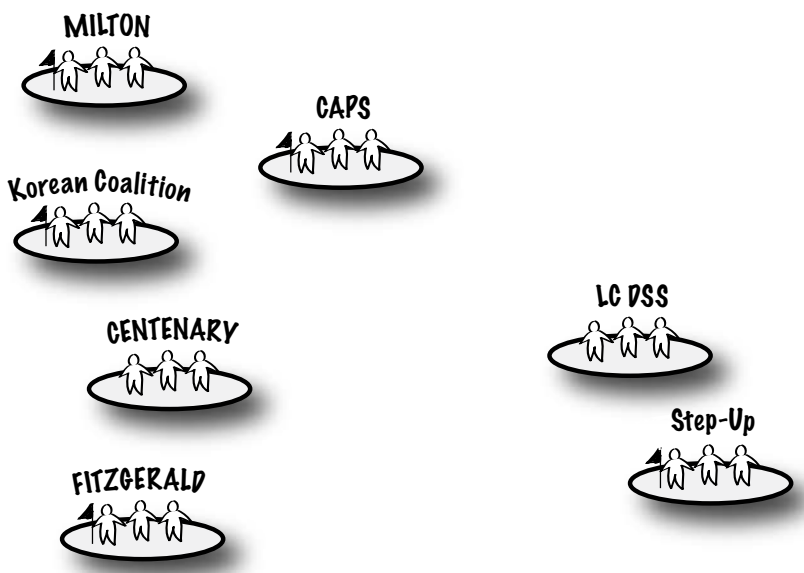


Setting Out Real Communities Retreat

19-20 August 2010
Eatonton, GA

The purpose of real communities	3
Hopes for Real Communities	4
The Real Communities Learning Circle	8
Key messages from the Initiating Group	10
Getting lost	12
Where we are coming from	16



This report summarizes the third meeting of the **Real Communities Initiating group**.

Since October, 2009 Real Communities has developed with the guidance of an Initiating Group whose members include Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) members and staff, people with an interest in building stronger and more inclusive communities, and consultants to the initiative. The Initiating Group met for one day in October 2009 and set in motion a series of dialog interviews which formed the basis for a two day retreat in January 2010. The January retreat guided engagement with a number of potential partners and the identification of seven potential partners; representatives from five local groups joined the second day of August's retreat.

INITIATING GROUP

Dottie Adams
Caitlin Childs
Jessie Coleman
George Crawford
Ajeenah El-Amin
Carl Flair
Mike Green
Trace Haythorn
Marion Jackson
Eric Jacobson
Carlos Keilhauer
Noel Keilhauer
Tom Kohler
Pat Nobbie
Connie Lyle O'Brien
John O'Brien
Stacey Ramirez
Valerie Suber
Jay Suber

MILTON

Tamara (Tami) Black
Ann Coggins
Patricia (Patti) Silva

CENTENARY CHURCH, MACON

Stacey Harwell

KOREAN COALITION

Sharon Chung

FITZGERALD

Jill Alexander
Shirley Brooks
Charles Coney
Lavonia Stepherson

CAPS GWINNETT

Detrice Jupiter-Gilbert
Anne Ladd
Jacqueline McKenzie
Radha Vettriano

John O'Brien prepared this report from the graphic records created by retreat participants. It is intended primarily as a memory aid for those who attended; others may need to review the report with someone who was present

The purpose of **Real Communities** is to learn together how local groups can...

Connect people with developmental disabilities & their organizations to other citizens & their associations & act collectively on community issues.



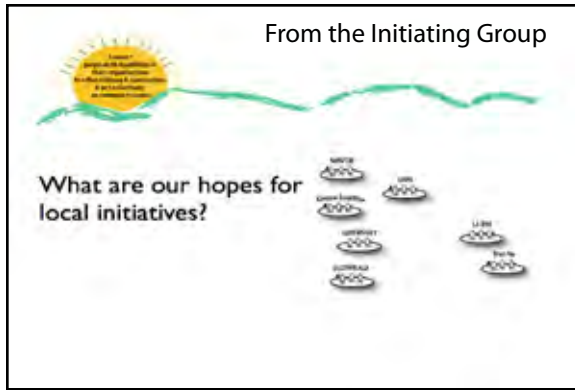
The goal that brings **Real Communities** initiatives together is clear. Each initiative is involved because in it's own way it wants to build bridges that join people with developmental disabilities and their gifts in action with other citizens to make Georgia's communities better and more inclusive. Discovering a variety of ways to reach that goal is the reason for GCDD's investments.

The Initiating Group thought of this retreat as a bit like the beginning of

Lewis and Clark's expedition to the Northwest. Like Thomas Jefferson, the Initiating Group wants to discover good ways to a valuable place and has entrusted explorers with a commission. Like the members of the expedition, those involved in local initiatives are called to find their way in unknown territory and turn the knowledge they gather into maps and advice that others can follow.



There are some important differences too. Unlike Thomas Jefferson, who had to wait months for news, people from local initiatives will join those now in the Initiating Group as members of the Learning Circle, whose mission is to make sense of what **Real Communities** is learning and provide each other with support and advice. Unlike the members of the expedition, local initiatives are setting out from different places and they are not tied to any particular river systems. Differences among the routes that local initiatives explore are an important part of each local group's contribution to the whole. Finally, there is a good chance that additional local groups will join in as time goes by.



People who don't usually come in the same room are working together.

Developing from separate people to a circle & working together as one in the community

ABCD principles & GCDDC values are the DNA of every action.

Diversity is at the heart. Keep asking, *Who's not here?* Find allies and relationships outside "US" who now understand.

Engage young people

People with DD are right in the middle of the action from the beginning. They contribute & play valued roles.

Create something that would be impossible if you didn't work together

Keep looking outward, seeing more to build with, reaching out, connecting so more emerges to work with..

Learn from connections : cultural action. Flip cultural barriers into cultural opportunities. Seeds are in the community.

Invite & listen to each other. Share bonding activities: singing, crafts.

Recognize and acknowledge gifts of everyone . Discover new leadership from unrealized capacity

Honor choice & respect people's freedom

Break it down so all can understand. Use simple language.

INCLUDE

ACT

Success stimulates more local action. Define real physical change & keep track of outcomes.

Be inventive. Build & bring back new tools to work with.

Connect to each other:
More community builders & a community of practice.

Important local results recognized by local media in group's home communities.

Families & people with disabilities less alone, decade by decade.

Reflect on & build on assets so local difference shows up in how the group is, what it sees, & how it acts.

Organized relationships + resilience. Concern for failure holds some people back. It's OK to try.

Be a place to learn. Share your stories. Document from the beginning in multiple media.

Lasting results that attract resources, relationships that increase engagement & further action.

Growing numbers of ordinary citizens question segregation & congregation.

Takes risks & learn from failure. Try regardless of results. Take on real challenges. Participate in moving forward. Small wins.

Learn from history – avoid recreating segregation & build on what works.

We have something important to say at national meetings.

Increase membership of people with DD & their allies in mainline groups.

People find power: We can act & ask expecting a government response & relying on each other as fail safe.

LEARN

CREATE

As the members of the Initiating Group move into their new roles as members of the Learning Circle, they have high expectations for Real Communities. They hope to see a variety of different local efforts that, each in their own way, are guided by ABCD Principles and GCDD values to achieve three results.

Real positive changes that improve life in the community for all, based on a thoughtful and well informed answer to the question, *What does our community need from us?*.

Strong bridges to community associations and leaders and alliances that reach outside the boundaries of disability so that a wider network benefits from the energy and gifts of people with developmental disabilities and their families and people with disabilities have more people to count on.

Learning about how to make real changes in a way that creates a bigger we and a great awakening to the assets that every community has.

Everyone has a chance to dance!

– Noel Keilhauer



I want to see a GREAT AWAKENING to the riches & possibilities that come alive when local people connect & see their assets & get things done.



George Crawford



Real Communities Learning Circle

The role of the Learning Circle is to hold the vision and values of the Real Communities Initiative by...

- Building and telling the stories of its participants
- Exploring the critical questions of community building and inclusion from different perspectives
- Connecting participants to each other and to other resources

Membership in the Learning Circle is by invitation of the GCDD staff responsible for Real Communities.

Members of the Learning Circle offer each other...

Opportunities to better understand the GCDD values and ABCD principles and practices that form the DNA of Real Communities and to develop the skills they need to implement them.

Guidance from people with developmental disabilities and experienced allies about involving people with developmental disabilities in the initiative's work.

Understanding of the history of efforts to serve people with developmental disabilities and their limitations so that Initiatives can build on what works and avoid reproducing past errors.

Active engagement in creating safe spaces to reflect on and learn from experiences of success and failure.

Deep listening, practical suggestions and problem solving.

Advice, coaching and practical help with assisting people to recognize and mobilize gifts and community assets.

Resources in gathering intelligence about systems and how they work.

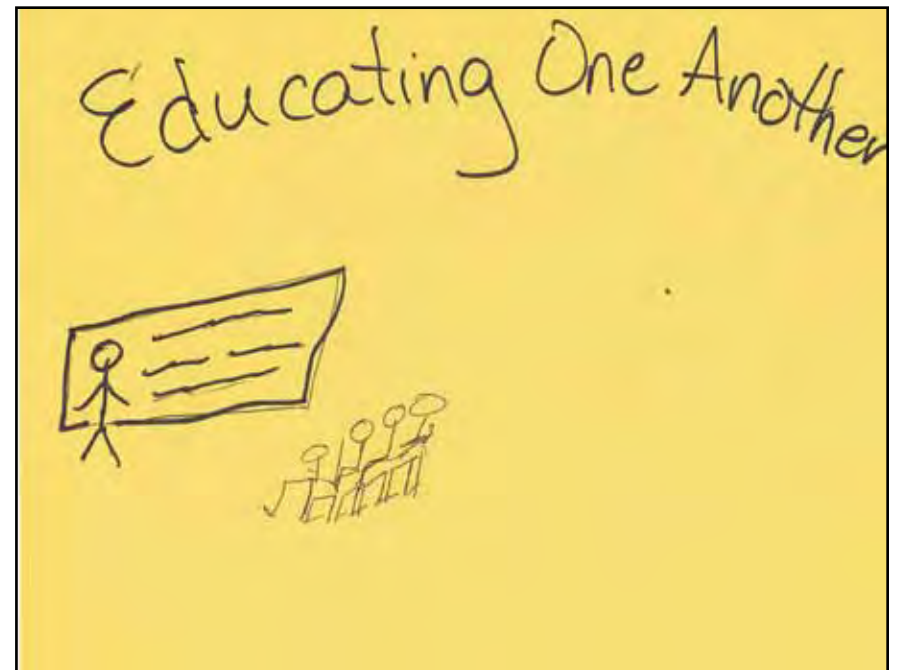
Advice on attracting necessary resources, analysis of the financial aspects of proposals, and connections to some possible sources of funds.


Encouragement and assistance in telling the story of the local initiative and its meaning with different media and from different perspectives, including the ways that people with developmental disabilities experience participating in the group.

Links to one another's resources. For example, in addition to help in implementing ABCD Principles, GCDD staff have expertise in planning and evaluation, navigating the service system, and public awareness strategies.

Engagement in documenting and disseminating the practices that build inclusive, collective action.


Interest in finding accurate and resonant language to describe the work and learning of building Real Communities.





From the Initiating Group

Our key messages to local initiatives




Be a repository of experience to share, connect & learn in community building

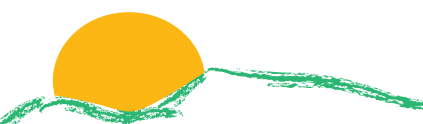
Identification & clarity of needs & opportunities to bridge citizens with disabilities with communities striving in search of inclusiveness



Make people comfortable who have never been at the table before

Be a place to learn new tools & practices: check-in, check out; critical thinking; Try Another Way; recognizing gifts & talents

Do something! Something people choose that is practical, sustainable, & builds community



Keep the faith.

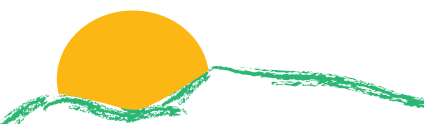
Believe what you want can happen.

Keep going when you have set-backs.



Importance of accomplishment in the process of community improvement

Assessment is important for sustainable funding



The value of a core group in community programs

Assure that folks with disabilities are included in the core group



Document from the beginning

Tell your story

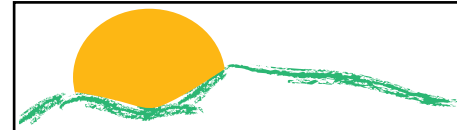


With, not for

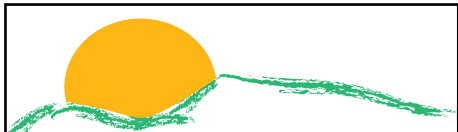
- We change our town
- We change ourselves
- We involve everyone + nurture new leaders



- New leadership in people who don't expect to be leaders
- Support groups hold a voice/values; move from group to community
- Back to basics
- Put things into action
- Have a back-up plan
- Share documents/stories



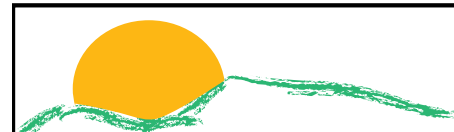
- Mending bridges to bring people together
- Choices to spend time as community builders
- Real initiatives that are sustainable & accountable to people with DD & the community
- Engage churches
- Take & use ABCD training



Do a power analysis to determine who is benefitting from the existing conditions within the community



Get to know a variety of people in your community to get an accurate picture of what is going on.



Go and make a difference!

Local initiatives could lose their way if they...

- ... fail to include people with DD as active members from the beginning
- ... spend too long talking and don't take positive action: small wins that are really on the path to positive community change and give people a chance to give their gifts and the group real reasons to celebrate
- ... don't pay enough attention to building and maintaining good working relationships among members; fail to form a strong circle so people lose interest as soon as they hit barriers; get caught up in power struggles and personality conflicts
- ... count too much on the usual suspects to do the work; neglect to develop leadership, especially among people who don't see themselves as leaders.
- ... fall for the belief that no one in the community can really understand or respond to the offer of the group's contribution and fail to reach out
- ... don't think through the GCDD values well enough to confront the belief that only "special" can be welcoming, safe, or developmentally powerful; not understanding the problems with segregation and congregation, or the problems that come up in the name of choice when people lack options, experience, or support
- ... get stuck in insisting on individual rights instead of thinking about doing the right thing for the community whose citizens they are
- ... focus too much on making the system work, as if all the answers were up there in the professional system or in passing more laws and local action doesn't matter much
- ... get hijacked by (even well meaning) service provider agendas or offers of memberships on boards or committees
- ... look in the rear view mirror at the past (especially grievances) instead of through the windshield, toward positive goals
- ... lack back-up plans and so get discouraged when the first things they try don't work out
- ... fail to plan for sustainability, so the initiative disappears or loses its community focus when GCDD funds decrease



There is some danger of a pronoun problem here. It's important to think about 'we' and 'all of us', not 'us and them (people with DD)'. The actions suggested here are good for any person new to a group. Those with little experience of civic action will benefit from a thoughtful, intentional, indi approach to inviting and involving them, and some people will need some accommodation to assure that activities are accessible and assistance to insure their successful participation. The best way to approach accessibility and assistance is to ask the person and those who know the person what works best for them and then be prepared to learn and adjust as things change.

Engage people right from the beginning

ASK
Make it clear: We need you (specific person)

Hold learning conversations with everyone... look for gifts, interests... match with needed roles within the initiative

Use your contacts & peer groups. Reach out, ask, invite, don't give up

Be brave; take risks.
Step beyond

Cultivate a welcoming culture
Develop bonding activities
Share meals

Invest in people
Build relationships; take relationships seriously

INVITE

WELCOME

Listen! Listen! Listen!
Allow people to be heard & demonstrate their competency

We know that people have stories to tell, these are valuable in many ways. Help people share their stories, collect them, & make meaning of them

Pay close attention to how each person is invited, welcomed, listened to, engaged, & supported

Develop "participation pairs" between 2 people within the larger group. The whole group is divided into pairs of people who help one another be successful as members.

Include all in decision making process – no tokenism

Fight for what you believe in

Encourage everyone to speak up, take risks, be eager to learn, find your voice, invite others 'in'.

Focus on strengths & create opportunities to use them
Build on gifts & talents

Supports up front. What to expect, transportation, usable accessibility
Some one other than "mom" for supports

INVOLVE

SUPPORT

