

PUBLIC LIFE

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Investments in Education:

Communities, regions and states take
initiative to boost college enrollment

Framing the Issue:
Should OMHS build
a new hospital?

**Undoing 50 years of
being “off the map”**

Editor’s Notes (and Responses):
The public should shape private
investment along the riverfront

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Rodney is president of the Public Life Foundation of Owensboro. He joined the foundation in 2000 following twelve years with RiverPark (performing arts) Center. His volunteer and civic experience includes work in education, health care, youth, social services, tourism, and community development. He is a graduate of Western Kentucky University.



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Dave is Associate Professor of Journalism and Director of Media Studies, Poynter Center for the Study of Ethics and American Institutions, Indiana University. He holds a B.A. degree from Central College and an M.T.S. and Ph.D. from Harvard University. From 1978-87, he was Editorial Page Editor for the *Messenger-Inquirer*. He has published articles in *Journal of Religious Ethics*, *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, *Newspaper Journal*, and *Journalism Quarterly*.



Fran Ellers

Fran works as a writer, editor, and communications consultant. She is a former reporter with the Louisville *Courier-Journal* and was a frequent panelist on Kentucky Educational Television's "Comment on Kentucky." Her clients include the Public Life Foundation of Owensboro, University of Kentucky Center for Rural Health, and the Kentucky League of Cities.



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John established the Public Life Foundation of Owensboro in 1996 following the sale of the Owensboro *Messenger-Inquirer* to the Belo Corporation (Dallas, TX). A graduate of Princeton University and the University of Michigan College of Law, he was a practicing attorney for 19 years prior to returning to the family newspaper in 1973. He has been involved in numerous civic initiatives, including a lead role in the establishment of the Owensboro Community College. In 1996, the Kentucky Press Association honored him with its "most valuable member" award. He was named to the Kentucky Journalism Hall of Fame in 2002.



Ed Staats

Ed served The Associated Press for 41 years, as a reporter, editor and administrator in 10 AP offices, including the AP's headquarters in New York. He retired in mid-2002 ending a career that bridged the print, broadcast, cable, and online news businesses. At his retirement, he was in charge of AP's Kentucky operations, a position he had held since the mid-1980's. He is a member of the Kentucky Journalism Hall of Fame.

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The public should shape private investment along the riverfront



by Rodney Berry

The following column was distributed as a "Special Bulletin" to our mailing list in advance of this publication. Responses received by August 25 follow the column.

Owensboro's Riverfront Master Plan is BIG. Really BIG. Fifty million taxpayer dollars big. Officials intend to spend more on our riverfront than the amount spent to build Owensboro Community College, RiverPark Center, Riverport, industrial parks, public library, museums or parks.

One could challenge whether these federal grants reflect appropriate priorities with the nation facing alarming budget deficits, security threats and social problems. Most local leaders would acknowledge that if they had discretionary use of \$50 million, the riverfront would not be the sole beneficiary. But it's a done deal. The grants won't be returned to Washington.

The master plan could spark a remarkable transformation of our riverfront, downtown and community. Like our hospital, colleges and cultural centers, the riverfront project will serve the whole region. Consequently, we should seize this opportunity and leverage the public investment as best we can to attract the maximum and most appropriate complement of private investment (retail, office, entertainment, hotel, housing, etc.) to our downtown riverfront area.

The dramatically expanded and redesigned Smother's Park will be an attraction in itself, but the private investments on contiguous properties along Veterans Boulevard and nearby in downtown are what will revitalize the area, create jobs, enrich the tax base, accentuate the aesthetic appeal and ultimately justify the taxpayer expense.

With \$50 million at stake, there is no reason for citizens and governments to be apologetic about protecting that investment. We owe it to the people to maximize this development opportunity. But it's not just about completing a good project; it's about community ownership of the project itself.

We have two choices: 1) We can take our chances and let the forces of the marketplace drive any development that may occur; or 2) We can control the development process to increase the likelihood that the best development possible will occur in the area.

If we do nothing and take our chances, things still could turn out fine. We might see an office building or condominium, maybe a new restaurant along the riverfront on

properties that to this point are undeveloped or largely underdeveloped.

On the other hand, good things may not necessarily happen and the project could fall tragically short of its potential. Development could be held hostage by speculators or property owners who place profits above community improvement. We could see inappropriate uses, incompatible architecture, a project of a disappointing scale, or no significant change at all across the street or in the neighborhood of this unprecedented taxpayer investment.

Professional planners should establish a site plan framework and identify properties that are essential to the ideal development of the area. These properties should be acquired (or optioned) by a public or non-profit entity – perhaps the new redevelopment authority planned as the successor of Downtown Owensboro, Inc. If the authority does not have the financial means to acquire the property, the funds should be borrowed through the backing of local governments and financial institutions.

Property owners should be allowed to make an appropriate profit and businesses should be compensated fairly for relocation expenses, but they should not be able to demand an unrealistic price that falls upon taxpayers to absorb. To serve the public interest, officials may need to use their legal authority and acquire property through the threat of condemnation. Had this same authority not been exercised in the acquisition of property for RiverPark Center, the arts center would not have been built on the site that author and city analyst Neal Peirce called "a stroke of genius."

Another land acquisition strategy is for government(s) or a redevelopment authority to purchase property for a public parking garage (some or all of which could be built underground) and lease air rights for development.

Once a critical mass of strategic property is assembled, reputable real estate developers – particularly those with experience in downtowns, waterfronts and entertainment districts – should be invited to submit proposals for the development of the area based on various parameters and community goals

Contributors

Fran Ellers



"It was interesting to learn about the factors affecting hospital construction around the country – outdated buildings and market competition, among other things – and how they compare to what's going on in Owensboro. I hope there is a thorough community conversation about the options for OMHS. It's easy to see the benefits of a state-of-the-art hospital, but the community also must understand the tradeoffs so that it can address them."

In addition to editorial duties, Fran has authored two health care reports for the Public Life Foundation: *Health Insurance Premiums in Daviess County: Why do we pay more than other Kentuckians* (2003) and *Paying for Prescriptions: The high cost of drugs and what we can do about it* (2002).

Tom Gaston



"As I interviewed sources for this story, I soon realized how fragmented the effort is, how uninformed community groups are of one another's efforts to get more students through college by helping to pay their college tuition."

Tom's report is sure to be a useful tool for local educators and advocates who have made increasing the number of college graduates in Owensboro-Daviess County a top priority.

A retired college professor, Tom is a regular contributor.

Chad Gesser



Chad recently assumed full-time faculty status as Instructor of Sociology at the Owensboro Community and Technical College. He founded the health data website "Project Healthy Owensboro: Progress and Evaluation" (www.octc.kctcs.edu/ir/HOPE).

David Smith



A first time contributor, David examines a fundamental community self-image issue: Why is it that the Owensboro community so often feels like it is treated as a second class city? He concludes that it is due to our relative obscurity, and he examines some steps that could improve our visibility.

David earned a bachelor's degree in political science from Kentucky Wesleyan College and a master's degree in public policy from the University of Chicago. He worked for the Daviess County Fiscal Court in the 1990's and Congressman Ron Lewis in 1994-1995. He is chair of the Greater Owensboro Chamber of Commerce Transportation Committee and manager and part-owner of Yeiser's Warehouse and BJB Enterprises trucking.

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Editor's Notes: Proposed Riverwalk

set by the city with input from the public. The citizens group PRIDE (Public Responsibility In Designing our Environment) is a natural mechanism to facilitate such input.

Proposals from developers should include information about the firm (comparable projects, staff experience, financial stability, etc.), the amount of space planned for various uses, preliminary commitments from major tenants, preliminary architectural design, economic impact estimates and any public sector participation (parking, land lease, tax abatement, low-interest loans, etc.) requested by the developer to make the project viable.

Some may prefer a more entrepreneurial-driven eclectic cluster of quaint shops and restaurants along our riverfront, and more night life and spontaneity that would be unique to Owensboro as opposed to a project controlled by a developer. Developers may be more inclined to attract tenants from restaurant, retail or entertainment chains. Moreover, the riverfront traffic counts and downtown market may not be strong enough to attract significant interest from the private sector.

There are no guarantees, but given the dramatic infusion of riverfront improvements, such a process should produce some impressive proposals for mixed-use projects in the range of \$30-\$50 million or more.

Since fifty million taxpayer dollars will be used to create the environment that makes the area enticing to developers, and since additional tax dollars may be needed as incentives, citizens should have ample opportunities to review the proposals, ask questions, share im-

pressions, consider the public's return on investment and select their favorite proposal. This should involve a citizen review panel and public meetings through the coordination of PRIDE.

In fact, the project would be well-served to have dozens, if not hundreds of citizens involved in committees to select park amenities, design details, graphics, tenant mix, and much more. There should be forums, surveys, workshops, interactive websites and other ways for the people to have a substantive role in shaping this thrilling community project.

From a design, construction and functional standpoint, it makes sense to coordinate the private with the public. If we expect a three- to five-year construction site to build the riverfront master plan, would it not be better to have as much of the private sector construction occurring simultaneously rather than stretch out the inconvenience another three to five years?

Given that many Owensboro-Daviess Countians do not feel that their voice matters and that power is concentrated among the few and the privileged, the riverfront project is a unique opportunity for us to speak and act as one and demonstrate that major community decisions can involve people from all walks of life. In so doing, we will advance the common good and foster trust in our public institutions. An open, transparent and participatory public process can be an uplifting, unifying experience for our community instead of a divisive one. It can be an exciting time as citizens see public and private improvements transform our riverfront and the image of our community.

Responses:

Thank you for sharing. I am all for revitalization, jobs, new energy focused on the riverfront. One aspect I would hate to lose is the view of the riverbend. If this can be preserved then I am for it. If the view of the river is lost, a part of this city's history is lost. I can picture Bill Smothers tying up his flatboat from this river view. I am for jobs but against putting up a wall.

- Cindy Evans

As usual, Rodney has hit the nail perfectly on the head! Good job and thanks for caring so much about OUR downtown!!!!

One additional thought to what I previously wrote: I don't know whether my advancing age makes me more pessimistic or "realistic", but in either case I feel compelled to say: that anything as large as our riverfront, left to the devices of individuals has a better than 50/50 chance of NOT being what is best for the entire community. A master plan, properly vetted and properly implemented will have a MUCH better chance of community support and total success than the alternative. As one who has grown to love our downtown more and more as time goes on, let me voice my support for a "plan" that the stakeholders can support, as opposed to the willy-nilly approach that, left to their own devices, might occur otherwise ...

- John Hall

Dear Rodney,

You are on the right tract ... (The riverfront plan) is an awesome responsibility that I don't think people really realize since no one ever believed it would ever come to pass. I continue to pray for help and guidance as we move forward. Keep up the good work.

- Mayor Tom Watson

...Very good piece here.

Might you be interested in helping to organize a small group of folks committed to organizing community get togethers for dialogue and deliberation? I know of a few that are interested in maintaining

a focus on dialogue in this community, and I think this subject matter would be a good fit.

Thanks again.

- Chad Gesser

"After reading Mr. Berry's Special Bulletin, "The public should shape private investment along the riverfront," Owensboro-Daviess Countians should question his logic and conclusions. He begins his argument saying "the public should shape the private investment" in Owensboro. That's like suggesting the Post Office should tell Federal Express how to deliver packages effectively. Imagine a postal worker explaining why making people wait in lines to buy stamps is a "best practice" that FedEx should follow. The Post Office can preach all it wants, but no one at FedEx will listen. Neither should Owensboro-Daviess Countians heed Mr. Berry's advice.

While Mr. Berry is a persuasive writer, a careful reader should question his logic of how taxpayers' monies should be spent on Owensboro's riverfront. He suggests the money should be used "to attract the maximum and most appropriate complement of private investment." This assumes that the availability of fresh investment capital in public hands is the key stimulus for attracting entrepreneurs.

If by "attraction" he means that the money should be spent to build infrastructure that all customers and businesses could use to serve the needs of potential customers, his proposition deserves consideration. However, if by "attraction" he means that public dollars should be used to subsidize private investors as a condition for opening their doors, the "remarkable transformation" he expects will instead become another pork-barrel project that will decay in the sunshine. Any resulting "deal" offered to business owners that encourages them to locate on the riverfront and gives them a special advantage against other business owners who do not locate there is not a fair use of

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Investments in Education:

Communities, regions and states take initiative to boost college enrollment

By Tom Gaston

Preparing students for the “global workplace” is topping agendas of business leaders everywhere, and concerned citizens in Owensboro and Daviess County are considering bold new strategies -- including paying at least part of students’ college costs.

“There is a lot of momentum in this community to find ways to pay college costs, not just for the students but because of the statement that would make about the community,” said Tracy Marksberry, executive director of The Learning Community, citing recent discussions with the Higher Education Advocacy Group.

Both The Learning Community and the Higher Education Advocacy Group are recently-formed subgroups of the Citizens Committee on Education, which began in the 1980s and was instrumental in bringing Owensboro Community College (now community and technical college) here.

Last year the Citizens Committee published a study that contained recommendations for increasing the number of college graduates in the community. The new groups are charged with implementing those recommendations.

The Higher Education Advocacy Group is in the “very preliminary stages of exploring ways to increase support to enable students to attend one of Owensboro’s four institutions of higher learning,” according to Forrest Roberts, who co-chairs the Citizens Committee.

Of particular interest to The Learning Community, Marksberry said, are arrangements in communities such as Madisonville, Ky., that increase college attendance by reaching children early, monitoring their progress, supporting their aspirations, involving their parents and, eventually, paying their college tuition.

Investments in Education

Madisonville's "School Counts"

One of the models under consideration is Madisonville's "School Counts" program, which has already proven decisive in bringing Land of Frost's 500-job facility to Hopkins County.

School Counts provides scholarships to Madisonville Community College to all Hopkins County students who meet basic academic and attendance requirements in high school. The goal is to enable students to attend the college tuition free for two years.

School Counts immediately caught the attention of community leaders in Morrilton, Ark., which lost out to Madisonville in competition for the Land of Frost plant. Land of Frost officials told Morrilton that the Madisonville program was a factor in the company's decision.

"So Morrilton's chamber (of commerce) and community leaders came and spent a day with us," said Judith Rhoads, president of Madisonville Community College. "Then they invited three of us to spend a day with them in Morrilton. We gave about four presentations explaining the program."

The impetus for Madisonville's program was a speech by Ken Ender, president of Cumberland County College in Vineland, N.J., which Rhoads heard at a national meeting of college administrators. Ender talked about School Counts, a licensed program of the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce which rewards students who meet punctuality, attendance and academic requirements. The students receive an employability certificate and a courtesy interview with a local employer when there is an appropriate opening.

Ender built an even bigger incentive into the local School Counts program, raising money for participating students to attend Cumberland County College with their tuition paid.

Intrigued by the possibilities for Hopkins County, Rhoads arranged for Ender to come to Madisonville. Among those who attended the six presentations he made two years ago were members of the Madisonville Rotary Club.

"The Rotary Club adopted the program, pledged \$100,000 and contributed 70 energetic workers. Within eight to 12 months we had several \$100,000 donations and a quarter-million dollars from the Trover Foundation," Rhoads said. The community now has almost a million of their \$1.5 million goal.

Since then, Madisonville community leaders have made presentations in Caldwell, Christian, Crittenden and Muhlenberg counties in Kentucky. Rhoads said the program will start this fall in Muhlenberg County, where the bequest of Iris Givens' \$1.4 million estate made

vigorous fundraising unnecessary.

And the Morrilton folks may return to Kentucky to learn more. Thomas Flowers, vice-chancellor of instruction and dean of students at the University of Arkansas Community College at Morrilton, said, "We were really impressed with the efforts of the folks at Madisonville, especially their K-12 emphasis on education. We have zeroed in on some good ideas of theirs and may want to send another group to Madisonville."

What is the need?

Daviess Countians are fortunate to already have a generous local scholarship fund for students, the John B. and Brownie Young Memorial Fund, established 45 years ago. For the 2006-07 school year, the \$18 million fund awarded more than a million dollars in 565 need-based scholarships to Daviess and McLean County students who finished in the top third of their high school class.

Nevertheless, the U.S. Census Bureau recently estimated that the number of Daviess County residents with college or graduate degrees has dropped 12 percent since 2000. Yet many business and education groups say that, in today's workplace, all students need at least some postsecondary education.

"We want to make sure that our young people and our businesses can compete with anyone in the world," said Owensboro businessman Malcolm Bryant, co-chair of The Learning Community with retired Kentucky Wesleyan Professor Bob Darrell. "When industries consider where to locate, their main question to the community is, 'What are your people trained to do? What can we expect from the work force?'"

"It used to be that we used our backs and our brawn to make our way in the world, but that's changed. My life and my children's lives have changed over the past five years more than probably my parents' lives changed over their whole lifetime."

The Citizens Committee study proposed that Daviess County try to match Fayette County's percentage of residents with bachelor's degrees or higher (32.6%) by 2020 (Fayette County is home of the University of Kentucky in Lexington).

As it turns out, Lexington is already considering locally funded scholarships to raise its percentage still higher. A prominent feature of Jim Newberry's mayoral campaign is his proposal for "the Lexington First Fund," which would pay for up to four years of study for students majoring in science, technology, engineering or math if those students stayed in Lexington after graduating.

Have other programs been successful?

The scholarship component of School Counts at Cumberland County College is relatively new, so there aren't many results to report. According to the college, 146 students were eligible for the scholarships in 2005 and about half of them now attend Cumberland County College.

A small number of locally-funded tuition programs have operated elsewhere. But as in Cumberland County, most are relatively new and without enough hard data for evaluation.

Although they developed independently, with little knowledge of each other, the programs hailed as most promising are remarkably similar. Among their common characteristics:

- Strong community involvement
- Early (6th or 7th grade) recruitment of students
- Parental involvement and support
- Focus on "mid-range" students who heretofore were unlikely to attend college

Significant support, engagement and cooperation from both public schools and cooperating institutions of higher education. Funding "last dollar" scholarships that pay remaining costs after all other available support has been applied. Here's a look at some of them.

Kalamazoo, Mich.

Kalamazoo achieved nationwide publicity when a group of anonymous donors pledged to pay tuition for their public school graduates. The Kalamazoo Promise Program is just now paying its first semester's tuition for students at some 15 to 20 state-supported institutions.

The program covers up to four years' tuition and mandatory fees based on the number of years that students have attended Kalamazoo Public Schools. Of last year's 500 graduates, about 80 percent qualified.

Bob Jorth, executive administrator for the Kalamazoo Promise Program, anticipates that about 70 percent of the Promise students will attend either Western Michigan University (located in Kalamazoo) or Kalamazoo Valley Community College.

Students who also qualify for federal Pell grants for low-income families get an even better deal.

"Western Michigan officials found that about 98 percent of their Kalamazoo students in the past got federal aid," Jorth said. "They did some calculations and found that, by reallocating aid dollars, they could give free room and board to students receiving this scholarship. So this year's students are required to apply for federal aid, but they get free room and board as well as their tuition."

One of the citizens who are funding Kalamazoo Promise is the superintendent of schools. Other than that, Jorth said, "We don't know who they are. . . . During discussions over three to five years they were looking at ways to improve public schools and somehow the idea of scholarships for all public school graduates came up as an option. So the group found resources within itself . . .

"The wonderful thing about them being anonymous is that it forces the community to step forward and take ownership," Jorth said, "and that is a huge, huge plus."

Once the money became available, a group of community leaders got together to coordinate the project. They formed four subgroups, each with an assigned responsibility:

- Support of public schools
- Regional educational support
- Intergovernmental and political relationships
- Economic development

These groups started yet smaller groups to handle media, marketing and other defined tasks within the overall mission.

Jackson, Macon and Swain Counties, N.C.

In the heart of Appalachia, in sparsely populated communities troubled by recent industrial losses and supported mostly by mom and pop businesses that cater to tourists, the New Century Scholars Program of Southwestern Community College has thrived.

Started in 1995 in Jackson County, the program expanded into nearby Macon and Swain counties the next year.

New Century Scholars identifies students for the program at the end of sixth grade and a "contract" to meet the program's requirements is signed annually between the families, school system and college.

The program targets the middle 60 percent of students who may not be expected to go to college and invests \$500 per student per year toward college costs. The money then makes up the difference between tuition and whatever other grants or scholarships they receive.

Connie Haire, vice president of Southwestern's Macon campus and institutional development, headed New Century Scholars from the beginning.

Haire saw it as more than a response to financial need. "There were other risk factors in these kids' lives," she said. "But when we started talking about high-risk kids, we found that public school folks had a different definition of high risk than we did." They meant children with severe emotional or developmental problems, she said.

"We meant a kid who had . . . potential barriers that might keep him or her from going to college. It could be a child from a single-parent family, could be one with academic difficulties or social and cultural difficulties. He may have trouble getting along with peers – or maybe just a family where nobody had gone to college – those kinds of things."

Like Madisonville's Rhoads, Haire stressed the importance of changing family attitudes towards college. In addition to helping with academics and social skills, she said, "Johnny's family situation may

be (one where) nobody even thinks about going to college. . . . College is just not a part of the family culture. . . . 'College is too expensive. It's so far removed from us that we just don't talk about that possibility.'

"We felt it was important, as early as the seventh grade, to let them know college is possible. We were setting out to change a culture, and to a fairly large degree we have. We've had some successes. We had a number who didn't make it. We had a number who didn't come to the community college but went straight to a four-year institution, which is a success in my book."

Like others working with these programs, Haire laments the schools' lack of follow-up tracking to provide reliable statistics on scholars "alumni." She is convinced, though, that an important key to the program's success is the fact that each school system assigned a coordinator whose job it was to track scholars in school, intervene when necessary to keep them on course, and plan activities to help them develop social skills and self esteem.

After a few years in operation, the scholars program received a "best practices" award from the Appalachian Regional Commission. And in 2002, Southwestern Community College received a \$338,000 grant from the commission to replicate the program in other Appalachian counties in North Carolina, Haire said. "We were able to start six new programs. Some started off with a bang and are doing fabulous things and some started off with five or six students and are struggling."

Other community colleges in North Carolina also offer locally funded scholarships, but the *Public Life Advocate* was unable to find any others that worked so closely with the public schools or that were deemed so successful by outside entities.

Investments in Education

Advantages and concerns

Because these programs encourage so many more high school graduates to attend college -- Madisonville's goal is 66% -- many tend to come from less affluent families. This fact occasioned unexpected benefits in some cases.

Advantages of "last dollar" scholarships. The scholarships discussed here are all last-dollar funds, which become available only after all other available money has been tapped. Students are required to apply for federal Pell grants. In some cases, the institutions actually prepare applications with students assisting. Scholarships are reduced by whatever amount the government pays. "That frees up money for other students," Haire pointed out.

The approach has also attracted a four-year university to the program.

Noting the high proportion of Pell grant recipients among the New Century Scholars, Western Carolina University decided to offer the same financial package to Southwestern Community College graduates who wanted to continue there for bachelors' degrees. That, in effect, doubled the scholars program's two years of funding. And as at the community college, Western Michigan University was able to offer free room and board to Kalamazoo Promise students with Pell grants.

Possible conflicts. The oldest across-the-board, locally funded scholarship program the *Public Life Advocate* located was that of the Clemens Foundation in Philomath, Ore. For 45 years, the foundation paid tuition for any graduate of Philomath High School who enrolled at Oregon State University.

Founded in the 1960s by timber magnates Rex and Ethel Clemens, the Clemens Foundation was publicly criticized in recent years for trying to use its tuition support to impose ultraconservative social values on the Philomath public schools and Oregon State University.

In March 2005, the foundation suspended grants for 600 Oregon State students, citing as the reason "ethical lapses" at the school. At that time, foundation spokesman Steve Lowther said that of the thousands of students supported by the \$30 million foundation, only 1,200 had actually graduated.

Educators and policy analysts told the *Public Life Advocate* that there may always be a risk of undue influence of private institutions on cooperating public institutions. The remedy is to build in appropriate safeguards when the funds are set up, they said.

Cultural balance. The proposed Lexington First Fund was the only one of these programs that limited its scholarships to students in specific areas of study. However, concern about American's comparative shortage of engineers and technologists is clearly behind most of the efforts to produce more college graduates.

Some educators warn of pitfalls to that approach. "Technology is essential," said James Alexander, associate professor of elementary education at Kentucky Wesleyan College. "But society would be impoverished if you only funded science and technology.

"I think the real goal is to foster critical thinking and creativity. Even scientific thinking is fostered by the liberal arts. And there are the bigger issues of morality and ethics. Technology has an ethical component, too."



Where things stand

Local leaders remain focused on the urgency of workforce development. Tracy Marksberry cited the recently published Annual Atlas Van Lines Corporate Relocation Survey that shows a growing number of companies listing "inadequate workforce" as the driving force behind their relocation. "In 2004, the number doubled, to 44 percent. In 2005, it rose to 51 percent."

Of the Madisonville program, she said, "That's very impressive, and I don't see any reason we couldn't do something like that here. Our community has always been very interested in education and also very generous."

As evidence of generosity, Marksberry cited Owensboro's "Impact 100," a group of more than 100 women who are contributing their own money and raising more to contribute to local nonprofit charities. Their first award will be announced later this year.

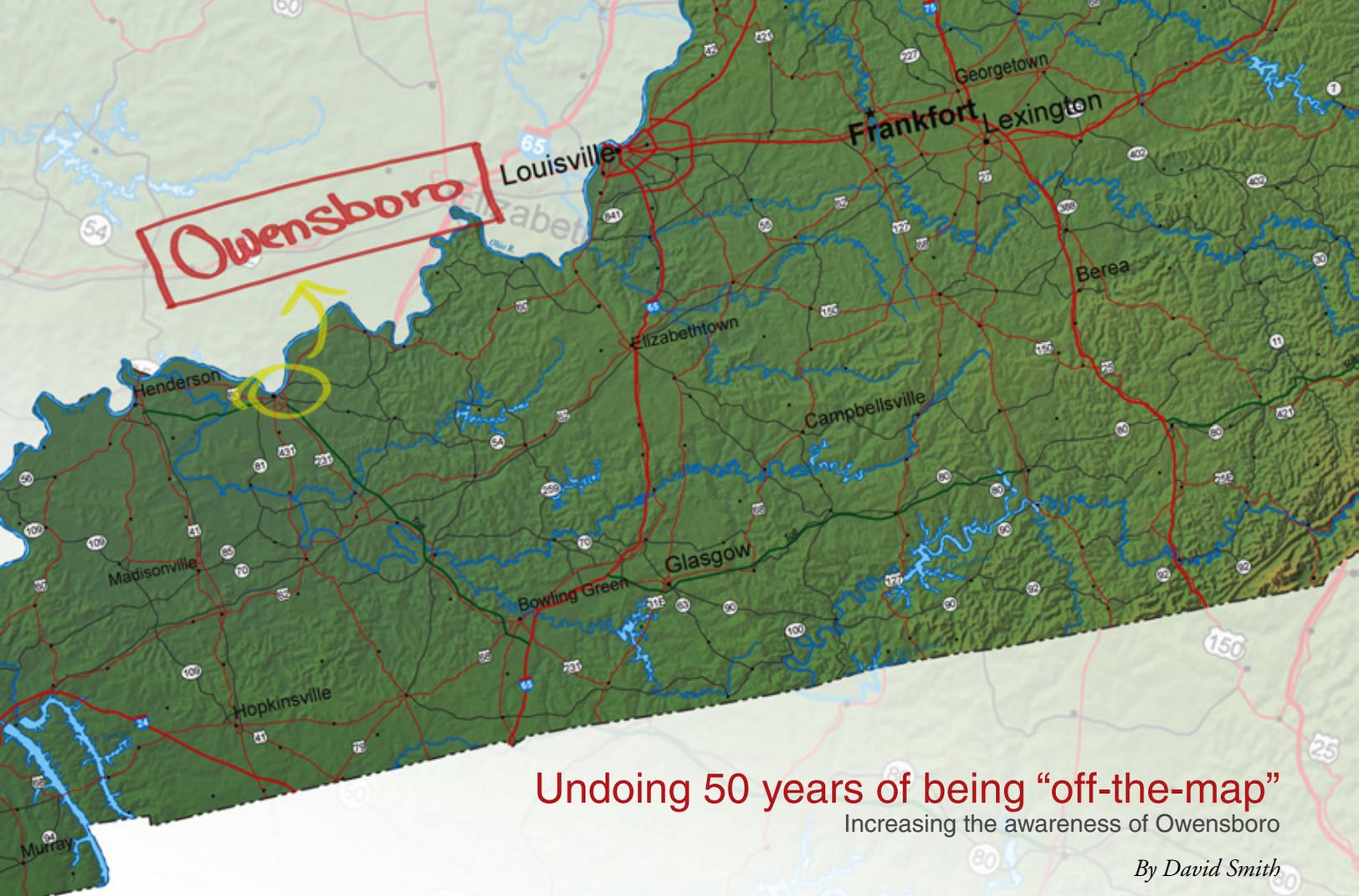
The group's goal was to raise \$100,000 and "we raised \$151,000 our first year," said Martha Clark, one of the organizers. "Compare that to Cincinnati's first-year \$123,000 or Austin, Texas's \$126,000 or San Antonio's \$125,000 in their first year. Generosity? I think so!"

At the same time, local leaders know that any effort to help more students go to college will require major changes in local attitudes.

Among the goals of The Learning Community are cultivating a culture that values learning and "promoting learning opportunities for residents from all walks of life in all stages of life."

"We will soon be talking to any group that will listen to us," said Malcolm Bryant of The Learning Community. "We want to ask the community if they would like to brand themselves 'The Learning Community.'" He envisions the designation on entrance signs to the city and on its official stationery.

"Futurists and demographers say the quality of life of every citizen will be tied to how much we value learning and how much we engage ourselves in learning," Bryant said. "We want to make sure that the greater Owensboro area is on the leading edge of every quality area of learning that we can offer our citizenry." ■



Undoing 50 years of being “off-the-map”

Increasing the awareness of Owensboro

By David Smith

One has to be going to Owensboro. It is not on the way to a major destination. Many lifelong Kentuckians cannot even find Owensboro on a map. Owensboro’s relative isolation and lack of visibility is a notorious shortcoming. If, however, our community can unite behind the following goals we can undo 50 years of missed opportunities and thereby greatly enhance Owensboro’s public image and self-esteem.

Weather Station at Airport

The lack of a weather reporting station means that Owensboro never appears in state weather reports and our weather is rarely mentioned in newspaper or television reports outside the area. Thirty-two Kentucky airports, many of them smaller than ours, have automated observation stations. In addition, installation of an automated station would improve the marketability of our airport as it would make it a 24-hour facility. The Federal Aviation Administration should be pressured to live up to a commitment made in 2000 to install an automated weather station.

Fred Reeves, former executive vice president of the Owensboro-Daviess County Chamber of Commerce, said in a Messenger-Inquirer interview, “This gives us a shot at making The Weather Channel. Jackson and every place else seems to have a weather station. Being on the map is significant.”

Bowling Green, Covington, Frankfort, Jackson, Lexington, London, Louisville, Paducah, and Sturgis have the advanced Automated Surface Observation System. Ashland, Bardstow, Cadiz, Campbellsville, Danville, Elizabethtown, Flemingsburg, Georgetown, Glasgow, Gilbertsville, Greenville, Hazard, Henderson, Hopkinsville, Jamestown, Madisonville, Mayfield, Mount Sterling, Middlesboro, Murray, Pikeville, Prestonsburg and Somerset have Automated Weather Observation System III.

Owensboro airport manager Tim Bradshaw pointed out the economic development benefits in a newspaper interview. “Commercial

and charter flights are required by law to have the latest local weather information before they take off ... Our control tower provides limited weather information between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m. But this information will be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week ... It improves our marketability” as it essentially makes the Owensboro airport a 24-hour facility.

In the past year since this was first written, the Owensboro Weather Station has been put into service. We have also been successful in having the National Weather Service Office in Paducah add Owensboro to its Regional Temperature and Precipitation Summary and in having the Louisville weather-service office add Owensboro to its State Temperature and Precipitation Summary.

We are still attempting to get a Preliminary Climatology Data Report issued for Owensboro and we must launch a campaign across the state to persuade Kentucky newspapers and television stations to include the Owensboro weather in round-ups, not Evansville weather.

River Gauge at Downtown

Since the destruction of Dam #46, there has been no river gauge listing for Owensboro in the newspaper or on television, further keeping us “off the map.” In addition, because Owensboro is 20 and 35 miles from the nearest dams, the river level fluctuates greatly, partly causing large-scale erosion of Yellow Bank Island during the past 30 years. Fifteen Ohio River cities do not have gauges associated with dam sites, including Ashland, Paducah, Evansville and Mount Vernon. As part of the riverfront development a river gauge should be installed with a monitoring agreement with the Corps of Engineers.

What would be the cost? According to a 2004 newspaper story the installation of an automated river gauge at Fredericksburg, Va. was \$10,000.

The U.S. Geological Service announced that it was shutting down 11 automated gauges primarily in Eastern and Southern Kentucky unless local governments paid for the annual monitoring cost.

According to the geological service, the annual cost to operate a standard continuous streamflow station is \$12,500 while the cost to operate a continuous water-quality monitor equipped with four or five parameters is \$25,000. A gauge height-only monitor may be significantly less expensive.

In addition to an Ohio River gauge, the city and county may want to pursue the placement of a gauge on Panther Creek.

Interstate Highway to Owensboro

For years, national surveys of manufacturers have consistently cited “interstate highway access” as a top site selection factor. As a result, for the past 20 years, more than 80 percent of new U.S. manufacturing operations have located in interstate-served communities. In Alabama, the average distance to an interstate for both Mercedes and Honda suppliers is 3.2 miles. Owensboro is the sixth largest metropolitan area east of the Mississippi not on a current or proposed interstate. A concerted community effort should be placed to upgrade the parkways to interstate spurs of I-65/I-66 and I-69.

In a newspaper story a former recruiter for Owensboro said that “industrial prospects and their site selectors often require sites to be within 25 miles of an interstate.”

The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet recently completed an overview of the conditions on the Western Kentucky and Pennyriple parkways and a preliminary cost estimate for minor upgrades and safety improvements to interstate standards for I-69. The costs were approximately \$1.5 million per mile. Given the conditions on the Audubon and Natcher Parkways the cost estimate to bring them to interstate standards would be \$35 million and \$135 million each.

A study of upgrading the parkways to interstate spurs should be undertaken, by local governments, if necessary, to push this project along.

Rebrand Four-Year Public Education

In addition to lack of an interstate highway, the lack of a four-year public university has been cited as a hindrance to high-quality economic development. The presence of Owensboro Community & Technical College and Western Kentucky University on U.S. 231 creates the ability to produce a de facto four-year public university. The 102 acres on U.S. 231 should be renamed or “rebranded” the Owensboro University Center.

The model of the Gwinnett University Center in Georgia and the University Center in the Mountains in Hazard should be modified to fit Owensboro and Kentucky education requirements. The Owensboro University Center’s core mission would be as an innovative center for high-tech learning. The Center would offer higher education courses and degree programs that are focused on the ever-changing educational needs of the citizens and businesses of Daviess County and its immediate area.

It would not be a stand-alone university, but a consortium of institutions of higher learning that have come together in partnership to meet the ever changing educational needs of our community. Founding academic partners would be Western Kentucky University, the University of Kentucky Graduate Center and the Owensboro Community and Technical College. Other entities such as the University of Louisville and private colleges may join as we identify the current and future needs in our community and the educational gaps that need to be addressed.

The key to the ultimate success of the Owensboro University Center will be the establishment of public and private partnerships. Owensboro and Daviess County governments have extended a donation of land and infrastructure improvements for the campus that is valued in excess of \$1 million. The state of Kentucky has invested more than \$29 million in public funds to construct the campus. Although the public resources have been generous, to respond to the expansive educational needs in Daviess County at the pace at which they are developing, we are going to need to rely upon significant private resources.

If we rely solely upon state dollars, we will have another tradi-



tional academic institution like most. Our vision should be far more expansive than traditional and it would be private dollars that would make the difference.

Television Station

Owensboro is one of the largest cities in the nation without a commercial television station. In the era of the only three national networks it was somewhat understandable that Owensboro would not have a station. However with FOX, WB and UPN setting up national network programming many “fringe” cities like Owensboro have commercial stations. In Kentucky, Bowling Green has two stations (NBC, FOX), Campbellsville/Louisville one (WB), Danville/Lexington one (FOX), Hazard one (CBS), Hopkinsville one (Independent), Madisonville/Evansville one (WB), Morehead one (PAX), Newport one (FOX), and Paducah two (NBC, WB). Of particular note is the fact that Madisonville’s station – Channel 19 – was originally assigned to Owensboro.

Local leaders should approach South Central Communications (owners of WAZE) or Communications Corporation of America (owners of WEVV) in Evansville about “relocating” their station to Owensboro and “renaming” it WOWB. In addition, a news studio could be located in Owensboro to broadcast a local “Kentucky” newscast with the assistance of Paxton Media personnel in Owensboro and Madisonville. (Paxton Media Group owns the Owensboro *Messenger-Inquirer* and the Madisonville *Messenger*.)

With the exception of upgrading the parkways to interstate status, these five objectives need little up-front money. They do require a united community not settling for second-rate status and a desire to change how we look at ourselves. ■

Framing the Issue

Should OMHS BUILD A NEW HOSPITAL?

By Rodney Berry and Fran Ellers

Issue Brief/Dialogue Guide – September 2006

BACKGROUND

A strategic decision. In an Aug. 16 presentation to the Owensboro Rotary Club, Jeff Barber, president and chief executive officer of Owensboro Medical Health System (OMHS), acknowledged that the hospital faces a critical strategic decision: Do we build a new facility or expand and renovate the existing one?

Necessary changes for inpatients. According to Barber, OMHS needs to add 140 beds, 10 operating rooms and 19 recovery rooms. Admissions of inpatients (who spend the night in the hospital) have been declining for the last few years as more medical procedures are done on an outpatient basis. However inpatient admissions are projected to increase over the next decade, partly because of the aging population, Barber said in an interview. The hospital also needs to modernize its inpatient facilities, which do not allow the safest, most efficient care, he said.

An aging population. A demographic analysis for OMHS shows its inpatient load will grow by about 13 percent over the next several years because the local population is aging and will need more health care (10 percent of the increase). Also, in outlying counties such as Spencer, the population is projected to grow (3.2 percent of the increase), Barber said.

The inpatient load is expected to increase by another 8 percent when OMHS recruits specialists who provide services that patients presently get at hospitals in Louisville, Evansville or Nashville.

Outpatient growth. The hospital's outpatient centers, such as the emergency room, are newer and do not need to be renovated or moved. However because the growth of outpatient care is outpacing inpatient care, Barber said that the hospital will eventually need to add a second convenient care center and another clinic or clinic site to serve the uninsured, as the McAuley Clinic does now.

Hospital construction boom. Many hospitals around the U.S. are constructing new buildings and expanding capacity. Analysts say the construction may be meeting legitimate health needs but could also raise costs for consumers by increasing utilization, among other things.

Increasing utilization. Part of the hospital's plan is to add doctors in the community. OMHS plans to recruit 85 physicians, about half of whom would replace retiring doctors. Of the remaining 40, about 20 would be primary care physicians, Barber said.

That would help expand access to primary care, including preventive care, throughout the area. At the same time, all those extra doctors would be detecting more problems and admitting more patients to the hospital, thus increasing utilization of health care in the community.

Cutting costs. Barber said that modernizing the hospital will help it operate more efficiently and reduce some of its operating costs over the long haul. Currently operating and intensive care rooms are too small and the size and layout of patient rooms vary by floor. If the rooms were standard, nurses and other employees would be able to do their jobs more efficiently, Barber said.

To expand and renovate. If the decision is made to expand the current facility, Barber proposes 545,000 additional square feet and renovation of 230,000 square feet. This would cost an estimated \$500 million, require five to seven years construction and cause significant disruption to hospital operations. The current 57-acre campus is difficult to expand since the hospital is surrounded by busy streets and a railroad track.

Who's for a new hospital? Who's against it?

"I'm 100 percent for a new hospital. It doesn't make any sense to renovate."

Billy Joe Miles, chairman
Owensboro Medical Health System

"The reality is we have an aging population...the big baby boomer population needs services. That's the root cause of what's going on."

Jeff Barber, president
Owensboro Medical Health System

"I'm 100 percent behind building a new hospital. If you look at the numbers and you look at the facility that they have now (parts of which date to 1939), they could spend the next five years trying to remodel it and it still wouldn't meet our needs eight or nine years down the road..."

"I'm sensitive to the fact that it's moving from the inner city...But we (at the hospital) don't just serve people in the city limits...It's just a very good opportunity to do something special (for the community), increase the job base and hire more folks..."

"The only real negative part is leaving the center of town and how do we make sure the folks in the western part of the city and county are able to access the hospital. We'll still have a very good Convenient Care and ER (emergency room) centered right there in the city...We're going to have to put in a new bus line to make sure we can adequately provide transportation to folks who need it (to the new building). But these are opportunities, not obstacles...I'm convinced that it's a way to move us forward."

"Even though we are creating this opportunity, I feel somewhat concerned about being able to attract the number of physicians because of the cost of liability insurance."

Tom Watson, mayor
City of Owensboro
Owner, Watson's Prosthetic and Orthotic Lab

BACKGROUND (CONT.)

To build new. Barber said that a new one-million square foot facility would cost the same amount, take five years or less to plan, design and build. He recommends a campus of at least 75 acres to allow for long-term growth. The current facility includes areas that were built recently, such as the Mitchell Cancer Center; other areas are nearly 70 years old.

Improvements have been made. OMHS buildings have been renovated many times through the years. Double patient rooms have been converted to singles, emergency and critical care facilities have been expanded and improved, medical offices have been added, as well as many other enhancements. Despite these improvements, some sections lack the capacity and convenience offered at other modern hospitals.

OMHS dominates the market. OMHS is the hospital of choice for its primary market. Ninety-four percent of hospital patients in 11 counties use OMHS over other options. At the same time, patients have to seek some services elsewhere because Owensboro does not have the appropriate specialists.

Owensboro's largest employer. Barber predicted the expansion would create 800 jobs on top of its current 2,690 – a 30 percent increase (500 at the hospital and 300 connected with offices of 40 physicians the hospital hopes to recruit).

Complementary initiatives. OMHS is expanding into cancer research through a partnership with the Brown Cancer Center of Louisville at the new facility on the hospital campus. At the Mid-America Airpark, OMHS acquired Kentucky Bioprocessing LLC (formerly Large Scale Biology) to expand the firm's research and product development of pharmaceuticals through the use of plant-based biotechnology, including tobacco.

Sites under consideration. OMHS has apparently focused on sites in the fringe areas of the city that are visible and accessible off the Wendell Ford Expressway (U. S. 60 By-Pass) and/or the planned East-County Corridor.

Use of Parrish campus. If a new hospital is built, Barber acknowledges that facilities such as the cancer center, outpatient services, emergency room and support services would remain at the current Parrish Avenue campus.

Timeline. The OMHS board expects to make a decision by mid-October.

Public input. The OMHS board of directors is under no obligation to solicit public input on this decision. The Public Life Foundation and other community groups may schedule events to examine these options in an open forum.

“At present the decision for the future of the hospital rests with the board of directors. They have access to the studies done and the consultant's report. So it would be premature without seeing any of the data for me to take a side on the issue. Once the board makes its decision, then the public will have the opportunity to determine if that decision is the right decision.

“I am excited about the prospects surrounding the growth of our medical facilities. I believe it speaks well of the quality of Owensboro Medical Health System and the strides it has made over the last few years in health care delivery. The hospital is a major economic development engine in our community, so its success is a success for the community.

“The greatest concern I have at present is the future of the current structures should the board decide to relocate and build a new facility. The hospital takes up a significant amount of space in the heart of the city and I would hope that any plan to move would include a comprehensive plan to address what will happen with the existing buildings. However I have great faith in the wisdom of the board and I feel comfortable that they will address that issue.

**Reid Haire, judge-executive
Davies County Fiscal Court**

“Citizens Health Care Advocates has always given the hospital opportunities to present its plans and viewpoints to the public. We hope they will continue to use our organization as one of their avenues for communication.”

**Jennifer Kaminski, secretary
Citizens Health Care Advocates**

“The Greater Owensboro Economic Development Corporation strongly supports the hospital in its efforts of expansion to better serve the Greater Owensboro region.

“Health care is the fastest growing sector of the national economy in terms of jobs and capital investment. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 7 out of 10 of the fastest growing occupations from 2004-2014 will be in the health care industry. The hospital's effort to recruit a total of 100 new doctors is the equivalent of a \$100 million, 1,200 job employer with most jobs requiring college degrees and paying a wage above our median income level.

“With an aging population and a region that is less healthy than many other parts of the country, a rock solid growing health care sector will be a critical component of our economic development strategy.”

**Nick Brake, Ph.D.
President/CEO
Greater Owensboro Economic
Development Corporation**

Framing the Issue: OMHS

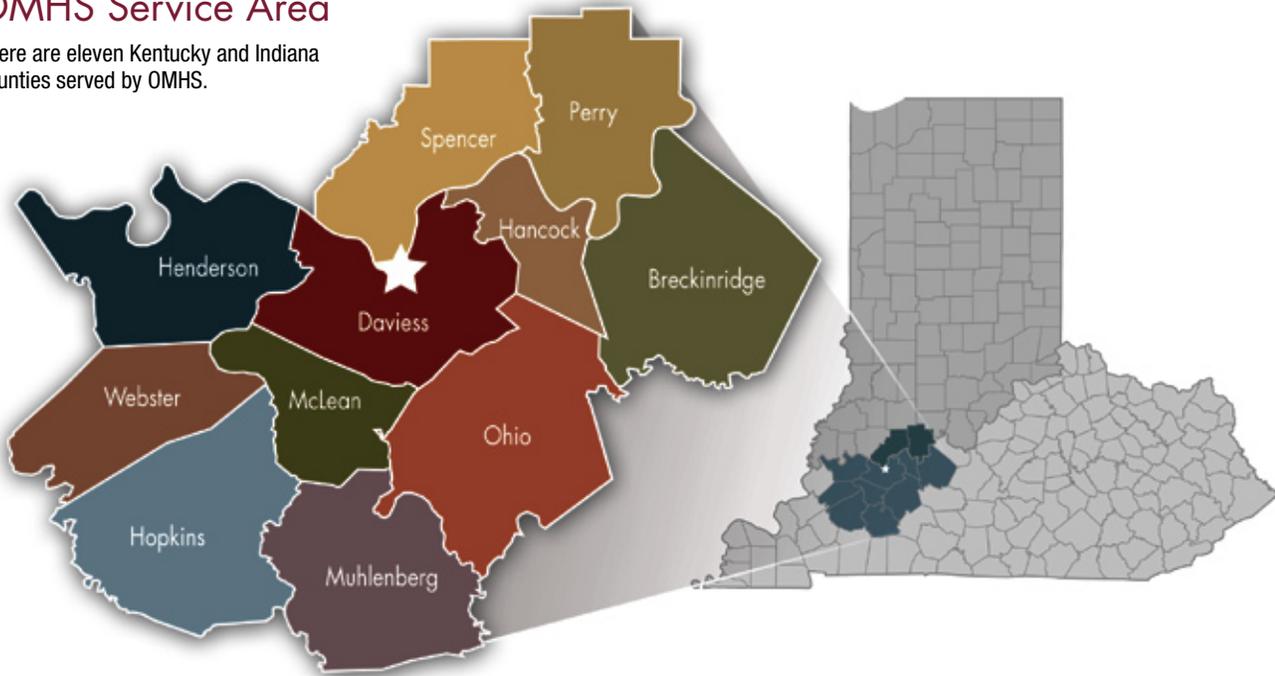


SHOULD OMHS BUILD A NEW HOSPITAL OR EXPAND AND RENOVATE EXISTING FACILITIES?

THOSE WHO SUPPORT A NEW HOSPITAL MAY SAY...	THOSE WHO SUPPORT RENOVATING THE EXISTING FACILITY MAY SAY...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ OMHS needs to build for the future. ■ A new facility will be more appealing to more patients and allow the hospital to provide better care. The current layout of some parts of the hospital is inconvenient and impractical for both employees and patients. ■ The hospital needs room to grow. Expansion at the current campus is difficult; there are major streets and a railroad to work around. Parking and access will be much improved. ■ The cost is essentially the same to build new and OMHS can afford it. ■ Building new can be completed in less time than phased expansion and renovation. ■ New construction on another site would not disrupt operations as would renovation. ■ A new hospital will help us recruit more physicians. ■ OMHS is our largest employer and the economic engine of our community and region; we need to protect it and maximize its potential. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ By expanding, OMHS will need to increase utilization and occupancy. Increased utilization (the use of health care services) is one of the primary factors in the rising cost of health care. ■ The cost of the project will be passed along, in part, through increased charges to insurance companies and thus to patients. By phasing in necessary renovations over a period of years, costs will be easier to absorb. ■ Our community and hospital should have other priorities, such as expanding care for the uninsured and helping people change behaviors, such as smoking, that put them in the hospital in the first place. We don't need to be spending a lot of money on a new building. ■ OMHS will have a fragmented campus because it will need to keep certain facilities (cancer center, emergency room, etc.) on the Parrish Avenue site. ■ Moving many hospital services away from the current location could hurt an area that is already in need of revitalization. ■ If OMHS builds a new hospital, it may be difficult to find uses for part of the current facility.

OMHS Service Area

There are eleven Kentucky and Indiana counties served by OMHS.



Kentucky Annual Hospital Utilization And Services Report

	2001 Inpatient Occupancy*	2005 Inpatient Occupancy*	2001 Inpatient Days, Private Pay	2005 Inpatient Days, Private Pay	2001 Inpatient Days, Medicare	2005 Inpatient Days, Medicare	2001 Inpatient Days, Medicaid	2005 Inpatient Days, Medicaid
OMHS	49.7 %	40.9 %	36.1 %	30.2 %	50.4 %	56.1 %	13.5 %	13.7 %
Ranking, other hospitals	36 of 105	44 of 73	22 of 109	43 of 120	7 of 109	57 of 120	56 of 109	66 of 120
Actual numbers	71,139	61,900	25,686	23,799	35,848	44,214	9,605	10,784

*Acute, non-psychiatric inpatients

Year	Acute care		Intensive care		Neonatal		Newborn days	
	2001	2005	2001	2005	2001	2005	2001	2005
Average days per bed	258	213	229	208	18	30	124	121
Number of beds	291	291	34	34	5	5	34	34
Number of days	75,257	61,900	7,813	7,084	82	152	4,220	4,121
State average days per bed	206	212	210	269	222	232	130	115

OMHS Facts

Current Campus	57 acres
Beds	347
Employees	2,690
Staff Physicians	220
Specialties	35
Annual Payroll	\$82 million
Annual City Occupational Tax Paid	\$1.09 million
Annual Admissions	20,800
Operating Rooms	14
Recovery Rooms	26
Service Area	11 counties*
Annual Emergency Room Patients	65,000
Annual Convenient Care Patients	32,000
Annual Charity Care	\$15 million

* Daviess, Hancock, Ohio, Muhlenberg, McLean, Webster, Hopkins, Henderson, Breckenridge, Spencer (Ind.) and Perry (Ind.)

Sources

Barber, Jeff – Interviewed by Fran Ellers, August 29, 2006
 Kentucky Annual Hospital Utilization and Services Report, Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services (<http://chfs.ky.gov/ohp/dhppd/datasrsgal.htm>)
 Lawrence, Keith “OMHS forecasts major growth,” *Messenger-Inquirer*, August 17, 2006
 Lawrence, Keith “Barber: If MHS builds new hospital, it will be annexed,” *Messenger-Inquirer*, August 18, 2006

Major Hospital/Health Care Facilities Built or Planned in our Area

Facility

Ohio County (KY) Hospital
 Perry County (IN) Memorial Hospital
 Trover Hospital (Madisonville)
 Deaconess Hospital (Evansville)
 Deaconess Gateway Hospital (Evansville)
 Methodist Hospital (Henderson)
 Methodist Hospital (Union County)
 St. Mary's Hospital (Evansville)

Beds

25-bed acute care facility
 25-bed critical access facility
 410-bed
 365-bed
 116-bed
 216-bed
 25-bed acute critical access
 16-long term beds
 564-bed

LEARN MORE

Owensboro Medical Health System

811 East Parrish Avenue
 Owensboro, KY 42303
 270/688-2000
 Jeff Barber, President/CEO
jbarber@omhs.org

Kentucky Hospital Association

2501 Nelson Miller Parkway
 P.O. Box 436629
 Louisville, KY 40253
www.kyha.com

American Hospital Association

One North Franklin
 Chicago, IL 60606
www.aha.org

SHARE YOUR VIEWS

Owensboro Medical Health System

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 270/688-2000
 Jeff Barber, President/CEO
jbarber@omhs.org
 Billy Joe Miles, 2006 Board Chairman

Tom Watson

Mayor of Owensboro
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 City Hall
 Owensboro, KY 42302

City Commission

Candance Brake
Charles Castlen
Ron Payne
Jim Glenn
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Reid Haire

Daviess County Judge
 Executive
 P.O. Box 1716
 Daviess County Courthouse
 Owensboro, KY 42302

Daviess County Fiscal Court

Jim Lambert
Bruce Kunze
Mike Riney
 P.O. Box 1716
 Daviess County Courthouse
 Owensboro, KY 42302

GET INVOLVED

Citizens Health Care Advocates
 401 Frederica Street, B-203
 Owensboro, KY 42301
 270/685-2652
 Don Crask, 2006 Chair
don.crask@ky.gov



Citizens Speak... LEADERS RESPOND

Participants support a different direction on energy



On August 22, more than 50 concerned citizens gathered to examine how coal-fired power plants fit into the future of this region. Following a presentation of the history, data, trends and options (see “Framing the Issue” feature – July edition, *Public Life Advocate*), participants engaged in small group deliberation. Each group reported on the major themes that characterized their discussion and points all could agree on. Thirty-seven participants also completed a post-forum questionnaire with the following results:

A ranking of options examined, in order of preference:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1. Conserve and invest in renewable energy alternatives:</p> <p>68 percent agree strongly
24 percent agree somewhat
5 percent disagree somewhat
3 not sure</p> <p>2. Allow new plants to be built, but insist on higher standards, better regulation, end loopholes and emissions trading:</p> <p>50 percent agree strongly
44 percent agree somewhat
3 percent disagree somewhat
3 percent not sure</p> | <p>3. Halt construction of new coal-fired power plants:</p> <p>42 percent disagree strongly
19 percent disagree somewhat
14 percent agree strongly
14 percent agree somewhat
11 percent not sure</p> <p>4. Stay the course. No more regulation. The current system works fine:</p> <p>64 percent disagree strongly
25 percent disagree somewhat
6 percent not sure
3 percent agree strongly
3 percent agree somewhat</p> |
|---|--|

Demographic Information

Of the forum attendees who completed a questionnaire:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>51 percent are between 45 and 60 years of age
24 percent are over 65 years of age
19 percent are between 30 and 44 years of age
5 percent are under 30 years of age</p> <p>61 percent are men
39 percent are women</p> <p>49 percent reside in the city of Owensboro
29 percent reside outside the city in Daviess County
22 percent live outside Owensboro-Daviess County</p> | <p>All are white</p> <p>76 percent have a college degree or more
11 percent have completed some college coursework
13 percent have not completed any college coursework</p> <p>86 percent vote in every election
14 percent vote in most elections</p> <p>83 percent say that a candidate's position on coal-burning power plants would be a pivotal issue that determines their vote
17 percent say it would not be a pivotal issue</p> |
|---|--|

Other participant responses:

Our priorities should focus on protecting the environment and the public over economic development and employment.

Participants would be willing to pay higher taxes and utility rates for cleaner, safer air and water.

To reduce our dependence on foreign oil, we should not increase coal production at the risk of environmental quality. However, we should increase coal production if environmental safeguards are in place, but reduce/phase out coal production and invest in clean, renewable energy alternatives.

New power plants should be built as older, more polluting plants are phased out.

To reduce environmental and public health dangers, Kentucky should stop building power plants that serve other areas.

However, participants consider Kentucky's coal reserves to represent a unique and valuable resource that should be maximized through mining and coal-fired power plants, while also finding alternatives to coal because mining is dangerous, harmful to the landscape and ecosystem, and the burning of coal pollutes our air and water.

Coal mining is an important occupation for our region and should be supported while safety is improved.

Participants were evenly split on whether or not surface mining reclamation leaves the land in good, if not better condition, than it was before the mining occurred.

Participants strongly agreed that mountaintop removal in eastern Kentucky is devastating to the environment and should be prohibited.

A complete report on the forum results and participant questionnaire responses, including demographic data on the participants, is available on the Public Life Foundation's website: www.plfo.org.

Responses from elected officials and energy-environmental policy makers will be published in the next edition.

public funding and should be discouraged.

Mr. Berry continues by suggesting, "...it's about community ownership of the project itself." Mr. Berry is confused here as there is no such thing as "community ownership." What a person owns, he takes care of. But when all of us (or none of us) "own" something, it tends to fall into disrepair. Obviously Mr. Berry is confusing the concept of ownership with stewardship. While an entire city population can be proud of a public or private accomplishment that benefits everyone, ownership is the embodiment of private citizens trading their savings for things they plan to take care of. If the \$50 million of taxpayers' monies creates a "white elephant" that does not attract businesses, today's advocates will scatter like flies because none of them owns it.

He then offers up two classic economic alternatives, questioning whether Owensboro should "...let the forces of the marketplace drive" or "...control the development process." What is the history of really smart public servants guessing how the future will unfold in Daviess County? Have their public decisions produced the benefits they promised? If instead we were judging baseball batting averages, we might ask whether private or public investors "got more hits" in predicting where people are living and working in Owensboro? This "fatal conceit," that smart public servants can predict the future better than average citizens looking out for the best interests of their families, should cause concerned Owensboro-Daviess Countians to seriously question Mr. Berry's confusing proposition.

Has Mr. Berry ever run a successful business? When he says, "Property owners should be allowed to make an appropriate profit," inquiring minds want to know what "appropriate" means. Entrepreneurs pursue business opportunities by judging whether a sufficient number of customers exist for a product or service they plan to offer. If they are lucky and guess right, they earn a profit. If they are wrong, they suffer a loss. The response of a property owner to a purchase offer made determines the size of the profit that emerges. Mr. Berry's insinuation that someone other than a property owner should judge whether a private transaction should yield a large or small profit sounds sinister, almost socialistic. Could Mr. Berry be confusing the rights expressed by the US Constitution with something that exists in France or Cuba?

In deference to a recent decision of Kentucky's General Assembly, Mr. Berry suggests, "To serve the public interest, officials may need to use their legal authority and acquire property through the threat of condemnation." By using the phrase, "through the threat of condemnation," he must realize that Kentucky's General Assembly recently reaffirmed the inalienable rights of Kentucky property owners. Legislators passed HB 508 last spring that decreed, "No provision in the law of the Commonwealth shall be construed to authorize the condemnation of private property for transfer to a private owner for the purpose of economic development." In the past, when threatened, some property owners withered and sold properties in Kentucky at a price government officials persuaded them was fair enough. Today Mr. Berry's "threat" is as empty as a carcass picked clean by buzzards. Without resorting to designating the Owensboro riverfront as a "blighted area," using "the threat of condemnation" is the only weapon government officials have to separate property owners from their property rights.

Nevertheless, to presume that force – the threat of condemning private property to facilitate private profit - must be applied to a project in order to succeed is a clear indication that Mr. Berry's ideas won't work. In addressing how to truly invest \$50 million of taxpayers' monies so all Owensboro-Daviess Countians can benefit, community leaders should first ask why private developers have not yet taken advantage of Owensboro's potentially attractive riverfront opportunity. The answers to this question should lead such leaders to make an investment decision that both respects existing property owners and benefits all Owensboro-Daviess Countians.

After all, doesn't our experience waiting in line at the Post Office suggest that it would be better to ask FedEx to counsel the Post Office than the reverse?"

Thank you for your consideration.

- Chris Derry
Bluegrass Institute

Making a Difference

UNITY COALITION FOCUS ON IMMIGRATION

The Unity Coalition is taking the initiative to bring immigration issues, trends and proposals to the forefront of public life. On July 11, the coalition presented a public forum to introduce the public to the complexities of immigration law and to hear case studies of what several local immigrants endured over many years to make our nation their home. On September 28, there will be a follow-up forum addressing various legal issues and proposals for immigration reform: 6 p.m. at the Neblett Community Center.

EDUCATION ALLIANCE PROPOSES INITIATIVES

The Greater Owensboro Alliance for Education, a collaborative mechanism that addresses key educational challenges facing our community, has been revitalized under the direction of Helen Mountjoy and the Greater Owensboro Economic Development Corporation. Co-Chairs Marilyn Brookman (Western Kentucky University – Owensboro) and Reid Haire (Daviess County Judge-Executive) recently proposed five initiatives for 2006-2007:

- Teachers in Technology program to demonstrate for educators current math and science workplace applications
- Improved curriculum alignment so that more high school students and graduates can enroll directly into courses for college credit
- Enhanced instructional strategies and professional development through quarterly roundtable discussions involving P-12 educators and academic deans from area colleges
- Engagement of area employers to examine the importance and applications of "rigor" and "relevance" in education and the workplace (a Partnership for Kentucky Schools initiative)
- Special efforts to design educational programs to meet the workforce needs of Owensboro Medical Health System expansion

WORLD AFFAIRS COUNCIL SOLICITS SUPPORT, PLANS PROGRAMS

The Owensboro Area World Affairs Council is soliciting community support to sustain and expand educational programs on global issues. Since 2002, the council has presented free public lectures, panel discussions and small group roundtable dialogues on military policy, the impact of 9-11, middle east dynamics and policies, the European Union, oppression in Latin America, the transition and challenges facing Russia, the credibility of international elections and more.

Prospects for the upcoming series include documentary film viewing followed by discussions, lectures by a noted historian, visiting faculty from China and more.

Council leaders would like to continue to offer programs at no cost to the public. To join, support, or offer suggestions to the council, contact Mark Maltby, president (marc.maltby@kctcs.edu), or Beverly Mills, project manager (beverly.mills@plfo.org.)



SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER Public AGENDA

Meetings, hearings, and forums open to the public. Please contact us if your organization would like its events listed by calling 685-2652 or sending an email to info@plfo.org. (Meetings are subject to change.)

Important Upcoming Public Meetings

SEPTEMBER

- 14 Citizens Health Care Advocates (CHCA)**
5:30 p.m.
Program: "Drug Addiction Recovery Resources"
Green River District Health Depart.
Bedford Walker Community Room
- Owensboro Area World Affairs Council (OAWAC)**
7:00 p.m.
Film presentation: "Paradise Now" followed by discussion Kentucky Wesleyan College
Hager Performance Hall
- 25 Learning Community Special Preview**
"Just Say Go" campaign
4:00 p.m.
Commerce Center
- 28 Unity Coalition/Owensboro Human Relations Commission**
5:30 p.m.
Program: Immigration Law: What is your opinion?
H. L. Neblett Community Center

OCTOBER

- 12 Citizens Health Care Advocates (CHCA)**
5:30 p.m.
Program: "Men's Health"
H. L. Neblett Community Center
Mitch McConnell Community Room
- 17 Owensboro Area World Affairs Council (OAWAC)**
7:00 p.m.
Program: "The Chinese Experience: Myth and Reality"
Speakers: Baiyi Liu and Aiming Liu
Owensboro Community & Technical College, Blandford Hall
- 19 Owensboro Human Relations Commission Recognition Banquet**
6:00 p.m.
Speaker: Mary Evans Sais, President, Kentucky State University
H.L. Neblett Community Center
- 20 Womenomics Conference Owensboro Business and Professional Women/Kentucky Commission on Women**
1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
"Workplaces and Workforces in Transitions: Impacts on Workingwomen and Employers"
Green River Area Development District offices

Regularly Scheduled Public Meetings

Meeting Dates and Times Subject to Change

- Citizens Health Care Advocates**
Second Thursday each month
5:30 p.m.
GRDHD, Bedford-Walker Community Room
- Daviess County Board of Education**
Third Thursday each month
6:00 p.m.
1622 Southeastern Parkway
- Daviess County Fiscal Court**
First and Third Thursday each month
4:00 p.m.
Daviess County Courthouse
- Greater Owensboro Chamber of Commerce "Rooster Booster" Breakfast**
First Thursday each month
7:30 a.m.
Executive Inn

- Green River Health Council**
Second Tuesday every other month (Feb, Apr, June, Aug, Oct, Dec)
10:00 a.m.
GRADD

Neighborhood Alliance Meetings

- Apollo Area Alliance**
Fourth Tuesday each month
5:30 p.m.
Apollo Heights Baptist Church.
- Audubon Bon Harbor Area Alliance**
Second Monday each month
6:30 p.m.
Audubon Church of the Nazarene
- Dogwood Azalea Neighborhood Alliance**
Third Thursday each month

continued on pg. 20

The TRACKER DATA OF INTEREST



Compiled by
Chad M. Gesser

HISPANICS AND IMMIGRATION

- In 2005, Hispanics represented nearly 15 percent and blacks represented 12 percent of the U.S. population. By 2050, Hispanics are expected to account for nearly 25 percent of the population, while blacks are projected to account for 15 percent.
- In 2005, Hispanics represented two percent and blacks represented four percent of the Owensboro-Daviess County population.
- The median net worth of white households in the U.S. in 2002 was \$88,651. The median net worth for black households was \$5,988 and for Hispanic households was \$7,932.
- In 2004, approximately 15 percent of those living in the U.S. were born in another country. Of these 36 million immigrants, 29 percent were legal permanent residents, 30 percent were naturalized citizens, 29 percent were unauthorized immigrants, 7 percent were refugee arrivals, and 3 percent were temporary legal residents.
- An estimated 180,000 unauthorized immigrants arrived annually in the U.S. during the 1980's. From 2000-2005, the number increased to 850,000 per year.
- More than 80 percent of the unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. come from Latin America. Fifty-seven percent of the unauthorized immigrants come from Mexico.
- Less than one percent of the U.S. unauthorized immigrant population resides in Kentucky.
- Nearly 70 percent of the U.S. unauthorized immigrant population resides in eight states: California, Texas, Florida, New York, Arizona, Illinois, New Jersey, and North Carolina.
- More than 80 percent of U.S. Hispanics have a relative living in the U.S.
- Nearly 75 percent of U.S. Hispanic households are considered "lower middle" or "lower class."
- Approximately 36 percent of the current U.S. Hispanic labor force does not have a high school degree.
- More than half of new migrants from Mexico learned about work available in the U.S. by talking with someone in the U.S. before their migration.
- Most immigrants from Mexico work in the same industry in the U.S. as they did in Mexico.

This Index and other items of interest can be found at The Owensboro Blog:
<http://owensboro.blogspot.com>



Citizen Action UPDATE

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Mead

To submit updates on citizen action: 685-2652 or info@plfo.org.

Owensboro-Daviess County Asset Building Coalition

Contact: Keith Sanders (685-5707, keithsanders@omuonline.net)

- Making plans for an expanded program in 2007.
- Recruiting volunteers to help low-income people prepare tax returns and qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit.
- Developing financial literacy programs.

Bring Back Baseball Committee

Bruce Brubaker, chair

bbrubaker@champion-ford.com

- Sharing information about the group's proposal (stadium, Frontier League franchise) with community groups and political candidates.
- Recent endorsements include: Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Corporation, Downtown Owensboro, Tourist Commission.
- Tracking state government legislation concerning tax increment financing.

Citizens Committee on Education

Marianne Smith Edge, co-chair

msedge@smithedge.com

Forrest Roberts, co-chair

robroom@adelphia.net

- Supporting the Higher Education Advocacy Group to facilitate increased local opportunities in undergraduate and graduate education.
- Supporting "The Learning Community" initiative that seeks to instill a higher value of education and lifelong learning into the fabric of community life.
- Tracking city-county school issues, dropout rates and more.

Citizens Health Care Advocates (CHCA)

Don Crask, chair

don.crask@grdhd.org

www.CHCA.US

Meetings: Second Thursday of each month, 5:30 p.m., Green River District Health Department, Bedford Walker Community Room

- Continuing monthly programs on relevant topics and issues
- Tracking "Five Fields of Focus" for 2006:
 - access to health care
 - healthy lifestyles
 - governmental affairs
 - health care costs
 - organizational development
- CHCA now has 121 members and 574 attendees and participants at meetings
- Meetings are broadcast on OCTV

Coalition for the Poor

Nancy Keeton, Keith Sanders, and Sharon Sharp (Steering Committee)

c/o Public Life Foundation, 401 Frederica Street, B203, Owensboro, KY 42301 (685-2652)

- Conducted an August 29 community forum around the broadcast of the PBS documentary, *Waging a Living*.
- Featured Terry Brooks, executive director of Kentucky Youth Advocates, on issues and state legislation affecting youth and families.
- Building a network of citizens who are concerned about the plight of the poor.
- Sharing information and concerns regarding the impact that government social program cuts have on the poor.
- Interested in leadership development programs that empower the poor.

Dental Task Force

Contact: Rodney Berry (rodney.berry@plfo.org, 685-2652)

- Applied for a grant to retain the University of Kentucky Center for Health Management and Research to assist the task force and community organizations in developing an effective model for meeting the dental needs of disadvantaged youth: school-based (Foust model), clinic, etc.

Goodfellows Club

Bruce Kunze, president

bkunze1@aol.com

- Hosted a successful benefit tennis tournament (June 16-18); partnered with Luke Woodward Memorial Tournament.
- Participating in task force on youth dental needs.
- Raised \$110,000 through 2005 "Roll Call" campaign.
- Recently named as a beneficiary in a will.
- Providing more than 1,000 children with winter coats, shoes, clothing and emergency assistance each year.

Owensboro Area World Affairs Council

Marc Maltby, Ph.D., president

marc.maltby@kctcs.edu

- Planning 2006-2007 series to begin in the fall.
- Recent programs: "Paradise Now" (film and discussion); Leonard Pitts, syndicated columnist; John Stempel, senior professor and former director of the University of Kentucky Patterson School of Diplomacy; George Russell, international elections consultant for the U.S. State Department.

Owensboro Neighborhood Alliance

Contact: Robin Cooper

cooperrw@owensboro.org

- Reviewed Germantown Park redevelopment proposal
- Conducting leadership training program through a Public Life Foundation partnership.
- Strengthening alliances, recruiting members, sharing information, and developing programs to improve neighborhoods.

PRIDE of Owensboro-Daviess County

Donna Risley, president

drisley@visitowensboro.com

www.prideodcky.org

- Developing cost estimates for the master plan for enhanced community entrances from the Natcher Bridge and West Parrish Avenue from the airport.
- Planning a follow-up forum on the riverwalk proposal to English Park.
- Committees active in areas of beautification, public projects, architecture, and more..

Unity Coalition

Hervey Howell, president

hervey@myway.com

- Held a public forum on immigration issues on July 11.
- Planning a follow-up forum on immigration on September 28.
- Presented a "Fair Housing" forum on February 16.

Public AGENDA, cont.

5:30 p.m.
Davie County Public Library

Dugan Best Neighborhood Alliance
Fourth Tuesday each month
6:00 p.m.
Dugan Best Recreation Center

Hillcrest Area Alliance
Second Tuesday each month
6:30 p.m.
Davie County High School Media Center

Midtown East Neighborhood Alliance
First Thursday each month
5:00 p.m.
Buena Vista Baptist Church

Northwest Neighborhood Alliance
Fourth Tuesday each month
5:30 p.m.
Foust Elementary School Media Center

Old Owensboro Neighborhood Alliance
Second Tuesday each month
5:30 p.m.
Wendell Foster Center Administration Building Boardroom

Seven Hills Neighborhood Alliance
First Thursday each month
7:00 p.m.
Trinity United Methodist Church

Shifley-York Neighborhood Alliance
Second Tuesday each month
5:30 p.m.
Lewis Lane Baptist Church

Southeast Alliance
Second Thursday each month
6:30 p.m.
Newton Parrish Elementary School

Wesleyan-Shawnee Neighborhood Alliance
Fourth Tuesday each month
6 p.m.
Kentucky Wesleyan College, Winchester Center

Owensboro Board of Education
Fourth Thursday each month
4:30 p.m.
Boardroom

Owensboro City Commission
First and Third Tuesday each month
5:00 p.m.
City Hall

Owensboro-Davie County Regional Airport
Third Monday of each month
4:30 p.m.

Airport terminal building conference room

Owensboro Historic Preservation Board & Downtown Design Review Commission
Fourth Wednesday each month
5:00 p.m.
City Hall

Owensboro Housing Authority
Fourth Thursday each month
11:30 a.m.
2161 E. 19th St.

Owensboro Metropolitan Board of Adjustment
First Thursday each month
6:00 p.m.
City Hall

Owensboro Metropolitan Planning Commission
Second Thursday each month
6:00 p.m.
City Hall

Owensboro Riverport Authority
Fourth Friday each month
12:00 p.m.
1771 River Road

Owensboro Utility Commission
Third Thursday each month
4:00 p.m.
2070 Tamarack Rd., Third floor board room

Preservation Alliance of Owensboro-Davie County, Inc.
First Friday every other month (Feb, Apr, June, Aug, Oct, Dec)
12:00 p.m.
Campbell Club

RWRA
Third Monday each month (except January, Fourth Monday)
3:30 p.m.
RWRA, 1722 Pleasant Valley Road

Tobacco Control Coalition
Fourth Wednesday each month
11:30 a.m.
GRDHD

Tourism & Convention Bureau
Third Thursday each month
7:45 a.m.
215 E. Second St.

ABOUT THE PUBLICATION

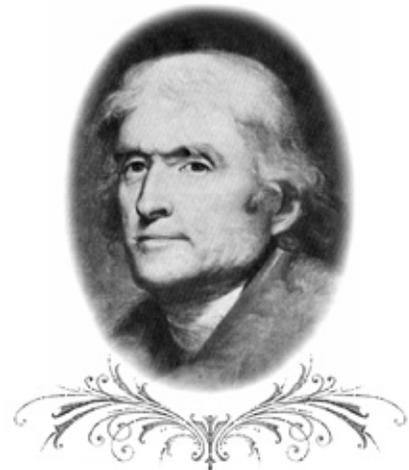
The *Public Life Advocate*, published bi-monthly, is committed to be a trusted resource of information and analysis of public concerns and community issues. The *Advocate* is a community-driven publication, grounded in a commitment to be "of the people, by the people, and for the people."

ABOUT THE FOUNDATION

The Public Life Foundation of Owensboro, Inc. is a private, nonpartisan, nonprofit 501(c) operating foundation (not a grant-making entity) founded in 1996 by John and Marjorie Hager. Mr. Hager is the former owner, editor, and publisher of the Owensboro *Messenger-Inquirer*.

The foundation fosters broad, meaningful citizen participation in community decisions and public policy. We believe that open, accessible, and trustful institutions are essential to an enlightened and engaged citizenry and the democratic process.

Foundation activities are driven by the importance that people attach to issues. We are committed to the people's agenda. To assist citizens in solving problems and seizing opportunities, we facilitate a process of information > deliberation > action.



"I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education."

Thomas Jefferson