

CONNECTS

CASEY

SPRING 2001
A REPORT FROM THE
ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

IN THIS ISSUE: Sharing Strategies for Using Data; MC³ Meeting Puts the Pieces Together; Conference Assesses Welfare Reform; Resource Corner; INSITES



ISAAC JONES

ANNA DEAVERE SMITH, an acclaimed playwright, actor, author, and teacher, spoke at the Foundation March 26 and performed at Center Stage. Smith, who uses interviews, story telling, and acting to dramatize controversial events, is particularly interested in using the arts to engage communities in addressing social issues. Her most recent book is *Talk to Me: Listening Between the Lines*.

SHARING STRATEGIES FOR USING DATA IN MAKING CONNECTIONS

The ultimate goal of the Casey Foundation's *Making Connections* initiative is to improve the odds of success for children and families living in challenging neighborhoods. To do that, we need multiple sources of data to track the conditions that contribute to child, family, and neighborhood well-being.

But our data agenda in *Making Connections* goes well beyond evaluating the success of this work. It is driven by a fundamental belief that neighborhoods need to be able to produce, interpret, and use data effectively in order to both understand and influence the forces that shape their destinies.

Key to helping people develop this capacity in *Making Connections* is a special entity known as the Local Learning Partnership. Local Learning Partnerships are diverse groups of organizations, institutions, community leaders, and residents being assembled in the 22 sites to help shape the local agenda for using data.

On March 28–30, the Casey Foundation sponsored the first gathering specifically designed to bring members of these partnerships from the different cities together. The meeting drew about 180 people, including

researchers and policymakers, practitioners and scholars, ethnographers and demographers, statisticians and civic leaders, preachers and teachers. Although they hailed from varied backgrounds and locales, participants had a unifying force: their firm belief in the power of data to help people learn and bring about positive changes in their communities.

“The most successful Local Learning Partnerships will be those whose agendas are driven by data users, rather than providers,” noted Tony Cipollone, director of the Foundation's Evaluation, Data Analysis, and Policy Advocacy unit, which convened the meeting.

The meeting was designed to help the Local Learning Partners come away

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Participants in the Local Learning Partnership meeting en route to a reception at the American Visionary Art Museum.



JOYA MUBHAWI, IAM ASSOC. INC.

CASEY CONNECTS

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The Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. The primary mission of the Foundation is to foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. In pursuit of this goal, the Foundation makes grants that help states, cities, and neighborhoods fashion more innovative, cost-effective responses to these needs.



From bottom left to top right: Sarah Morgan, Debbie Chase and her daughter Rachel, Edgar Cahn, and Manuel Gutierrez participate in a small group discussion at the MC³ meeting.

These players have taken on a wide range of responsibilities, from serving as key local contacts and coordinators to documenting the role of the site team leaders to helping steer the sites' agendas for acquiring and using data.

The February 5–9 *Making Connections* Consultants Conference, informally called MC³, was designed to help all these players understand the rationale, values, goals, strategy, and components of the initiative so they can help carry a consistent message. More than 250 people attended.

"We wanted to use this opportunity to create a strong network of practitioners to provide ongoing support and capacity, we wanted to create time and space for reflection, and we wanted to create an energy and synergy about the work," said Casey Foundation Vice President Ralph Smith.

Besides helping local consultants charged with various tasks understand their roles, an important goal was to help form a cadre of people who are better equipped to contribute to a national movement on behalf of strong families and neighborhoods.

Making Connections focuses on generating local momentum, energy, expertise, and will in the

MC³ MEETING PUTS THE PIECES TOGETHER FOR LOCAL PLAYERS

A variety of local actors in *Making Connections* cities had the chance to meet and begin forming their own network at a recent five-day retreat.

In keeping with the initiative's goal of drawing on local talent and leadership to assume ownership and sustain this work on a long-term basis, Foundation-based site teams assigned to the 22 cities have increasingly relied on local people to keep important aspects of the work moving.



The MC³ Resource Café featured a colorful collection of displays showcasing work going on in each of the 22 sites, sprinkled with artifacts of local history, culture, and commerce. The Café also offered on-line information and tools from the Foundation's Technical Assistance Resource Center, a sampling of Foundation publications, and on-line library reference services.

22 sites, but it is part of a much larger body of work designed to spur a national commitment to improve children's lives by strengthening their families and neighborhoods.

The conference featured presentations and conversations on the history, theory, premises, and goals of *Making Connections* as well as its strategies for connecting families to the opportunities, networks, and support they need.

"In our view, the vulnerability of America's most at-risk families can be most usefully and constructively grasped if it's understood in terms of the social, economic, and political isolation that these families in tough neighborhoods live with every day," said Casey Foundation President Douglas W. Nelson.

The meeting offered reflections from people involved in specific *Making Connections* sites and opportunities for participants with different and similar roles to discuss what they were learning. Electronic polling was used to gauge how well people understood *Making Connections* themes, and by the end, many more reported feeling comfortable and ready to be effective message bearers.

"I got lots of ideas and suggestions for how to move forward," said Patrick McGuigan, a member of the Local Learning Partnership in Providence (see story, page 1). "It was an impressive group of people with a lot of experience who were able to share their lessons."

Several participants said the meeting helped them understand how their work contributes to *Making Connections* and to the larger mission to refocus the national debate on child poverty.

Sherece West, a program associate at the Foundation who is on the Baltimore, Boston, Denver, and Philadelphia teams, said what meant most to her was "getting a sense of what's going on in the other communities—meeting them, understanding their challenges and how they are not so different from ours."

"It's good to know we're all in it together," she said.

CONFERENCE TAKES STOCK OF WELFARE REFORM'S IMPACT

Despite the RANGE
OF PERSPECTIVES,
there was consider-
able COMMON
GROUND about
what has changed
under welfare reform.

For two days in February, standing-room-only crowds debated how to fine-tune the revolution that began nearly five years ago when Congress passed reforms to end welfare as we knew it.

The sometimes academic, sometimes heated debate took place at a policy summit organized by the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy at the University of Michigan and funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. The conference, *The New World of Welfare Reform: An Agenda for Reauthorization and Beyond*, drew some 875 people to Washington, D.C., including state budget directors, academics, social workers, county officials, Navajo Nation leaders, legal services attorneys, government research and policy staff, think tank scholars, and welfare recipients and their advocates.

The summit provided a forum for some of the leading researchers in the welfare policy field to analyze the data and discuss their implications for public policy as Congress prepares to reauthorize the legislation that unleashed a sea change in the way this country responds to its poorest citizens.

The interest reflects the importance of the social experiment being conducted with the country's social safety net. It is elevated by a new administration, by headlines predicting an economic downturn, and by the potential consequences welfare reform will have for lives in the balance.

In addition to researchers and policy specialists, the conference drew about 60 grassroots activists, including current and former welfare recipients, who disrupted targeted speakers, adding volume and some tension to the already lively scholarly exchange that predominated.

Despite the range of perspectives, there was considerable common ground about what has changed during the past five years. There was widespread agreement that "the culture of welfare has been transformed," as Susan Golonka of the National Governors' Association put it. Decision making has been transferred from the federal government to the states and counties. Recipients have heard the message that they must work and prepare for the day when welfare will no longer be an option.

The number of families receiving welfare has dropped every year since 1995, and there have been dramatic increases in female labor force participation, particularly among single mothers and less-skilled women such as high school dropouts.

Has the shift from welfare to work reduced poverty? Ron Haskins, a long-time congressional staffer who now works with the Brookings Institution and the Casey Foundation and helped organize the conference with Rebecca Blank of the Ford School, said increased government spending on child care, Medicaid, children's health insurance, and the Earned Income Tax Credit helped the second-lowest-fifth of earners make up for the loss of welfare and food stamps and come out ahead overall.

But, in some years, welfare benefits fell more than earnings rose for the bottom fifth of earners, some of whom were worse off after leaving welfare. Wendell Primus of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities estimated there are 700,000 families—as many as 2.5 million people—in this category. Researchers also called attention to other problems associated with the loss of welfare, such as increases in homelessness and hunger, unsupervised children, untreated illnesses, and mental health issues. They also noted that a weaker economy could undermine the gains in employment made since 1996 under welfare reform.

Are children better off? Data on the effects of welfare reform on children are not definitive, suggested Greg Duncan, a professor at Northwestern University. But available research suggests that the age of the child and the kind of care available to children while their parents work are factors. “An obvious recommendation here is to provide after-school programs for adolescents as well as child care for young kids,” he said.

Duncan also cited data showing child outcomes were better in states that supplemented the earnings of former welfare recipients with additional financial incentives that increased total income.

The activists who staged the protests objected in particular to the views of Charles Murray of the American Enterprise Institute, known for his controversial writings on issues such as illegitimacy and race. Murray and other speakers discussed the effects of out-of-wedlock births on welfare issues and what can be done to help young people succeed and improve job prospects for African-American males.

Lawrence Mead, a professor at New York University, said welfare reauthorization should stay focused primarily on work. The public “would like two-parent families to be the norm, but there is not a desire to enforce the norm,” he said.

Although they disagreed on solutions to many of the challenges raised at the conference, researchers agreed the following items should be addressed in the reauthorization legislation:

- Continue block grant funding for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families.
- Plan for recession.
- Address problems in the food stamp and Medicaid programs that lead to underenrollment by eligible families.
- Support flexible strategies to reach the most disadvantaged families.
- Emphasize activities, including education and training, that will help people retain jobs.
- Improve the child support system.

The papers presented at the conference are available on-line at www.fordschool.umich.edu/conferences/final.htm. For a complete report on the conference, go to the What's New link at www.aecf.org.



Addressing the welfare reform conference in March, Casey Foundation Senior Consultant Ron Haskins described the movement of families from the welfare rolls since the implementation of reform legislation in 1996. The two-day meeting, which attracted nearly 900 policy advocates and public officials, examined the consequences of the welfare reform law in advance of congressional consideration of reauthorization of the law in 2002.

RESOURCE CORNER

In Print:

All publications listed below can be ordered from the Foundation website (www.aecf.org) or by calling our publications voice line at 410.223.2890, unless otherwise noted.

- **THE RIGHT START CITY TRENDS: CONDITIONS OF BABIES AND THEIR FAMILIES IN AMERICA'S LARGEST CITIES (1990–1998):** This new special report, published jointly by KIDS COUNT and Child Trends as a two-volume set, presents a decade's worth of data tracking the successes and failures of the nation's largest cities in providing every child a healthy and promising start to life. The report includes trends for several key measures of a healthy birth, such as the percentage of babies born to teen and unmarried mothers, the percentage born to mothers who smoked during pregnancy, the percentage born to mothers who did not complete high school, and the percentage born at low birth weight.
- **THE RIGHT START STATE TRENDS: CONDITIONS OF BABIES AND THEIR FAMILIES ACROSS THE NATION (1990–1998):** The second part of the series described above, this volume presents a decade's worth of data tracking the successes and failures of all 50 states in providing children with a healthy and promising start to life.
- **EMPLOYING WELFARE RECIPIENTS WITH SIGNIFICANT BARRIERS TO WORK: LESSONS FROM THE DISABILITY FIELD:** This report examines efforts in the disability community to help individuals with significant barriers to work get and maintain

employment. It also identifies how welfare agencies can learn from and build on lessons from the disability community.

- **HOLDING SCHOOLS ACCOUNTABLE TOOLKIT: A GUIDE FOR PEOPLE WORKING IN NEIGHBORHOODS:** This guide was prepared by Public Interest, a North Carolina education research and consulting organization, with support from the Casey Foundation. It offers useful instruments, materials, stories, tips, and references based on the experiences of more than 20 pioneering community-based efforts to hold schools accountable. It can be found online at www.publicimpact.com/hsat, or copies can be ordered by e-mailing hsat@publicimpact.com or calling 704.370.0357
- **CULTIVATING COMMUNITY: PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES FOR COMMUNITY GARDENING AS A COMMUNITY-BUILDING TOOL:** This report was produced for the Casey Foundation by the American Community Gardening Association. It explores some basic values that underlie successful community empowerment programs of any kind, and it illustrates how these have been applied to community gardens across the country. It was designed as a resource for organizations and coalitions whose specific aim is to use gardens to empower people by building their skill and confidence to transform their lives and their communities. Copies are available from the Community Gardening Association, 100 N. 20th Street, 5th Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19103-1495, 215.988.8785, www.communitygarden.org

On the Web:

The following websites offer information specific to community development efforts.

- **CHANGE COMMUNICATIONS:** This is a compilation of hundreds of links to sites dealing with issues critical to community development. The links are organized into categories such as economic development, housing, sustainable development, organizing, case studies, and best practices: www.change.org
- **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ONLINE:** This database, drawn from the NeighborWorks network website, contains information related to neighborhood revitalization efforts throughout the country: www.nw.org
- **GRASS ROOTS:** This site contains more than 200 stories about some of the most innovative grassroots programs in the United States and the local heroes involved in these efforts. Stories are organized by state, region, and type of program and cover issues ranging from feeding hungry people and housing the homeless to job training, political organizing, and community economic development: www.grass-roots.org



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SU'AD ABDUL KHABEER and other Foundation staff members greet AL GORE, who visited April 6 to meet with community-building specialists. The former vice president has been teaching and is working with a consortium of universities, based at the University of California at Los Angeles, that is developing a family-centered community-building curriculum.

LOCAL LEARNING PARTNERS
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

with a deeper understanding of the Casey Foundation, *Making Connections*, and their own role in this work; some stimulating ideas to help them do their work; and new connections and relationships with colleagues from other sites.

In plenary sessions and small workshops, people from the different cities had the opportunity to share the myriad ways they are generating and storing data, finding ways to preserve local stories and histories, and mobilizing communities to use data as a policy tool.

"It was great in terms of presenting a wide range of ways that sites are engaging with communities to collect and use data and technology in ways that help those communities do their work," said Gloria Cross Mwase, site liaison for the Boston *Making Connections* team.

"For this enterprise to be worth the undertaking, all our collaborators have to know where we began, what obstacles and assets each community faced, what happened, what resources were mobilized, what changed in each community,

and how these changes succeeded or failed in forging new economic, social, and service connections for families and children," Foundation President Douglas W. Nelson said at the conference. "No actor will be more critical in answering these questions than our Local Learning Partners."

A proceedings document summarizing highlights and lessons of the conference will be available later this summer.

INSITES

SPRING 2001
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MAKING A DIFFERENCE WITH DATA

What will it take to help families in challenging neighborhoods raise their children? Data may not be the obvious answer. But if communities can't chronicle their challenges, they have no ammunition to make their stories count, no baseline to track change, and no way to hold decision makers accountable.

One milestone for success in *Making Connections* is helping communities improve their ability to collect and use information to advance their interests.

This issue looks at how four sites are beginning to use data as a force for change.

STUDENTS PLAY POWERFUL ROLE IN 'CITY SCAN'

Many students use computers for entertainment and communication, research and homework help. But in Hartford, kids are using technology to make a difference in their community.

Armed with hand-held computers, digital and video cameras, a group of high school students has been gathering data on local parks and neighborhoods. The students record positive conditions as well as graffiti, litter, abandoned houses, and unsafe playground equipment.

The students are participants in City Scan, a pilot project launched by the Connecticut Policy and Economic Council to get citizens involved in collecting data that can help influence city

policies. The young people use the data to produce reports, maintain a website, and present information to policymakers.

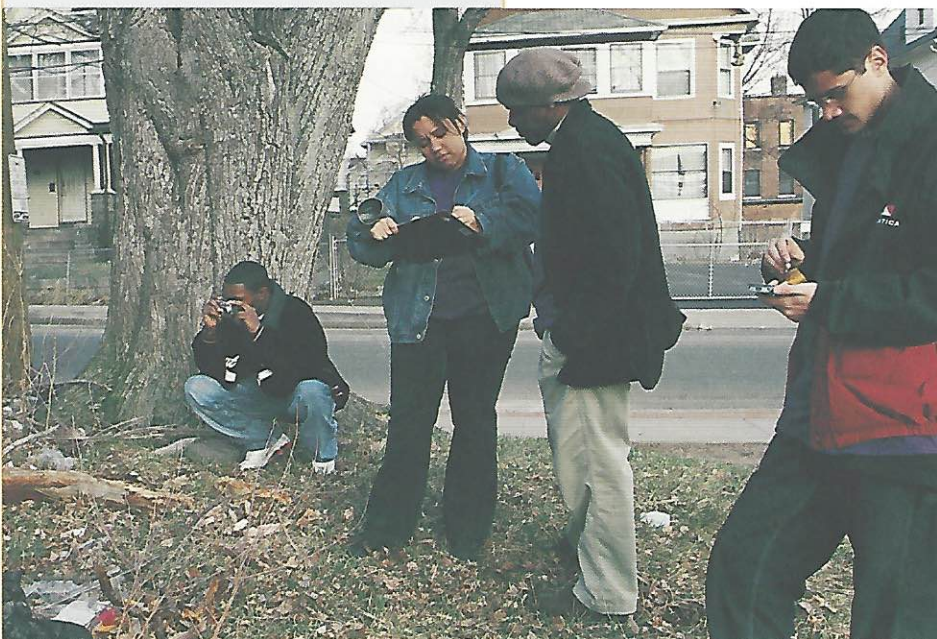
"In the past, I would go to a park and say this or that could be better," said John Ciprian, a junior at Hartford Public High School. "Now, I'm actually working toward doing something good for the parks."

"Young people not only have the time, but they're enthusiastic, they're not intimidated by the technology, and they're excited about being trained," noted Michelle Doucette Cunningham, City Scan project director.

Hartford is one of several *Making Connections* sites that also participate in the federal Youth Opportunity Grant initiative, so it's a perfect opportunity to involve young people in productive activities that can also benefit their families and neighborhoods.

City Scan is just one example of Hartford's commitment to resident-driven data. Hartford's Institute for Community Research, another Casey

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From left to right, Mahlon Whyne, 18; Andrea Obaez, 17; Richard Walker, 23; and John Ciprian, 17 gather data on Hartford parks and neighborhoods.

MAPPING HAS PROFOUND IMPACT ON RESIDENTS

For several weeks last year, Charlene Davis put a futuristic looking antenna on her back, a computer in her hands, and comfortable shoes on her feet. As one of nine community mappers, Davis donned the latest in GPS (global positioning system) technology to document the physical landscape of several south-east San Diego neighborhoods involved in *Making Connections*.

Generally, mappers worked in pairs for five to six hours each day. The details they recorded included whether a building was residential or commercial and whether there were security bars on the windows or graffiti on the walls. The TELESIS Corporation then added this information to a website it maintains on the quality of life in San Diego, where it can be compared with other regional data.

Being a mapper was an eye-opening experience for Davis, who grew up in the Grant Hill neighborhood. "I live in this community and I'd been noticing more and more that we have a lot of things here that we really don't need and we don't have a lot of things we need."

For example, in Grant Hill and neighboring communities that line San

Diego's Imperial Avenue, "there are a lot of liquor stores on the corners," Davis noted. "But we need a bigger grocery store and we don't have laundromats that are convenient."

"The mapping process not only produced valuable information about the neighborhoods that is not captured by existing data, but it provided a profound experience for many of the mappers, who have become involved in various projects in their community," said Mareasa Isaacs, the San Diego site team leader.

Another phase of the project, now in the planning stages, will involve going back through the neighborhoods and noting positive changes, such as a new neon sign at a local store. Richard Serpe, director of the Social and Behavioral Research Institute at California State University, San Marcos, sees community mapping as an important way to track change.

"Being able to document place-based change in a lot-by-lot process, and being able to attach that change, over time, to initiatives and activities that are driven by the local residents is what makes it powerful," he said.

NEIGHBORHOOD DATA SPURS NEW CONVERSATIONS

Evie O'Connell was listening to a presentation at a neighborhood meeting when she heard some numbers that didn't compute.

The data showed that the cost of Section 8 apartments in O'Connell's neighborhood was among the highest in Jefferson County.

"That is very interesting, because this is a low-income neighborhood where you can buy a house for \$30,000, but rent for these apartments is around \$500 a month," said O'Connell, a resident of the Portland neighborhood. "Investors are coming in and buying up property and making a lot of money off of it, and that is something we need to be concerned about."

The information, published in a report funded by *Making Connections*, chronicles the condition of children and families in 24 Louisville neighborhoods. It highlights such factors as prenatal care, teen birth rates, out-of-home placements, school success, crime, poverty, and unemployment.

"Nobody's seen a lot of data like these before at the neighborhood level, so when people see it they get pretty excited," said Michael Price, who directs the Kentucky Population Research project at the University of Louisville's Urban Studies Institute. Price, who has worked with KIDS COUNT at the national and state level, compiled *Making Connections: Neighborhood Profiles of Child & Family Well-Being, Louisville and Jefferson County, Kentucky*.

Price first presented the data at a meeting organized by the New Directions Housing Corporation, a community development organization that has its own neighborhood initiative. "Folks were riveted on the information," said Joe Gliessner, the group's director.

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From left to right: Marvin Jenkins, Charlene Davis, Donna Oliphant, and Jessica Figueroa are community mappers in San Diego.



PARTNERSHIP PUSHES PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

One goal of using data in *Making Connections* is to help policymakers make decisions that promote strong families. Another is to hold them accountable for results.

In Philadelphia, public- and private-sector leaders are using data to pinpoint how the city's kids are faring—and what's needed to turn the numbers into success stories.

The Philadelphia Coalition for Kids, a partnership of policymakers, citizens, legislators, child advocates, corporate and philanthropic leaders, clergy, and community leaders, released *Report Card 2000: The Well Being of Children and Youth in Philadelphia* last June. The report looks at such factors as prenatal care, family support, high-risk behaviors, community safety, and school achievement.

With the support of a Children's Commission formed by Mayor John F. Street, who declared 2000 the Year of the Child, the coalition is working to keep these data from languishing on shelves. In December, the city published the *Philadelphia Children's Budget*, to help assess the fit between how children are doing and where money is going.

"The Children's Budget represents a commitment to measure and monitor our investments in children and youth to determine how well our actions match our rhetoric," Mayor Street said.

"This should help us with better management and coordination in shifting funding to address the areas of greatest need," said Naomi Post, executive director of Philadelphia Safe and Sound, which has received Casey Foundation funding and technical help to produce

these reports. The Foundation is also helping city departments look at ways to assess their performance based on outcomes for children and families.

Several departments are collaborating to address issues cited in the report, such as curbing child abuse and neglect, reducing sexually transmitted diseases, and stemming youth violence. At a recent meeting, the recreation department agreed to keep some centers open later at night in high-risk neighborhoods, and the police department will work to maintain safety during these hours. Safe and Sound agreed to survey community young people about the kinds of activities they would like.

Safe and Sound is also working with community organizers to help residents document neighborhood needs. Teams of community leaders, residents, block captains, schools, city agencies, and clergy have helped channel resources toward tot lots and safe play streets.

The next Report Card and Children's Budget will be released in June.



PAUL SROCHMAN REPORT CARD 2000

The MAPPING
process not only
produced valuable
information about
the neighborhoods
that is not captured
by existing data,
but it provided
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The Philadelphia Coalition for Kids is using data to pinpoint how the city's kids are faring and to help hold public leaders accountable.



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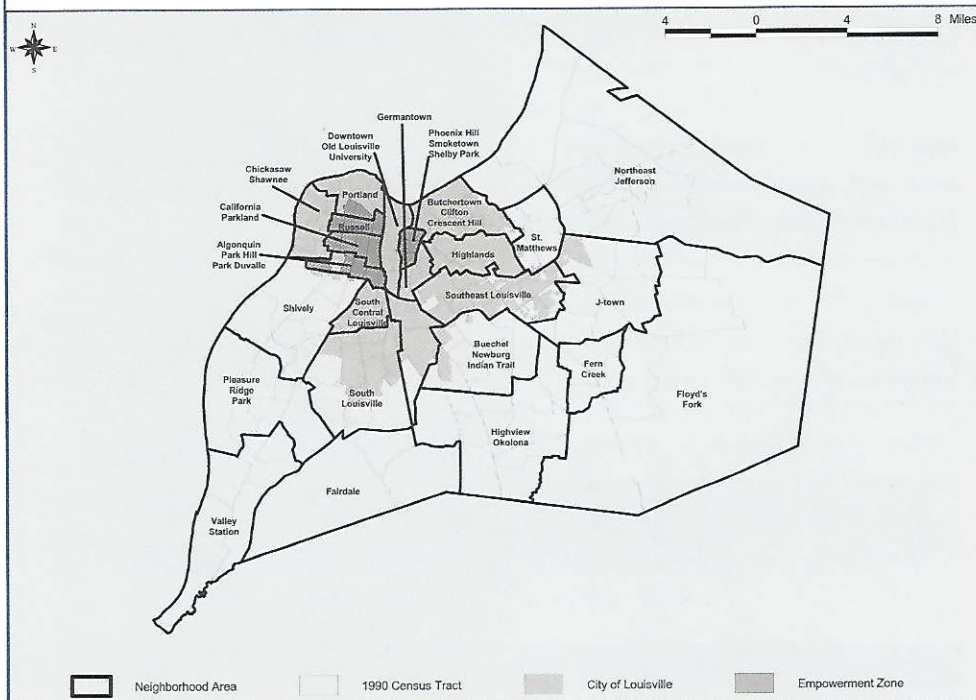
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This map shows the 24 neighborhood areas profiled in the Louisville report. The report used multiple sources of government data to paint a picture of neighborhood children and families.



LOUISVILLE

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"It's easy for folks to sit around and think we have a clear picture of the neighborhood, but this helps us plan and target where we have concrete information on things that need to be done," said Sue Fridenstine, a board member of the Phoenix Hill Neighborhood Association.

Last month, the association invited representatives of schools, churches, and other agencies involved in children's programs to a meeting to discuss the data. The goal was to help motivate people to work

together to address needs that surfaced in the report.

"To get a full picture of what a neighborhood is like, we need to combine this with information that comes from collecting residents' stories and histories," said Sammy Moon, Louisville *Making Connections* site team leader. "We want residents to help identify the kinds of information they need, and we want to work with them in effectively using the information."

HARTFORD

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Foundation grantee, sponsors "action research" projects that train residents to collect data on issues that directly affect them.

"In generating their own research, people get a much better sense of how other sources of data can meet their needs—and the strengths and limitations of that data," notes Jean Schensul, the Institute's executive director.

Ramon Rojano, director of human services for the City of Hartford, believes statistics are worthless unless they're used to solve problems. "I don't believe in using data for finger pointing—it has to be plugged into action-taking."

City Scan has already produced results. Graffiti students identified in *Making Connections* neighborhoods last fall was removed by a public-private partnership called Hartford Proud and Beautiful. Mayor Michael Peters has an anti-graffiti campaign, noted Cunningham. "They welcomed our data with open arms."