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U.P. Lead: An Issue-oriented, Experiential, Shared Leadership Project in Michigan's Upper Peninsula

Michigan State University

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Issued June 1998

56 pages

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U.P. LEAD

An Issue-oriented, Experiential,
Shared Leadership Project
In Michigan's Upper Peninsula

By

Upper Peninsula **CLIMB** Partners Donna Aird, Cindy Brock,
Jim Dompier, Anni Gregor, Rita Hodgins, Steve Nelson



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Background

For many years, Michigan State University Extension held training programs to develop current and future leaders. The educational programs were primarily offered by “experts” who traveled from the campus of MSU in East Lansing and made a circuit of the region on consecutive evenings delivering the training.

In 1993, Dr. Gail Imig, then director of Extension, who was an advocate for collaborative initiatives, brought a group together to formulate a proposal to rethink how Extension offered community-based leadership programming. After months of deliberation, the task force presented an innovative approach to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and received a grant to proceed. Michigan State University Extension also committed dollars to the effort.

A design team was named to launch the program, CLIMB — an acronym for Community Leadership Initiative — Michigan’s Best. The program was to emphasize connecting campus-based faculty members, Extension field agents and people from around Michigan who had a strong



interest in community-based leadership through an experiential learning model. In other words, MSU Extension was saying that we don't have all the answers and this needs to involve people in communities.



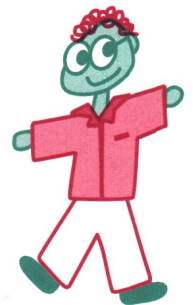
The CLIMB partner group ended up involving 70 people from around Michigan who would learn together, share their learning back in their communities and model new ways of advancing community-based leadership throughout the state. The group's experiential learning took place at "gatherings."

Early on, CLIMB partners decided to share some of their resources to broaden the work across Michigan. The CLIMB partners from the Upper Peninsula met and developed a proposal to offer mini-CLIMB gatherings in each of the 15 counties in the region at which at least 25 multi-generational individuals would come together to address issues facing their communities. The two-day mini-gatherings would be followed by six months of teamwork on selected community issues. The 15 county groups would come together after one year to reflect and to share their stories.

People in Michigan's Upper Peninsula are often termed "fiercely independent." The very geography of the region and its history — how it became part of Michigan, to which it is not attached, rather than Wisconsin, to which it is physically connected — account for some of the culture. Though the Upper Peninsula of Michigan makes up one-third of the state's landmass, only 3 percent of the population resides there. So it takes virtually everyone to be involved in some way to get community work accomplished.

The idea was to "do leadership in a new way." Rather than have an expert lecture about leadership, local people who had been involved in leadership roles would share what they had learned about leadership. Participants would have many opportunities to talk about community, leadership, shared leadership, capacities, individual gifts, what happens when people work together for the good of the community and community issues.

The Upper Peninsula CLIMB partners presented their idea to the county MSU Extension directors and got their full support to proceed.



Two counties, Luce and Alger, were selected as pilot counties. The county Extension directors in the two counties involved their entire staffs and community people in the planning.

The Luce County program, with 35 participants, was a learning laboratory. The group divided into three teams to work on economic development, activities for youth and negative behaviors that affect families.

Alger County attracted 25 participants and selected three issues to work on: community apathy and lack of public participation, vision, and issues around family and youth.

We were able to fine-tune the planning and mini-gatherings following the two pilot programs. The people and Extension staff

members were so positive about shared leadership and “experts residing in the community” that other counties were eager to get up and running.



We learned that mailing brochures isn't very effective. It is more effective to personally invite someone to participate. We learned that the "experts" in our communities were excited about sharing their knowledge. We learned that whatever people have a passion about gets done. Although "shared leadership" and "everyone is a leader" were our guiding principles, we learned that someone needs to shepherd the process and teamwork along.

As one of our county Extension directors, Steve Nelson, put it, "Through our constitution, we have that inherent permission to organize ourselves around a common interest or issue. U.P. LEAD provided over 300 Upper Peninsula people with the tools and the opportunity."



Part I – Lessons Learned

Lesson 1 – Diversity Brings Richness

In the community of White Pine in the western Upper Peninsula, involving young people brought a new dimension to the discussion of community revitalization. In this mining community, many people felt they had been “defeated” once the mine closed, said Paul Saaranen, who was responsible at the time for outplacement—getting former mine employees working once again. But it was the students who proved to be the catalysts to create change. A number of young U.P. LEAD participants from White Pine Schools asked Saaranen to work with them on a project. The students were enthusiastic about getting an area resurfaced so that they could play tennis and basketball. Saaranen met with less than a dozen students, but together they brainstormed, had a discussion with the school principal and held an organizational meeting. Then the young people addressed the school board and also made presentations to local organizations to help raise the funds needed, he said. In spite of busy school

schedules, the students went door to door talking with residents about the project. Saaranen credited these young people for having a vision as well as an action plan to create change at a critical stage in their community's development.

"These students represented one of the only positive forces operating within their community at a time when the local economy and general community attitude were severely depressed," Saaranen said. They completed the repaving of the courts in the summer of 1996; they're still in use today.

After the U.P. LEAD Leadership Development Workshop in Houghton County, two small groups formed to address issues involving better land use and economic development. The group conducted surveys and educated the public via workshops, speakers and newspaper articles. According to participant Jim Boyce, the group recruited the involvement of the Keweenaw Chamber of Commerce, the U.P. Environmental Coalition and the Regional Planning Commission; in addition, the League of Women Voters also assisted in the process.



“Among the lessons learned from this two-year experience with the LEAD group was the value of having group members pooling their best ideas in planning community projects,” Boyce commented. “The resulting decisions and plans were far superior to what any one person could have done alone. One example was the ‘fine-tuning’ of the survey questionnaire. We learned the value of working with other groups who had similar interests.”

From a personal perspective, Boyce said he’s grown from the experience. “I’ve become an even stronger advocate for broad participation in any issue or decision that affects the public,” he said. “Differences of opinion are welcome because they serve to clarify issues, and through dialogue, we educate one another.”

Jim is a retired “Big Three” executive, a former professor at Michigan Technological University and a current county commissioner.

Some of Delta County’s U.P. LEAD workshop participants decided to focus on youth and quickly found that decision to be a move in the right direction.

“U.P. LEAD really opened connections for us,” said Donna Aird, one of the participants. She said that their group combined with another local organization, Youth First, in obtaining materials to focus on the 40 assets youth need to succeed.

“Rather than looking at youth’s problems, [this approach] involves building on their assets,” Aird said. She remarked that, initially, the group hoped to begin a youth leadership program involving “some quiet kids with leadership potential from the seventh and eighth grades.”

“We wanted to start with 20 to 24 kids and we got 36,” she said.

She commented that the program, which also included communication skills and conflict resolution, made a measurable difference in the young people involved.



“In six weeks’ time, it was amazing how they grew and developed from their own little ‘cliques’ to working in groups in hands-on activities,” Aird said.

She said this group of young people might find their next steps might be to get involved in community service and peer mediation. She also remarked that plans are underway to take the program into fifth and sixth grades in more rural areas.

Sally Harris Smith, another Delta County participant, agreed with Aird on the value of developing a community-based leadership effort.

“There are many, many organizations just waiting to grasp and run with an idea for improving the health of the community,” Harris Smith said. She encouraged the inclusion of diverse groups to make the process successful. “This includes youth groups, school groups, church groups and others,” she added.



Lesson 2 – People Will Participate If They are Asked

“The ones who stayed with U.P. LEAD were the ones who received a personal invitation,” Donna Aird noted.

Though flyers, brochures and ads in the local media were also utilized, the emerging leaders proved to be those who received personalized letters and/or phone calls. Aird also said that in letters mailed to potential participants, individuals were told how both the individual and the community could benefit from their involvement; in addition, the potential participant was told that he/she had been identified as a potential leader.

“There’s something positive about being told that you have leadership abilities,” another participant said.



A small school in the district received the information about the leadership program and two single parents were personally invited and encouraged to attend. One of the parents arrived at the site of the mini-gathering, and several times she got up and left the room. Following the two days of intensive work together, the young woman threw her arms around one of the facilitators and repeated her thanks over and over. She said that when she arrived and looked around the room at the people there, she thought she was in the wrong place. She was leaving the room to call her school to make sure that she was in the right place. She couldn't believe that she could possibly be a part of this group. She was not only a part but a key player.

Mailing brochures and putting out press releases are important, but nothing works as well as the "personal ask."



Lesson 3 – Learn by Doing

“We can learn from traditional leadership practices and glean the good processes,” said Sally Harris Smith. “State agencies and community organizations are realizing that traditional community leaders and grass-roots leaders must blend and represent a more diverse population if we are going to make a long-lasting impact within communities.”

U.P. LEAD also taught Harris Smith that everyone, regardless of their age, background or social status, has something to give.

“I’m now better able to appreciate the gifts all people have to offer in the process of change,” she said.

U.P. LEAD provided numerous methods, processes and experiences to allow for various learning styles. The philosophy of U.P. LEAD is that you don’t learn leadership from a book but rather through the experience of doing it. Through the course of the two-day mini-gatherings, people had an opportunity to try out their voices and their gifts in a very comfortable atmosphere. There was an

opportunity to be listener, speaker, organizer, reporter, recorder, doer, creator, innovator, inquisitor, reactor, observer and change agent.

When the young people in Baraga County got involved in activities that enhanced their community — such as the spring cleanup, painting, planting flowers, tutoring grade school children and participating with the HeadStart program — they found their voice in the community. Several of the participants ended up giving a report to the county board when the adult member of their team was late in arriving.

Members of a team working to build a footbridge over a wetland area at a local park were able to see what gets done when you decide to do something. The bridge was dedicated to the memory of another very involved community resident. A popular local park was enhanced through their efforts.



As reported in the October 21, 1996, issue of the *Eagle Herald* newspaper, residents made a visible difference in their communities following a U.P. LEAD leadership program. The group, which included high school students, gardeners and

other area residents, planted apple trees at Orchard Hills, a home for developmentally disabled persons. The group thought the fruit trees would be a doable project in terms of the time commitment involved; in addition, the trees would benefit the residents for years to come. The residents of Orchard Hill will also have the chance to learn to care for the trees.

Sitting in a classroom learning leadership techniques may be one thing, but what counts “is doing something for the community,” according to Judy Pomeroy, a U.P. LEAD participant from Menominee County.

Pomeroy noted that she was especially pleased with the involvement of area high school students.

“It represented the area youth in a positive way; in addition, it was an opportunity for the teens to do something close to home,” Pomeroy said. “The project may have made them more aware of Orchard Hills, and it could open doors to them to find other ways of helping the home’s residents.” These Menominee County residents learned that doing something positive for their community taught them more about leadership than they could have ever learned from a book.

Jim Boyce’s involvement in U.P. LEAD, and his group’s successful effort to promote better land use and economic development, taught him some important issues that couldn’t be learned from a book.

“Leadership develops through experience in groups and organizations that seek to accomplish something by means of a group working together,” he said. “What is effective is a participatory style of leadership. This can create more effective and successful organizations in the long run,” he said.



Lesson 4 – We’re All On Our Own Personal Leadership Journey

Donna Aird noted that projects such as U.P. LEAD are important not only for what they can accomplish in communities but for what they can do for individual growth. She pointed to their area’s “Welcome Newborns” project as an example. (This project includes volunteer home visitors who have an interest in newborns, the health of mothers, or prevention of abuse and neglect.)

“Once volunteers have been trained, they go into a home and assist new mothers,” Aird said. By doing so, “they find the value in the program and themselves,” she said. “These volunteers often seek other ways of growing, by returning to college, seeking employment in human services agencies or by looking for other community challenges,” Aird said.

She also commented that she grew as a result of U.P. LEAD.

“I’ve gained a broader view of the positive aspects of my community. And, it’s been great fun,” she said.

Participant Mary Kostecki said U.P. LEAD really strengthened leadership skills for several people in Mackinac County. A relatively recent “transplant” to their area, Bob Nitz, became involved and his impact has been considerable. He had many skills to share from his professional work career and has become a mentor to three U.P. LEAD participants. He made an immediate difference in the Human Services Collaborative Body by helping the group fine-tune its organization. In addition, Nitz’s wife was influenced by U.P. LEAD and is now a 4-H leader and has volunteered to serve on the Foster Care Advisory Board for the region.

Two of the participants on a team working on strengthening their downtown business community have instituted a main street program in their downtown. Efforts to accomplish this had previously met with resistance. Both Mollie Larson and Roger Good have been asked to speak in other communities about how to start such a program elsewhere in the region.

In Schoolcraft County, a team of students and adults were unhappy that teens rarely got positive press. After meeting with little success when presenting positive stories for print, the team worked to develop its own newspaper, **TNT** (Teens Networking Together). The adults on the team serve as mentors/advisers and the teens write and produce the paper. The paper has been a real hit with the local youth and area publishers are vying for the bid to print it.



Lesson 5 – Start Small - The Seed Will Grow

While participating in U.P. LEAD, two teachers quickly became fired up about what they might accomplish. Cathie Stanaway and Amy Lesatz, two HeadStart teachers in Pelkie, both shared a concern about the lack of volunteerism in their community. By targeting high school students, the teachers thought they could foster the spirit of volunteerism in the young, which would carry over into their adult lives. Armed with materials from a three-day training session on volunteerism and enthusiasm from other U.P. LEAD participants, Stanaway and Lesatz began a volunteer recruitment program targeted at high school seniors. The teachers arranged to speak with students at Baraga and L'Anse high schools. The duo had compiled a listing of many places where the young people could donate their time, from the hospital to day care centers to senior citizens' programs and many others.

"We really had too many places for them to volunteer," Lesatz said, and she felt perhaps the wide range of options might have overwhelmed many. Nonetheless, they saw progress.

“About the same time that U.P. LEAD was occurring, a Youth Advisory Council (from the Baraga Community Foundation) was being formed,” Lesatz said. The youth participants from U.P. LEAD became the nucleus for the Youth Advisory Council. This group responded to the call for volunteers and helped

with several special events at the HeadStart

program in Pelkie. Students helped set up a

“Fun Frolic,” a Halloween party with games and

activities for preschoolers. In addition, the

students helped put on a Christmas program

during the holidays and helped provide child

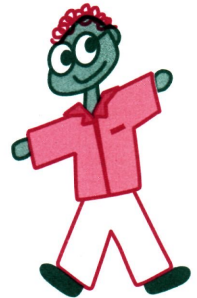
care during meetings with parents, Lesatz said.



By most observers’ accounts, the program would appear to have been a great success. But both Stanaway and Lesatz said they were disappointed that their message didn’t seem to persuade as many young people to volunteer as they hoped.

“We learned what not do,” Lesatz said. “We aimed too high by trying to recruit only seniors, and in our enthusiasm, we failed to delegate when we should have,” she said.

Nonetheless, several young people did respond to the challenge immediately, and it may be that several others took that message to heart and decided to volunteer several months later. And in the process, the adults learned several valuable lessons about leadership, the high school volunteers found that they could make a difference in their communities by working with preschoolers and the tots had the enjoyment of interacting with the teens.



Lesson 6 – ‘Seed Money Helps’

Scott Widmar found the importance of having funds available when the group he was involved with tried to put together a booklet outlining various organizations in Alger County.

“We thought it would be helpful for newcomers to our community to have a listing of contact people for service and civic organizations,” Widmar said. This way, new people could get quickly acquainted with other members of the community and inject new blood into area groups at the same time.

Widmar’s group prepared surveys, sent letters, made phone calls, all of which required resources to even begin. While Widmar expressed disappointment because “the project never really came together,” it was due more to the “nature of the beast” than the lack of available resources.

“We may have received a 2 percent response to our letters,” Widmar said. “Even with postage paid, people don’t want to complete surveys.” He said they found that contact people change yearly and their terms end randomly; this, combined with a difficulty in getting the “raw” information in the first place, made their effort all the more challenging.

“Even as we were composing the booklet, things changed,” Widmar said. Two points Widmar and his group learned from the U.P. LEAD experience: to begin to make a difference, you need resources, and the only thing certain in life is change.

Each of the counties received \$1,000 to help with implementing the projects they selected. In some cases, all the resources were utilized. In others, additional resources were raised, and in a few cases, things got done with human power and the money wasn’t an issue.

Lesson 7 – It Helps to Have a Shepherd

Chris Case quickly learned the importance of getting someone to “keep the ball rolling” in a communitywide effort, and he found himself taking on the major organizational efforts because he believed in the project.

“After the leadership training, some of us really wanted to apply the concept with a grass-roots effort to begin a recycling project,” Case said.

A group of about 12 area citizens started by seeing what was marketable and who would take what products, and then they contacted various municipalities.



“It was really a success story when we first got it going,” Case said, “but it required one person to spearhead the efforts.” He praised other volunteers for their involvement and noted that senior citizens made a major difference in getting the effort off the ground.

“Many of the oldest folks proved to be some of the strongest supporters of recycling,” Case said. “The synergy that developed with [volunteer] Ken McPhearson was incredible,” Case said. “Ken may be 74 years old, but he wore me out!”

Case succeeded in getting not only seniors involved but also scout groups and environmental classes from the middle and high schools. In addition, the group contacted a local appliance repair person, who agreed to extract freon from appliances for one-third of what it would typically cost; these appliances could then be recycled as scrap metal.



“We really tried to make this effort countywide and comprehensive,” Case said.

Though the group’s efforts were successful, he commented on the importance of keeping the effort orchestrated.

“It’s important that everyone gets on board, but someone has to make sure the horse is still hitched up all the time,” he said.

But a major project such as recycling, even with grass-roots participation and municipal backing, proved to take its toll.

“It was pretty intense,” he said, “and while this case is a study in what grass-roots folks can get accomplished, we also have to get more people involved in ‘old’ committees,” he said. Inevitably, some volunteers moved away; others experienced burnout.

Though he’s still committed to recycling and the group’s accomplishments, Case said, “I’m ready to have someone else drive the wagon and just ride in it.” He noted that Community Mental Health has taken over the recycling program to supplement displaced wages for some of their clients.

“The problem is that this isn’t a perpetual motion situation,” Case stated. “It still needs ‘nudging’ from time to time.

Recycling isn’t in the forefront as it once was;

it needs someone continually cheerleading and pushing, the P.R. stuff,” Case said.



He noted this is also complicated because of the need to have municipalities involved in the efforts. “With [periodic] elections, people change and the focus can be lost over the years,” Case said.

He said he used to give monthly reports to the municipalities; that has gone by the wayside so he can be with his family and keep in touch with his other, non-volunteer life.

Case said that though the recycling effort is still working in Alger County, it’s more “anemic” than it was before.

“We still get together once a year for a spring cleanup, and if we don’t get going, the spring cleanup just doesn’t happen,” he said.

Chris Case has proven that things don’t just happen—**it takes a committed volunteer to keep a group focused and organized if it’s to be truly successful.**



Lesson 8 – It Takes Time to Build Relationships

Steve Peffers said having two full days with a diverse group of people made a major difference.

“Too many programs are an hour here or there; what was learned gets too often lost,” he said. But U.P. LEAD was different, he said. “This was really a concentrated effort—it helped in the dynamics and added to the program.”

He commented that their group had about 25 people from every municipality in the county, something that really impressed him.

“There was diversity and new faces; too often we see the same faces over and over again. While this may show dedication—and that’s good—it was also good to see different people willing to enhance their skills,” he said.

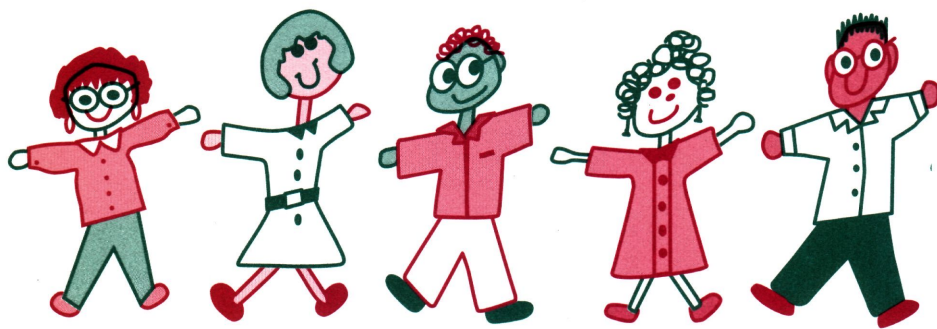
He said the relationships built during that two-day experience encouraged his group to work toward the development of a calendar of activities for Alger County.

“We were three-fourths of the way complete and the calendar was partially published when three of the five members of our group moved out of the area,” Peffers said. In spite of not achieving their goal, Peffers still feels good about the experience.

“The groundwork was laid and the process of work was very rewarding,” he said.

He also is pleased that he continues to run across former participants from the two-day training years ago.

“I still see some of those people from the outlying areas,” Peffers said. “It reminds me that there’s more to Alger County than just Munising.”



Lesson 9 – Collaboration Is Essential

Denise Marth’s group shared concerns for family issues.

“We had people working together that normally wouldn’t have been,” she said. From “known leaders to quiet leaders,” their input was not only valuable — it also “multiplied forces,” she said.

“That collaboration helped us prepare for Strong Families, Safe Children, an effort which focuses on four major areas: to increase the immunization rate in children; to promote kinship care for aunts, grandparents and other relatives raising children; to decrease the number of out-of-home placements; and to facilitate the adoption process when adoption proves to be a necessity. Initially the county was given \$123,000 in state funding for the program. Any interested person could come to the table and try to help us decide how to best utilize those dollars,” Marth said. “This provided the building blocks of who we are (as a community) and showed the need to avoid duplication of services,” she said. The group then began “working for the good of the community instead of their own agencies,” she added.

Marth said there was “quite a bit of teamwork,” and it paid off. In addition to bringing in speakers and developing classes to teach young people how to baby-sit, the group also started prenatal classes in a county where they hadn’t existed before.

Marth said the process has proven to be positive: “U.P. LEAD helped us to see who else was out there as well as the financial resources.”

In Ontonagon County, one of the groups wanted to make the area more inviting by erecting new welcome signs at key places throughout the county. Although each of the groups had a small sum of money to work on their projects, a sign project would require additional dollars. Through a number of fund-raising activities, the team raised nearly \$1,000. The sign project got

bogged down in the bureaucracy and languished until a 4-H club took the project on. Club members met with state and local officials and got approval to erect a number of very attractive “Welcome to Ontonagon County” signs.



Lesson 10 – Be Flexible

Dave Keller was part of a group that decided to take on the issue of housing.

“We had some real energy and enthusiasm to develop a ‘Christmas in April’ project for our region,” Keller said. This project, modeled after a national group like Habitat for Humanity, repairs homes for senior citizens, handicapped persons and others who couldn’t otherwise make repairs on their own.

“We obtained material [from the national organization], but it’s really challenging to try to start something new,” Keller said. Job conflicts, a limited group of volunteers and the difficulty of trying to find a common meeting time caused the project to “die on the vine,” Keller said. If he had it to do over again, “we’d get more people involved,” he said.

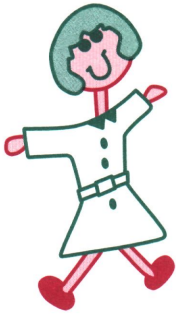
In many instances, teams joined other community groups working on similar issues/interests. U.P. LEAD brought to light the desire to develop affordable housing. According to one participant, a group had begun to address the issue of housing before U.P. LEAD.

“But while that group had begun to address the issue, it really got going after U.P. LEAD,” said participant Mary Kostecki. Seven new people who were a part of U.P. LEAD joined the existing group to form HOME: Housing Opportunities Made Equal for Mackinac County residents.

In addition to building Habitat for Humanity-type housing in their region, the group was also successful in writing grants, securing loans and raising funds from the local community. Through the unplanned merger of two groups working toward the common goal of improving housing, area teens got into the effort as well. A group of 13 young people and 5 adults recently travelled to

Newport News, Va., to take part in a building project away from home. Kostecki said this trip — which required an extensive and successful community fund-raising effort by the teens so they could make the trip during spring break — was one way the teens could see what could be accomplished if they put some distance between themselves and their own homes.





“We’re really excited to see what will happen as a result of their experience,” Kostecki said.

Kostecki is quick to point out that many individuals not involved with U.P. LEAD have worked hard to make HOME a success.

“It’s like putting a puzzle together — it’s not complete until all the pieces are in place,” she said. “And U.P. LEAD was a very important piece of HOME,” she added.

In Iron County, the U.P. LEAD participants felt a real need for positive role models and mentoring for young people. In the beginning, efforts were directed toward starting a Big Brothers/Big Sisters program, but the group found finances too restricting.

“For a small community like ours, funding simply wasn’t available,” a participant said. Instead, a number of agencies collaborated to strengthen a program that was in place called Kinship. “We now have a Kinship board with representatives from different agencies who match area youth with volunteers,” Sonne Stowell said.

Part II – How to Adapt U.P. Lead to Your Community

We all know that following a period of giving our power away, we have huge systems and diminished communities. The resurgence of civic participation is necessary to reclaim our communities. Programs such as U.P. LEAD that bring together a representative group from a community-centered, action-oriented, issue-focused, shared-learning perspective begin the process of rebuilding community. U.P. LEAD embodied community-based leadership development for the collective benefit rather than for the benefit of the individual.

There was great power in looking around the table and seeing what would typically be considered an unlikely group of people gathered together to talk about issues and their solutions. Therein was the greatest lesson — that **“each individual brings gifts to the table and is valuable to the community.”**

A quote from David Spangler's *Between Order and Chaos* is so apropos when we reflect on the U.P. LEAD experience: "I think a great lesson of our time right now is the degree to which we need each other. The steps we need to take are not steps that can be taken simply using the heroic model of the past: the isolated individual going out, overcoming obstacles and emerging triumphant. Instead, we are looking at an emerging model that says we must be a collective hero; the obstacles are not necessarily there to be overcome, but to be understood in ways that add insight and energy to our own resources. We are realizing that in an interconnected world, not only are problems interwoven, but the solutions are interconnected as well, which means whatever we do to help ourselves and the world, we must do it together."

A. Suggestions for Getting Started

Begin with a small group of people who are interested in the collective good of their community — people interested in community issues and being a part of the solutions. Work with a small group to plan the program with an emphasis on process and experiential learning and a bias for action. Learning by doing is the banner.

Recruiting additional participants is best done by personal invitation. Though a brochure can be prepared and press releases sent out, the very best results to get people involved occur when you ask them. It allows for the opportunity to talk with them about your new approach — that no one of us is as wise as all of us, and that this leadership development program is about shared leadership around community issues and their solutions.

It would be important to have the group be as diverse as possible in gender, ethnicity, age, socioeconomic background and race. A group of around 25 participants is ideal. It allows for the diversity you want to achieve as well as synergy.

Having the group together for an intensive period of time — two full days, preferably — is important for a number of reasons. When people spend longer periods of time together with good opportunities for sharing experiences, relationships begin to be developed. If the sessions are brief, there is never enough time for really getting to the heart of who we are and the sharing of meaningful experiences. Rather, we continue to spend time getting to know one another.

With U.P. LEAD, in the counties where we were able to have two full days of intensive “togetherness” in dialogue, learning and sharing experiences, we ended up with greater success in the six-month followup spent working on the projects. In the counties where the sessions were held in the evenings over several weeks, the cohesiveness and feeling of belonging weren’t as strong.

Allow the participants to decide what the issues are and what learning needs to take place to effect a solution. Use people from the community as the resource people to reinforce the notion that the “experts” are the people who live in the community.

B. Tools to Use

We found it useful to have the participants learn about their leadership type. At the time, we did not have anyone on our Extension staff who was qualified to administer the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), which would have been our choice instrument. We were able to offer the MBTI in several counties where we had a resident of the county who was qualified. In the other counties, we used a simplified version of MBTI.



Using a leadership assessment tool such as MBTI is a wonderful way to build team and highlight uniqueness. It gives the group members a good grounding and understanding of who they are and their relationship with the other members of the group.

We made a wonderful tape that was part of the first CLIMB gathering. The tape has the voices of four individuals at different ages in their lives—age 9, age 16, middle age and seasoned adult. The individuals speak about their lives and where they felt a real sense of belonging, community and leadership. After each voice, the tape is stopped and participants are asked to draw a picture of the place where they felt the strongest sense of community at that age and if they were involved in any leadership role to depict what they were doing. You could

create such an audiotape.

This was an amazing experience. At first, some of the men and women in the group just sat and stared



straight ahead with a look that said, "I can't draw!" Before long, they were drawing, writing, coloring and getting totally involved.

Participants worked in groups to describe the picture that best illustrated their strongest sense of community and leadership. We incorporated one of each of their drawings into a collage.

We used material from John McKnight, professor at Northwestern University and chair of the McKnight Institute at Northwestern. McKnight and Kretzmann's book, *Building Communities from the Inside Out*, would also be a great resource. The book focuses on "asset mapping" and looking at communities from an asset perspective rather than a needs perspective. The book costs \$12 and can be ordered from the Publications Department, Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, Northwestern University, 2040 Sheridan Road, Evanston, IL 60208-4100; phone: 708-491-8712; fax 708-491-9916.

We had a great deal of fun using the card game Diversity, which can be ordered from Ned Herrmann



Group. The game helps people understand the way they prefer to think and problem solve. For most tasks, especially creative problem solving, diverse groups with all types represented are best. People learn to appreciate their differences and work together. The Ned Herrmann Group can be reached at 2075 Buffalo Creek Road, Lake Lure, NC 28746; phone 704-625-9153; or fax 704-625-2198.

We involved “local experts” telling their stories about their experiences in getting things done, whether it was a community effort to build a youth playground, open a “walk-in closet” with quality donated winter coats/boots/hats/mittens or become a mentor for neighborhood children. Learning about what others in their community were doing at the grass-roots level to improve the quality of life for everyone, not just some, inspired people to believe in the power of one.



Build in reflection — it is how we know that change is taking place. At the end of each day, we took time to reflect and talk about what we learned. We built in a “six-month checkup” so we could come together and again reflect on what we

learned and what had changed. Additionally, we built in the one-year followup where we could share stories from across the region and build a network of people committed to community in the Upper Peninsula.

Above all, U.P. LEAD was about a community-based leadership project that was more about process than program. The program served as a means to a desired end — a personal leadership journey that is sustained over time to effect positive change for the collective good of a community.

"I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the community as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live. Life is no 'brief candle' to me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for a moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations."

- George Bernard Shaw

Be astonishing! Arise to serve.

A report on U.P. LEAD

Building a Sense of Community

Our plan was to bring together 25 community (county) people from all age/ethnic/income levels for two days of interaction, sharing, learning and dialogue, and through the course of the two days, to become connected. Additionally, we planned to work together to address community issues over the course of six months as teams and come back together in six months and again in one year to talk about what happened/didn't happen as a result of our efforts. The project was to take place in each of the 15 Upper Peninsula counties.

Identifying Group Concerns/Issues

We used the registration form as a method for people to identify what they felt were three issues facing their communities. These were compiled and listed on flipchart paper and were the basis for group dialogue around what were the

most pressing issues in the county. People were able to talk about the issues and explore solutions together. They were able to team up with others who had the same concerns and develop some type of action that they would take to address that concern. We formed as many as three teams in each of the counties. Where participation was fewer than the 25 targeted, we worked on one or two issues.

Creating a Vision

We didn't formally create a vision for each of the issues chosen to be addressed, but each of the teams talked about what members would like to see happen in their community around a particular area and what they could do to make that happen. An example would be in Mackinac County, where decent housing has become a critical concern. The team knew that this would be a massive undertaking, but they had experienced small steps toward providing decent housing for two families, and they knew that by tapping into resources and joining with others, they could continue toward decent housing for additional families.

Learning Together

We started with the premise that no one of us is as wise as all of us, and that each of us had part of the solution to make a difference in our communities. The entire two days was spent learning with one another. We built into the agenda time to reflect and discuss during each of the areas planned. Although we did have an agenda, it was flexible enough to allow for sharing and discussion.

Identifying Assets/Resources

As the teams formed around the issues that interested them the most, they identified others who needed to be brought into the team to make a difference. They identified additional resources — volunteers, dollars and other kinds of resources — to help them with their projects. In one county, economic development was at odds with the environment. The team joined hands, wrote a grant proposal and received several thousand dollars to augment their dollars to host a series of six informational sessions attended by more than 100 people.

Acting

That is what U.P. LEAD is all about. It is not just discussing what needs to be done, but rather joining together to go out and do it. We talked a lot about **"leaders are completers."** They "walk the walk" and they get involved with their hearts and hands. No matter how small the action, **the work of "one" will make a difference.** One of our teens took part in a youth forum and the 28 youth decided to work on four initiatives. She is involved with a small group working with the television station that covers our peninsula and they are planning a weeklong in-depth look at "positive youth activity" (beyond sports) and focusing on the great things that teens are doing.



Community-Based Leadership Development Program

Proposed Outline

Before the sessions, each participant would fill out a participant profile. In the profile, we would determine what kinds of leadership experiences participants have had, what their current interests in the community might be and what they see as the three major issues facing the community.

Once selected for participation in the experiential learning process, they would be mailed a Myers Briggs Type Indicator assessment that would be scored before the sessions started.



Format for the Two-Day Sessions

Day One:

- 1-hour time block on what is community — what is leadership.
- 2-hour feedback on the Myers Briggs Type Indicator.
- Lunch.
- 1-hour time block on conflict (family/organization/community).
- 1 1/2-hour time block on planning for change/community visioning.

Day Two:

- 1-hour time block on community collaboration using case studies from the community (a project that worked and one that didn't).
- 1-hour time block on power in communities.
- 1-hour time block on working through the political process.

- Lunch.
- 1-hour time block on discussion of the issues.
- Prioritization of the issues.
- Forming the teams (three top issues) and beginning the planning what we're going to do about them/selecting a chairperson/next meeting date,etc.

Six Months Following the Two-Day Retreat Sessions

- Teams work on the issues they have self-selected and keep the other two teams informed about what they are doing.
- Selected books/articles on leadership are provided/recommended for reading.
- Group comes back together in six months for a dinner meeting at which time the teams share what they have done/receive certificate.

One Year Following the Two-Day Retreat Sessions

- Participants from around the Upper Peninsula from all county leadership programs come together in a daylong gathering (350 people) and have a poster session and share the actions they have accomplished around community issues.
- Participants identify additional leadership training needed.
- Participants indicate where they are going to pursue personal leadership efforts.
- Major speaker at dinner.



...A Few Closing Thoughts

According to Cindy Brock, MSU Delta County Extension director, "As time passes, things continue to surface where a U.P. LEAD participant is involved. My belief is that we will continue to experience positive effects for years to come."

Jim Dompier, MSU county Extension director in Baraga County agreed. "Many U.P. LEAD participants are now involved in a community attitudinal survey." He added, "Because of U.P. LEAD, the teens felt they had an equal voice and place at the table, and they are providing new energy on the survey project."

"One of the results that was so heartening for me," said Rita Hodgins, U.P. LEAD project coordinator, "was the heightened awareness that we don't have to wait for permission to take action for the betterment of our communities. In many cases, participants went out and garnered additional human and financial resources and experienced firsthand the strength and value of collaboration and shared leadership for the collective good."

The U.P. LEAD project involved more than 300 participants and there are so many wonderful stories to share. We encourage you to contact any or all of us for assistance when you are planning community-based leadership development efforts.

The U.P. LEAD CLIMB Partners would like to express our gratitude to CLIMB, Michigan State University Extension and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation for its gracious support.

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U.P. LEAD



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Issued in furtherance of MSU Extension work in agriculture and home economics, acts of May 8, and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Arlen Leholm, Extension director, Michigan State University Extension, E. Lansing, MI 48824.

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