were various methods of engaging citizens suggested — from membership in organizations like the Rotary Club to public access channels, website polling, social media and letters to the editor. Two of the methods currently underutilized included traditional mail and using email for regular notices and information.
- Interestingly, a few elected officials took a “no news is good news” stance saying that they were elected to represent their constituents and they do so. If people aren't complaining, then the officials assume they must be doing their jobs right.

VOTER PARTICIPATION

The initial intention of this study was to include an in-depth look at the connection between voter participation and community engagement in Onondaga County. In brief, what we learned showed low voter turnout, limited turnout on issues pertaining to one's own municipality, a lack of informed voting and little correlation between the number of citizens registered to vote and the number who actually go out to vote on Election Day. Statistics from the Onondaga County Board of Elections from 2017 indicated that 285,126 citizens in the 433 voting districts throughout the county were registered to vote. Only 106,053 turned out to vote in 2017 — 37 percent participation. The districts with the highest number of registered voters included both the city and the suburbs

of Clay, Camillus and Lysander. The top ten districts with the lowest number of registered voters were all within the city of Syracuse. Historically, voter turnout in the county is highest during presidential election years, followed by mid-term elections, and lowest during off-year elections.

The decision by the board of directors of the Onondaga Citizens League was to expand this intriguing topic, selecting it as the focus of the next OCL study. The 2019 OCL study will take a deep dive into the how, when and why (or why not) of voter participation in our community. Stay tuned.





Private Sector Engagement

A study session was held with representatives from a variety of for-profit companies of various sizes throughout Onondaga County, including Alissa Viti, charitable and community relations manager at M&T Bank; Jan Quitzau, director of marketing for Bousquet Holstein; Lisa Mondello, director of corporate communications and public relations at SRC, Inc.; and Laura Serway, a business development consultant and co-owner of Laci's Tapas Bar. These businesses were selected specifically because they each have a strong history of community engagement, which extends directly into their workplace culture.

In addition, OCL sent out a survey to other private sector organizations of all sizes. While the response was very low, those who did respond seemed to agree that they promoted employee engagement in the community, had a strategic giving plan, and thought that employee engagement benefitted their businesses, as well as employee recruitment and retention.

Each company represented on the panel seemed to approach community engagement a bit differently, but all made it a purposeful part of their workplace culture — a theme shared with every employee from the top tier to the newly hired.

Larger organizations often have more employees and greater resources, but that doesn't make choosing how to engage in the community any easier. Companies are "overwhelmed with asks," from hundreds of nonprofit organizations and community causes. The days of dependable annual donations from long-term benefactors are, for the most part, a thing of the past, as opportunities and demographics in Central New York have changed over the past 25 years. This has made giving and receiving a much more strategic process.

Companies often devise parameters that not only fit with their own missions to serve the community but also work to drive their businesses forward. They set limits on their giving and do their research to make sure any such giving, whether it be in the form of money, in-kind donations or volunteers, is going to have the greatest impact on Central New York. Rarely do they simply give monetary donations to organizations that have not done their homework or worked to form a relationship with the businesses. Instead, companies often encourage, and sometimes require, company leadership to become actively involved with nonprofit boards.

Most of the companies who participated on the panel don't

incentivize their employees but instead depend on a trickle-down effect or positive peer pressure that encourages most to eventually engage at some level. Some give employees time off to volunteer, while others allow the use of flex time or simply make sure there is a constant flow of opportunities available. Still, others look to offer opportunities to volunteer with family or co-workers in order to encourage team building.

According to the National Center for Charitable Statistics, 1,153 nonprofit organizations filed IRS form 990 in Onondaga County as of 2016. In the face of this demand, businesses in the private sector aren't just sitting back and writing checks. They are forming relationships, doing research and looking for ways to make their dollars and other resources make the biggest impact on the greatest amount of people. Few give to nonprofits making cold calls or sending "instant invoices." Many encourage employees to suggest organizations and events worth supporting. The final say, however, typically comes from a company's board of directors, managing partners or committees set up to address corporate giving.

"Engagement is strategic," said Quitzau, director of marketing, Bousquet and Holstein. The law firm has been engaged in the community since its belief system was set up by its founders over 50 years ago, and today there is not a single attorney who is not involved with some nonprofit organization. "Our clients come first, but our community is an inherent part of our law firm," Quitzau added. "There is such a dramatic need at so many different levels, but we are also a business. Telling clients what our mission and goals are and setting examples in the community provides opportunities for business and growth."

Choosing a cause with a connection often streamlines the process. For example, SRC, Inc., which develops solutions for the defense, environmental and intelligence industries, typically supports causes related to the type of work it does — veterans and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math). According to Lisa Mondello, director of corporate communications and public relations, "People aren't buying radar because we are community involved," but this type of community engagement often attracts and retains people who want to work with a company that is innovative and involved. And, supporting

programs related to STEM through scholarships and information to students from underserved communities also helps to prepare future hires.

While M&T Bank has a more loosely constructed strategy, it, too, looks to fund specific groups and organizations — typically numbering up to 200 annually — that will make the biggest impact on the greatest amount of people. All senior management are required to serve on community boards and, within a year, move to some kind of leadership role within a nonprofit organization. "We are only as strong as our community," said Alissa Viti, charitable and community relations manager for the bank. "We work hard to make sure the boards they are on (are one's) they are passionate about. They need to be interested and highly involved. It must be a good fit."

For-profit companies know that their businesses can only be as strong as the Central New York community is. Most believe that people in this community tend to recognize those companies "as good, corporate, socially-responsible citizens," and, in turn, are loyal to them with their business. This is not to say that the private sector is in it only for the financial gain — far from it as these companies give thousands (and sometimes millions) of dollars each year — but the symbiotic relationship between giving and receiving is clearly an important factor.

It should be noted that not every for-profit company has such an outstanding level of commitment to Central New York. On the upside, a large number of companies eagerly partner with the area's United Way, as it makes for an easy and proven way for employees to give back to this community where "every dollar counts." On the downside, however, others simply don't feel it is their responsibility or part of their mission to contribute. Some, particularly smaller businesses, simply can't spare the resources on a regular basis. This doesn't mean that these organizations never contribute to the community, but it does present a gap. How can we lessen the drain on those companies known for their generosity of time, people and funding? Is there a better system for prioritizing where this generosity goes? And, how do we encourage more for-profit organizations, particularly small to mid-sized ones, to find reasonable ways to become more engaged in the community?



SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS SET EXAMPLE, DO FOR OTHERS

One member of our Private Sector Engagement panel was a small business owner. Laura Serway, co-owner of Laci's Tapas Bar, gave a unique perspective showing that you don't have to have hundreds of employees and large amounts of resources to be fully engaged in the community.

"Every morning, we get up and wonder what we can do for someone else," said Serway, who co-owns the restaurant with her wife, Cindy Seymour. Both are committed to helping the community where they live and work.

Laci's, a popular restaurant in the Hawley-Green Historic District on the near northeast side of the city, has unique challenges as a small business with employees who are on the lower end of the pay scale. Many of its employees work more than one job and don't have extra time or disposable income. Still, Serway and Seymour do not incentivize their employees to engage; they simply lead by example, and many of their employees — and customers — roll up their sleeves and jump in.

Choosing who and what to support can be difficult as the need is great, but they tend to concentrate on their Hawley-Green neighborhood, as well as issues related to veterans and the LGBTQ community. They listen to ideas from their customers and employees, too. Their engagement isn't always monetary, according to Seymour, who tries her best to answer the ever-growing number of requests for help.

Sometimes, it can be in-kind donations, volunteerism or services, which can be just as valuable.

In order to think outside the box, Serway and Seymour have learned from the Millennials and become social media savvy. Getting information out about their restaurant, as well as their commitment to the community, has become much easier since they created an active Facebook page. Posts on the page highlight not only the delicious food served at the restaurant but also promote their commitment to the community with information about Laci's Annual Giveback Celebration, which benefits local nonprofits nominated by its Facebook followers, and Serenity for Women, a program for homeless women veterans that includes a community garden. "You've got to fish where the fish are," said Serway, noting that today Laci's has 18,000 followers on Facebook "because we got out there, and we got engaged."

Small and mid-sized businesses might not always have the resources that larger companies do, but Laci's Tapas Bar is solid proof that businesses of all sizes can be fully engaged in this community — and attract customers and support while they are doing it.

"What we own and what we do is not really ours," Serway said. "It's about life and how we can help other people by giving back."

Media Engagement

Media engagement and its impact on community engagement in Central New York is a hot topic. This was evident as the OCL held a study session with a variety of experts, including Steve Davis, associate professor and chair of the Newspaper and Online Journalism Department at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University; Stan Linhorst, now semi-retired after 32 years at what is now Advanced Media New York (formerly Syracuse Media Group), most recently in the position of senior managing editor; Greg Loh, who recently moved from his position of executive vice president/managing director at Eric Mower & Associates to become the director of city initiatives for the City of Syracuse under Mayor Ben Walsh; Michael Streissguth, professor of communications and film studies at Le Moyne College; and David Tyler, publisher of the Eagle Newspapers, a group of weekly community newspapers and monthly periodicals.

Some in Central New York shed a harsh light on what is considered a decline in media coverage of the community over the past decade, particularly in regard to *The Post-Standard*, Syracuse's newspaper, and its online counterpart Syracuse.com. Criticism lies in the content and quality of the news, which has seemingly moved away from community events and local government and more toward an emphasis on Syracuse University sports, weather, crime and pop culture. Media experts acknowledged this shift to some degree but had mixed responses. Some attributed the change to economic downsizing, increased technology, the demands of a 24/7 news cycle, too many news outlets to choose from, as well as the tendency of self-selection, where people choose the outlets that will tell them what they already want or expect to hear.

In an age of “fake news” and partisan news coverage, it is no wonder some people have a distrust of the media. Who in this community — or any other — knows what to believe? Unfortunately, tough economic times across the country hit the news industry — print, television and radio — hard in recent years. (Long-time Central New Yorkers may remember the days

when *The Post-Standard* was delivered every morning and *The Herald Journal* was tossed on the doorstep every evening.) In some cases, today's reporters are paid by the number of online “clicks” their stories receive, giving them incentive to report not necessarily on the most important topics but instead the stories people want to read. This economic reality has given the media the tendency to give citizens what they want as a means of survival, and, for a variety of reasons, what the people of Central New York want to read or hear about is not generally news of town board meetings, school budgets or city politics.

Panelists representing the media acknowledge many of these weaknesses but, overall, truly believe the media is doing a good job in engaging the community, despite fewer resources and smaller staffs. Panelists coming from the academic side of news and journalism tended to be a bit more skeptical, taking a view that suggested room for improvement in the face of an up-and-coming generation of new journalists focused much more on specific areas of news coverage, little of which seems to be community-oriented.

“We’re not getting the meat and potatoes coverage of city council, county legislature, citizen review boards and school board meetings,” said Michael Streissguth, a professor of communications at Le Moyne College. “We no longer have the gatekeepers to process (the information) and make sense of it. That doesn’t bode well for community engagement.”

Stan Linhorst, who is semi-retired after 32 years with the Syracuse Media Group, wasn’t convinced that community engagement was supposed to be the main focus of the media. “(Community) engagement promotion is part of the mission (of media like *The Post-Standard* and Syracuse.com), but its true mission is to report the news — to find the heroes and villains,” he said, also noting that what is objective news has changed in citizens’ minds and that fewer people are buying into the age-old idea of “Just the facts, ma’am.”

Media literacy, defined as “the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create media in a variety of forms” (www.medialit.org), is a concern in regard to community engagement, as citizens become trained to trust or distrust certain kinds of media. With so many conflicting news choices in front of them, individuals are often forced to decipher things on their own, which wasn't the case even a decade ago.

The academics in the group shared that today's journalism students are not interested in general or community news but instead intend to specialize in areas like sports, fashion, technology or health. Steve Davis, associate professor and chair of the Newspaper and Online Journalism Department at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University, called this kind of “tunnel vision” in future journalist “alarming,” adding “It's hard to engage your audience in (something) you don't care about.”

The debate continued between the media as a way to foster community engagement and real discussion versus the media functioning primarily in a way that will attract the most readers in ways that will keep business going. Some, like Linhorst, see the changes in our community's news as a natural evolution of the media — much like the invention of the printing press or the introduction of the internet — that will alter but never destroy the media and its mission to teach, inform, inspire and engage. Others view it as the prioritizing of business over information, as well as a serious shift in citizens' faith in the media and those who report it.

David Tyler, publisher of the weekly Eagle Newspapers, noted that community newspapers were more likely to cover events like town board meetings and school budgets as a way to foster community engagement, particularly in geographically-contained areas like Cazenovia and Skaneateles. However, even these publications have their challenges engaging citizens in areas of suburban sprawl, which tend to lack the same sense of community.

The topic of media and community engagement would not be complete without addressing the impact of social media. Today, anyone with a smartphone or computer can be a “reporter,” and

most people are used to absorbing news in 30 second video sound bites, tweets allowing only limited character counts or images that quickly disappear on Snapchat. Organizations and/or causes that are readily engaged have learned to use social media to their advantage, while others with fewer resources or little social media know-how often fall under the radar.

Social media has, without a doubt, made a huge impact on how citizens get their news — for good and bad. On the positive side, social media allows citizens to learn more about the goings-on in their community, engage in events or actions that effect changes; store, retrieve and distribute information at a faster pace; and continue to give people the ability to interact and engage over information. Events can be live streamed on Facebook. News and updates can be accessed almost immediately online, and images can be shared in an instant. On the negative side, however, commentary posted anonymously through online media like Syracuse.com is often biased, inflammatory and outright false with little regard for verification. This is rarely conducive to civil discussion and can be demoralizing to our community. While allowing anonymous commentary obviously meets the media's goal of driving increased traffic to online sites like Syracuse.com, there has to be a greater sense of responsibility on the part of the media to verify or eliminate those comments that are strictly posted to be provocative or false, rather than informative and accurate.

Drawing on his years of experience working with media and related topics at Eric Mower & Associates, Greg Loh, who is currently the director of city initiatives for the city of Syracuse, presented an optimistic view. “Getting the word out — it's not either or; it's both — traditional and digital,” he said, noting that social media “represents what the changing level of engagement will have to be in the future.”

“I don't think the current state is going to be the future state,” Loh added. “I think an enlightened society will teach people at a younger age to look for a balanced diet of information. We don't have to accept the current state as the way that it is. We, as media leaders, have that responsibility.”



How Other Communities Engage

We've examined many aspects of community engagement throughout Onondaga County and the city of Syracuse, so it is only fitting to take a look at what other communities across the country are doing to improve or enhance community engagement. Not only do these examples serve as inspiration, but they provide concrete evidence that the establishment and/or enhancement of community engagement is absolutely possible. While there are hundreds of outstanding examples, the following is a sampling of a few.

Participatory Budgeting

Participatory budgeting is a democratic process where members of the community directly decide how to spend part of a public budget. A steering committee representative of the community establishes rules in partnership with local officials to be certain that the process is inclusive and meets the needs of a specific community. Participatory budgeting is being done in places around the nation including New York City and Chicago.⁹ One such example is in Hampton, Virginia. Facing decreasing home values and serious cuts to city services in 2011, Hampton started the I-Value Campaign, a participatory budgeting process that allows citizens to decide how to spend part of the public budget. This system evolved around the city's core values: 1. trust employers and citizens to know what is best; and 2. don't make decisions in a vacuum. The city manager pulled together a multi-disciplinary team from various departments and challenged

them to work with citizens to determine which city services were most valued. The process used the input from everyday citizens to evaluate the services they were receiving versus the services they truly wanted or needed and weighing this against what they were willing to pay for those services. Eight years after this began, the process is still working and has made citizens feel much more engaged in fiscal decisions that affect not only their community but their individual lives.¹⁰

Citizens Jury

The concept of a citizens jury involves creating a "jury" made up of representative samples of citizens, typically selected in a random fashion, who are briefed in detail on the background and other concerns related to a particular issue or project. Issues that a citizens jury is asked to consider are those that have a community-wide effect and where a representative and democratic decision-making process is required. The jury is presented with a range of possible alternatives in the decision-making process. The Jefferson Center is a non-partisan nonprofit that engages citizens to work through shared challenges and develop better policies using a citizens jury as the primary tool for education and deliberation. Two examples of success cited by the Jefferson Center are Red Wing and Willmar, Minnesota, where the Minnesota Community Assembly Project used citizens juries to assess reforms to electoral, administrative and participatory structures. According to the Red Wing Citizen Assembly Event

Report, the community of Red Wing held its first assembly using the citizens jury process in 2017. This resulted in 36 members of the community recommending four ideas to strengthen the community. These included digital public engagement, better public meetings, ranked choice voting and strengthened financial disclosure requirements. In Wilmar, participants used the citizens jury process to recommend better public meetings, digital public engagement and ranked choice voting, as well as discuss an at-large versus ward election system, according to the Wilmar Citizens Assembly Event Report.¹¹

Crowdsourcing

Crowdsourcing is “the process of getting work or funding, usually online, from a crowd of people.” The idea behind it is that by “canvassing a large crowd of people for ideas, skills or participation, the quality of content and ideas generated will be superior.”¹² Using crowdsourcing, Santa Monica, California, defined the goal of its local government as “improving the well-being of its residents.” To do so, the city created a holistic index of well-being that surveyed citizens about their lives, outlook, engagement, health, financial situation and other pertinent topics. Seven-thousand of the city’s 90,000 residents gave input. This resulted in an index with 100 data elements based on the survey results, as well as publicly available social media data and data from the city on a variety of topics ranging from crime to library usage. Taking it one step further, Santa Monica created the position of chief well-being officer and committed to putting “money into activities that improve people’s lives and stop funding things that make no difference.”¹³

Leveraging and Strengthening Ad-Hoc Ties

The idea of leveraging and strengthening ad-hoc ties fits well with the idea of community engagement, as it is a process of “using your community — not your conference room — as the reference point for your choices and actions,” according to the Harwood Institute. For example, six people from various

community organizations in Battle Creek, Michigan, formed an ad hoc steering group to engage the community and foster collaboration in an effort to join together and “work toward the common good.” This effort was led by the Harwood Institute, funded by the Kellogg Foundation, which gave coaching and training to these individuals over a two-year period. They quickly came to see that working as an ad hoc group instead of starting a completely new initiative or forming a new nonprofit was the most effective way of getting things accomplished. Using the Harwood Institute’s community conversation approach, the group discovered a number of community concerns, passing along the information to the appropriate agencies for further action. This work also morphed into another project where a group of community organizations, including the United Way, city government, the chamber of commerce, Kellogg Community Foundation and others committed to local planning and collective action, worked together as part of the Harwood Institute’s “Beacon Community” initiative to “improve the civic culture of the community.” Today, Battle Creek has seen a dramatic increase in community engagement, trust and belief that change is possible. In addition, this initiative has given support to once invisible populations, worked with schools to improve reading scores of children in vulnerable pockets of the community; seen people from every corner of the community, including business leaders, support children in new and creative ways; and noticed a shift in the way business is conducted in the community, as residents who once felt disenfranchised began demanding that their voices be heard.¹⁴

These stories of community engagement show that successful initiatives require investing time and energy into the planning, roll out and evaluation of the intended activities, and that buy-in from the widest possible range of stakeholders requires multiple access points and repeated opportunity for engagement. They also show that sustained funding is critical for extensive projects and that efforts like capacity building and skills training will contribute to long-term success in solidifying community engagement.

Findings and Recommendations

In our yearlong study process, we set out to find the answers to how engaged the citizens of Onondaga County are in our community. We examined the how, why, and to what extent our residents become involved in the issues that affect the quality of life in Central New York.

We found that the majority of people who engaged in this study were passionate about where they live and committed to continuing to be active and involved citizens in order to effect positive change. However, we recognize that there is still work to be done.

Below are the study committee's key recommendations. They are intended for the public at large, elected leaders, business and community leaders, and those who assemble for a common cause.

1. Create an “umbrella” organization to encourage collaboration among groups with complementary missions, sharing of resources, and eliminating duplicate efforts. This new organization would facilitate the following:
 - Establish an annual or more frequent symposium and invite all community engagement organizations. The symposium would allow participants to share program initiatives with a goal of creating synergistic connections with organizations undertaking similar or complementary efforts. This forum should also include ample time for agenda items that would help forward their missions, including: 1. evaluation and strategic planning tools; 2. marketing, public relations and social media tools; and 3. effective strategies to building trust with diverse, immigrant and refugee populations through effective dialogue.
 - Work with local university centers to develop and implement a training program for community engagement facilitators, so that there is a roster of people that can be called upon to assist with community engagement events.
 - Provide training forums for people/citizens to learn about the various forms of public participation and develop the skills needed for effective public participation, such as coalition building and networking, recruiting, managing conflict, decision-making, and planning and evaluation.
 - Engage the resources of national organizations with expertise in community engagement to visit our area and meet with stakeholders so we can learn from the successes and failures of other communities across the U.S. that have invested time, money and resources to make community engagement a priority.
2. Ensure that community action organizations have the tools for evaluation and strategic planning to ensure that their missions are still relevant and use effective marketing and brand awareness in order to differentiate themselves from similar organizations.
3. Urge municipalities to harness the advances in technology and online platforms such as Facebook Live to make proceedings more accessible for interested citizens — similar to efforts the City of Syracuse Common Council recently announced — as well as utilize hotlines and platforms with texting features that will enable residents to have dialogue with public officials.
4. Encourage public officials to develop the skills to initiate dialogue with people from all communities, races, backgrounds and socio-economic levels on a consistent and face-to-face basis with a commitment to actively listen and respond to the issues that affect citizens.

5. Work with local community foundations and business organizations to develop a mentoring program to encourage more corporate entities — particularly small and mid-sized — to develop a community engagement culture that encourages employees to build relationships with customers and create a mutual benefit for companies and the community. We have learned that community engagement benefits the bottom line through recruitment, retention and business development.
6. Urge media outlets to increase coverage of local community engagement efforts and civic affairs aimed at positively impacting their communities.
7. Encourage Syracuse.com and other local media to eliminate anonymous online remarks meant to be inflammatory rather than factual for the sake of informed public discourse.
8. Recognize that community engagement is often a learned behavior. Therefore, instill the concept and benefit of community engagement in young people at an early age through programs in schools, faith-based organizations, nonprofits and the like.
9. Improve how we approach engagement by going to where people are and directly involving the intended beneficiaries in the planning process and implementation and consistently reporting findings to those engaged and solicit their feedback.



Study Resources

¹ <https://freethought-trail.org/trail-map/location:jerry-rescue-monument/>

² <http://www.matildajoslyngage.org>

³ <http://unitedway-cny.org/mission-and-history/>

⁴ <https://prolitteracy.org>

⁵ "Public Participation for 21st Century Democracy" by Tina Nabatchi and Matt Leighninger

⁶ <http://www.interfaithworkscny.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Police-Community-Dialogue-Report-to-the-Community.2017.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.interfaithworkscny.org>

⁸ https://www.facebook.com/pg/Central-New-York-ROOTS-1970515576563290/about/?ref=page_internal

⁹ participatorybudgeting.com

¹⁰ <http://www.hampton.gov/3187/FY18-I-Value-Campaign>.

¹¹ <https://jefferson-center.org>

¹² dailycrowdsourcing.com

¹³ <http://www.governing.com/blogs/bfc/col-santa-monica-wellbeing-residents-goal-government.html>

¹⁴ <https://theharwoodinstitute.org/news/2016/2/3/battle-creek-michigan?rq=battle%20creek%20michigan>

Study Participants

We thank all those who gave of their time, expertise and viewpoints during the 2017-18 study. We hope this list is inclusive of all those who participated. If not, we apologize for the oversight and extend our sincere appreciation.

Khadijo Abdulkadir	Lisa Fasolo Frishman	Fatuma Mohamud	David Tyler
Haji Adan	Erin Gallagher	Tina Nabatchi	Lisa Veet
Philip Arnold	Ernesto Antonio Michel	Mark Nicotra	Meghan Vitale
Jan-Juba Aruay	Guardiola	Mark Olson	Alissa Viti
Dana Balter	Gus Hernandez	Stephanie Pasquale	Sarah Walton
Sandra Bigtree	Melissa Hidek	Tatiana Parker	Kelli Ward
Sara Wall Bollinger	Helen Hudson	Carrie Penner	Emily Winiecki
Habiba Born	Jirah Johnson	Debra Person	Kara Williams
Rebecca Bostwick	Amrutha Jose	Kathy Murphy Pietrafesa	Loretta Zolkowski
Ed Brown	Kathleen Joy	Phil Prehn	Community Library of Dewitt and Jamesville
Pam Brunet	Jim Keib	Jan Quitzau	County South Family Resource Center
Dennis Burlingame	Diane Kupperman	Susan Reckhowa	Onondaga County Central Public Library
Syeisha Bynet	Nancy Lanna	Donna Reese	P.E.A.C.E. Southside Family Resource Center
Joy Casey	Andrea Latchem	Joseph Romano	Rosamond Gifford Zoo
Mark Cass	Bridget Lenkiewicz	Eric Rogers	Skä•noñh: Great Law of Peace Center/Haudenosaunee Confederacy
Frank Cetera	Stan Linhorst	Juhanna Rogers	Southside Rotary Club
Peggy Chase	Samantha Linnett	Peter Sarver	Syracuse Near Westside Initiative
Colleen Cicotta	Greg Loh	Deu Sanjasi	University College of Syracuse University
Alisha Cruny	Andrew Lunetta	Rachel Scripa	WCNY
Janet Connors	Carrie McDonald	Laura Serway	
Steve Davis	Janet Mallan	Cindy Seymour	
John DeSantis	Andrew Maxwell	Simone Seward	
Margrit Diehl	Melissa Menon	Richard Shoff	
Walt Dixie	Chris Miller	Dirk Sonneborn	
Eileen Donovan	Diana Miller	Michael Streissguth	
Eamonn T. Dundon	Laura Miller	Jai Subedi	
Eric Ennis	Lisa Green Mills	Mary Thompson	
Marianne Ferris	Lisa Mondello	Kerry Thurston	
Capt. Melissa Forsyth	Chris Mott	Gregg Tripoli	

Study Session Questions

Public Study Session Questions (Summary)

Generational Perspective on Community Engagement

Sept. 26, 2017, Onondaga County Central Public Library

- When did you first become involved in community issues and what motivated you?
- Were there people/organizations that inspired you and have you tried to emulate them?
- What do you see as the biggest impediment to getting people involved in the community?
- How do you see the state of community engagement in CNY right now?
- On a personal level, how would you motivate those who say they aren't interested in getting involved?

The Big Picture with Tina Nabatchi: Community Engagement in the Syracuse Area

Oct. 5, 2017, Community Library of Dewitt and Jamesville

- What is the state of community engagement in the greater Syracuse area? What are we doing well and what needs to be improved?
- What ideas do you have for improving community engagement?
- What purpose does community engagement serve?
- From your experience, how is community engagement done? What does it look like?
- How should community engagement be done, and what should it look like?
- As a community, are we doing a good job of reaching out to people? How could people be more engaged?
- Are there issues in which we don't have the kind of leadership needed or don't have the engagement opportunities?
- What isn't going to be addressed? What is coming up or going on now?
- What are the purposes served by community engagement? How do we do it? What do we want it to look like?

Municipal Engagement

Oct. 19, 2017, Onondaga County Central Public Library

- As an elected official, what ways can you engage the public in decisions that are presented to you?
- What examples of civic engagement have been successful?
- Can you give an example of when citizen engagement was not done well and lessons that were learned?
- What do you think motivates people and what prevents people from getting involved?

Why Young Leaders are Active in Our Community

Nov. 16, 2017, Thursday Morning Roundtable, Rosamond Gifford Zoo

- What are your roles in the community and how did you use your roles to show commitment to the community?
- What made you want to become involved? Was it experience? Upbringing? Was there a particular person/mentor?
- When you hear the word "Millennials," there are those who see young, dynamic agents for change and others who see those who are apathetic and entitled. How will Millennials' impact be more important than ever as a resource?

The Private Sector and Community Engagement

Nov. 28, 2017, Onondaga County Central Public Library

- Tell us about your corporate culture as it relates to community engagement?
- Why is it important to your organization to be involved in the community?
- How does community involvement/engagement benefit your company?
- Who do you choose to help and why?
- What advice do you have for how/why to get involved, particularly for small to mid-sized companies?
- Who manages community engagement/corporate giving at your business?
- Do you incentivize employees to get them involved?
- Have you seen a trickle-down effect where you have inspired someone to do so on his/her own?

Media Engagement

Dec. 5, 2017, Onondaga County Central Public Library

- How would you describe the current state of how the media impacts civic engagement in Central New York?
- What's the most effective way to get the community engaged in issues important to them?
- What is awareness vs. engagement? What do you consider engagement and how do you measure it?
- How does geography impact engagement?
- Do you give the audience what they want due to economics? There seems to be a decrease in community news with the exception of sports? What does this mean for us as a community?
- Social media is engagement, but is it the kind of engagement we want? What is the quality of this kind of engagement and should there be more curation?

Community Engagers

December 21, 2017, University College of Syracuse University

- What is the perception of community engagement in Central New York?
- What are effective ways to engage people?
- How can we sell the benefits of attending events?
- After this discussion, what would you want the takeaways to be?

