

PUBLIC LIFE  
FOUNDATION  
*of Owensboro*

**2005 Annual Report  
2006 Plan**



*public concerns → citizen action*

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# INTRODUCTION

This report compiles a year of initiatives to galvanize public life in Owensboro-Daviess County. Through a process of *information* → *deliberation* → *action*, the Public Life Foundation of Owensboro attempts to engage citizens from all walks of life in community decisions and public policy.

Our community faces problems to solve, opportunities to seize. Owensboro's mayor unabashedly supports unification of city and county governments. County government's first occupational tax recently went into effect. Community leaders are restructuring economic development agencies. What has and will be the role of everyday citizens in these important initiatives?

A \$40 million grant earmarked for the riverfront master plan will require an \$8 million local match. Will this public investment stimulate comparable private sector investments? Additional major capital construction projects are planned or under consideration: public library, arena, baseball stadium, school athletic and fine arts expansions. Will the public have a sense of ownership in these projects, a voice in location, design and financing?

County government adopted an ordinance to restrict smoking in public places – the outcome of assiduous advocates who based their case on solid research and the common good. Will other controversial proposals be characterized by reliable information, deliberation and civility?

A recent study underscored the need to increase educational attainment in Owensboro-Davies County and the need to expand course and degree offerings through institutional collaboration. Will our *community* plan integrate and transcend institutional plans?

Will we fulfill the promise of “The Learning Community” initiative and instill a greater appreciation of education and lifelong learning into the fabric of our community? While state and national strategies are debated, can we develop effective local strategies to serve the growing number of uninsured? Can we make progress on lingering problems of substance abuse and births to single mothers? Will citizens respond and roll up their sleeves? Will institutions be open and transparent, or secret and defensive?

Whether expressing concerns about the war in Iraq, emergency response, health care or Social Security, what needs to be done for the citizens of our community to be heard in Frankfort and Washington?

In 2005, the foundation demonstrated that it is not just about issues and problem solving, it is also about process. A better way of making decisions. Steps to build trust between people and their institutions. Resources and events to help people learn, deliberate, come to judgment and take action. Citizens invested, empowered and enriched by a real sense that they are needed and that they *can* make a difference... through an active public life.

# INFORMATION

*“...if we think (the people) not enlightened enough to exercise their control with wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it (power) from them, but to inform their discretion by education.”*

Thomas Jefferson

## PUBLICATION

The *Public Life Advocate* continues to be the primary mechanism through which the foundation shares information on vital public issues with our community. Published bi-monthly, the magazine features journalistic research, in-depth reporting, issue briefs/dialogue guides, and recurring features that examine, track and celebrate citizen participation in public life.

The *Public Life Advocate* is available at no cost through email subscription, the foundation website ([www.plfo.org](http://www.plfo.org)), or Daviess County Public Library. Print subscriptions are available at cost.

## Articles

In 2005, we published the following articles:

[Citizens embrace community vision: PRIDE workshops examine 29 concepts](#)

[Is our democracy threatened? Excerpts from \*American Democracy in an Age of Rising Inequality\*](#)

[The medical malpractice debate: VA hospital model demonstrates that honesty is the best policy](#)

[Citizens Health Care Advocates \(CHCA\) takes five: Advocacy group targets five issues in '05](#)

[School nurse program grows but has serious needs](#)

[Under-employed in Owensboro: How two families cope](#)

[Plodding through their plight: Single mothers juggle work, school and family](#)

[How do we grow from here? Owensboro-Daviess County leaders regroup, redefine and recharge toward a more effective economic development mechanism](#)

The changing face of Owensboro: Immigration trends challenge us

Minority role models a lifeline to stability and success

Ten keys to an energized downtown

Community needs, deserves more higher education

Peace, justice and the courts

### **Editor's Notes**

Also published in 2005, columns by foundation president Rodney Berry:

Shooting straight with the public

Rwanda horror should change us

Major initiatives warrant a public process

Toward the greater good

Making sense of public input

Academics can give OHS distinction

### **Letters from readers**

#### **Citizens Speak...Leaders Respond**

Results of forums, surveys, etc. and official responses

#### **Making a Difference and Citizen Action Updates**

Activities, profiles and updates from informed, engaged and empowered citizens

#### **Public Agenda**

Schedule of upcoming public meetings and opportunities to get involved

#### **The Tracker**

Topical data of interest

**Issue Briefs** (listed in the "Deliberation" section of this report)

## COMMUNITY EDUCATION

The public also learns about issues, concerns, trends, developments and possibilities through citizen group programs supported by the foundation. For example, in 2005:

**Citizens Health Care Advocates (CHCA)** sponsored programs on the proposed city bikeways plan, a new tobacco use poll, trends in clinical depression and the increasing importance of physician assistants and nurse practitioners. CHCA presented speakers and organized panels to examine the final stages of health care, fitness initiatives of city-county parks departments, and options facing the state legislature in addressing the Medicaid shortfall. CHCA invited social workers to share the day-to-day stresses and needs of low-income families. Our community emergency response capacity and the structure of a single payer health system were also introduced at CHCA meetings.

All CHCA programs were broadcast 48 times per month on public access channel (OCTV) which reaches 30,000 homes. The CHCA program is the station's third most popular/requested program.

**PRIDE** (Public Responsibility In Designing our Environment) presented speakers to inform its members and the public of aesthetic issues and possibilities. Dave Adkisson, President and CEO of the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, reviewed his experience in raising community design standards while serving as Owensboro mayor. PRIDE continues to work closely with landscape architect Morgan McIlwain to develop a master plan for the new community entrance from the Natcher Bridge and the entrance from Highway 56/Parrish Avenue and the airport.

The **Citizens Committee on Education (CCE)** commissioned a major research project to identify community needs and opportunities in higher education. The report included some alarming data regarding Daviess County's educational attainment. To increase understanding of educational issues among its membership, the CCE featured guest presenters at its meetings: school principals, school board members, school system superintendents, researchers, advocates and others.

The **Unity Coalition** presented programs on immigration issues, programs to foster racial-ethnic harmony in local schools, and a report on the role and activities of the Human Relations Commission. The Coalition plans six programs for 2006, including a panel discussion on fair housing in February.

**Owensboro Neighborhood Alliance** leaders were introduced to leadership development techniques through a program sponsored by the foundation. The SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis may lead to a partnership with Owensboro Community and Technical College for a comprehensive training program for anyone interested in citizen action.

The **Owensboro Area World Affairs Council** presented an impressive series of speakers to advance global understanding in our community: U.S. State Department

official Mort Holbrook; author, professor and Russian scholar Stephen Cohen; *The Nation* magazine editor Katrina vanden Heuvel; and U.S.-Iraq program director Tamara Quinn. Several speakers are already confirmed for 2006: John Stempel, Patterson School of Diplomacy; George Russell, international election consultant; and Leonard Pitts, syndicated columnist.

The **Goodfellows Club** board of directors hosted a round table discussion with youth service providers and participated in a discussion about youth dental needs.

The incipient **Coalition for the Poor** regularly circulates information regarding proposals and policies that may be detrimental to the poor.

CHCA, PRIDE, Goodfellows Club, Neighborhood Alliance, and World Affairs Council also educate their members, community leaders and interested parties through newsletters. CHCA, PRIDE and the Neighborhood Alliance (through the City of Owensboro) maintain web sites.

Citizen group leaders and members also regularly attend public meetings, forums, workshops, banquets, receptions and other programs to better understand issues, network and better position themselves as advocates.

# DELIBERATION

*“ I never saw an instance of one of two disputants  
convincing the other by argument.”*

– Thomas Jefferson

## ISSUE BRIEFS

To help citizens come to an informed judgment on issues and choices facing our community, state and nation, the foundation prepared the following issue briefs-dialogue guides in 2005:

One county, three governments:

Examining options for Owensboro-Whitesville-Daviess County unification

Strengthening Social Security:

Ideology or economics? Modest adjustments or massive overhaul?

Big dreams, big decisions: A citizen guide to prioritizing proposed community projects

Care for the uninsured: Examining local options to meet the growing need

What will work along the riverfront? What is our vision and strategy for private sector investment to complement the \$40 million infusion of federal funds?

How should we pay for the hurricanes?

Issue briefs were circulated to governing boards, stakeholders, elected officials, advocates, committees and task forces established to examine these issues.

## COMMUNITY DIALOGUE

Issue briefs were also used as dialogue guides in the following forums:

### **Unification Forum**

A cross section of city and rural participants devoted several hours reviewing information, examining options and working through diverse perspectives prior to completing a questionnaire on the issue of city-county government unification. Forum results were shared with the City-County Unification Task Force, elected officials, community leaders, and the public (through the media, web site, publication, etc.)

The task force report will be released in 2006. If the subject remains on the community agenda, the foundation will encourage extensive public dialogue and lead or partner with other organizations as is warranted.

## **Social Security Forum**

A valuable exercise involving another healthy cross section of local citizens. The forum was held during the period when President Bush was touring the country promoting his Social Security reform plan. Questionnaires were completed following small group discussions and were shared with the public, Congressman Ron Lewis, Senator Mitch McConnell, Senator Jim Bunning and other officials.

## **Community Projects Roundtable**

Shortly after the release of the foundation's issue brief on the subject, city and county leaders held several open meetings in which advocates of various community projects were asked to make a case for their project.

## **Care for the Uninsured – Presentation and Dialogue**

Foundation president Rodney Berry reviewed the foundation's issue brief on this subject during a CHCA meeting that was broadcast on public access television. The subject generated considerable discussion and a sense that more must be done to connect the uninsured and underinsured with a medical home and preventive care. A follow-up session is planned with health care stakeholders.

## **Riverfront Development Roundtable**

Stakeholders and interested citizens came together to examine the need to develop a private sector development strategy along downtown Owensboro's riverfront to complement the ambitious \$40 million master plan for Smother's Park and other public areas. The foundation's issue brief served as a resource for the discussion.

## **Dialogue on Dental Health Care**

The foundation convened representatives of health and social service agencies, school nurses, public health officials, health advocates and others to examine growing concerns over the lack of dental care for low-income families and children in our community. Participants acknowledged that the charitable services of volunteer dentists should be celebrated; however, these services clearly are not meeting community needs. The group plans to examine the resources needed to establish a full-time, staffed dental clinic.



## **DELIBERATION AND CITIZEN GROUPS**

In 2005, public dialogue was an integral part of the efforts of several citizen groups supported by the foundation. For example:

The **Citizens Committee on Education** conducted a series of public forums and funded surveys of the public and the business community to solicit views on community needs and opportunities in higher education.

**PRIDE** conducted several community workshops to explore options and react to preliminary plans for enhancing the new community entrance from the Natcher Bridge and the entrance from the airport on West Parrish Avenue.

**Citizens Health Care Advocates** held several panel discussions on health care issues. These events were characterized by balanced perspectives to assist the public in coming to an informed judgment.

Participants in the **Owensboro Neighborhood Alliance** leadership training program deliberated over collaboration, communication, leadership skills and other ways to affect grassroots change.

# ACTION

*“Life is a verb.”*

– Buckminster Fuller

## SUPPORTING VOLUNTEERS

In 2005, the foundation provided administrative and financial support for the following citizen groups:

Citizens Committee on Education  
Citizens Health Care Advocates  
Coalition for the Poor  
Goodfellows Club

PRIDE of Owensboro-Daviess County  
Owensboro Area World Affairs Council  
Owensboro Neighborhood Alliance  
Unity Coalition

## INVOLVING CITIZENS

As a result of these initiatives, many citizens are now participating in public life and making a difference in important areas. For example:

Through a newspaper survey, small and large employer surveys, small group meetings, interviews, and three public forums, close to a thousand citizens had input into the **Citizens Committee on Education** higher education study.

In 2005, **PRIDE** grew to 925 members and more than 300 citizens participated in PRIDE Day.

The membership of **Citizens Health Care Advocates** grew to 122 and 550 citizens attended CHCA programs.

The **Goodfellows Club** attracted donations from thousands of citizens for the 2005 “Roll Call” campaign. Several dozen volunteers assisted with the annual Christmas party for nearly 1,000 disadvantaged children.

The **Owensboro Area World Affairs Council** introduced nearly 1,000 adults and students to global issues.

## DEVELOPING LEADERS

Foundation and citizen group activities produce leaders for our community. Citizens have opportunities to learn, engage in dialogue, serve on committees, network with others, hold board positions, organize events, edit newsletters, write news releases, speak to civic clubs, alert officials of concerns, manage projects, prepare grant proposals and more.

Ample training opportunities have attracted citizens interested in education, health care, disadvantaged children, community appearance, international issues, race-ethnic relations, poverty, grassroots citizen action and more. Many who have been active in foundation programs have assumed leadership roles with other organizations, become a spokesperson for a cause or run for public office.

## **DEVELOPING ORGANIZATIONS**

The foundation retained the services of J. D. Levy and Associates to assist the foundation and citizen groups supported by the foundation with organizational assessments, strategic planning, board/leadership development, fundraising, and sustainability plans. These services include a toolkit for each organization, foundation research, training, grantwriting and more.

## **MAKING A DIFFERENCE**

### **Citizens Committee on Education**

- ✓ Charting a New Course: Higher Education in Owensboro-Daviess County
- ✓ Promoting education and lifelong learning as our premiere community value

### **Citizens Health Care Advocates**

- ✓ Providing the premiere public forum for health care issues
- ✓ Caring enough to speak out
- ✓ Promoting better health and health care for all

### **Coalition for the Poor**

- ✓ Speaking out for the poor

### **Goodfellow's Club**

- ✓ Distributing more than \$113,000 for year-round needs: clothing, shoes, coats and emergency assistance for disadvantaged children
- ✓ Advocating for children

### **Owensboro Neighborhood Alliance**

- ✓ Developing camaraderie, leadership and a stronger sense of possibilities in every section of Owensboro

### **Owensboro Area World Affairs Council**

- ✓ Facilitating greater understanding of global issues

### **PRIDE of Owensboro-Daviess County**

- ✓ Developing a master plan to enhance community entrances
- ✓ Promoting quality design and aesthetic improvements

### **Unity Coalition**

- ✓ Presenting programs that raise and examine issues affecting race-ethnic relations

## MISC.

### **Interest in Our Model**

The foundation was asked to submit an article for Peter Karoff's soon-to-be published book, *The World We Want*. Karoff is founder and chairman of **The Philanthropic Initiative** (TPI) in Boston. TPI previously profiled the foundation's work in newsletters and videoconferences. In *Smart Communities: How Citizens and Local Leaders Can Use Strategic Thinking to Build a Better Future*, author Suzanne Morse devotes a section of the book to the foundation's work.

The **Danville, Kentucky Advocate-Messenger** invited foundation president Rodney Berry to submit a column that summarized the foundation's experience with citizen participation and influence in health care.

### **Advocating Openness and Transparency**

The foundation participated in **Sunshine Week** and is exploring ways to promote openness and transparency with **Kentucky Citizens for Open Government**, Vanderbilt University's **First Amendment Center** and the University of Kentucky's Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues.

John Hager, founder, benefactor and chairman of the foundation, participated in a panel discussion as part of the **First Amendment First** conference at Western Kentucky University. Former NBC Chairman Julian Goodman and former *Courier-Journal* owner and publisher, Barry Bingham, Jr., were among the other presenters.

## 2005 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

The Public Life Foundation is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, 501(c)(3) corporation – an operating foundation (as opposed to a grant making entity). Financial and staff resources are directed to foundation initiatives.

Endowment Value January 1, 2005	\$	7,461,733
Endowment Value December 31, 2005	\$	7,840,221

		<u>2005 Expenses</u>
Cable Television		777
Consulting Fees		24,099
Furniture and Equipment		1,985
Insurance		1,915
Meetings and Travel		9,414
Memberships/Subscriptions		2,397
Misc.		3,289
Personnel		203,675
Postage		1,632
Printing and Copying		219
Professional Development		174
Professional Fees		6,620
Projects*		
<i>Public Life Advocate</i>	30,603	
Coalition for the Poor	2,097	
Citizens Committee on Education	1,639	
Citizens Health Care Advocates	2,127	
Goodfellows Club	641	
Neighborhood Alliance	1,050	
Openness Initiatives	15,264	
PRIDE	1,602	
Unity Coalition	698	
World Affairs Council	11,427	
Panels, Forums	2,749	
Other	<u>5,930</u>	
Total		75,827
Rent		16,800
Repairs		30
Supplies		3,689
Taxes		13,285
Technology		12,371
Telephone		<u>2,536</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>380,735</b>

\*Direct project expenses are in addition to staff support and in-kind contributions of office space, meeting room, use of computer, Internet and e-mail, phone, cabinets and shelving, copier, printer, postage machine, equipment, and supplies.

# 2006 GOALS

## INFORMATION

- Publish six issues of *Public Life Advocate*
- Expand publication visibility and circulation
- Commission special reports as warranted
- Enhance web site to expand community dialogue

## DELIBERATION

- Frame six issues in publication (for use as dialogue guides)
- Organize and host community forums/workshops as warranted
- Collaborate with organizations involved in complementary efforts
- Explore technological applications to enhance and expedite citizen participation during forums and reporting to the media

## ACTION

- Continue support of valued citizen groups:
  - Citizens Committee on Education
  - Citizens Health Care Advocates
  - Coalition for the Poor
  - Goodfellows Club
  - Owensboro Neighborhood Alliance
  - PRIDE
  - Unity Coalition
  - World Affairs Council
- Conclude consultation/training with citizen groups toward a plan for self-sustainability. Attract outside support for these organizations.
- Develop plan to narrow interest areas
- Promote openness and transparency in government, charitable institutions, corporations, religious institutions and more

## ADMINISTRATION

- Add non-family board members
- Examine the benefits of a change to a public charity designation
- Convene publication advisory committee
- Adopt personnel policies, misc. contracts (e.g. Independent Contractor)
- Convene foundation committees as needed
- Communicate with board quarterly
- Conduct two foundation board meetings (May, November)

## 2006 BUDGET

Consulting Fees		10,000
Furniture and Equipment		3,000
Insurance		2,325
Meetings and Travel		6,000
Memberships/Subscriptions		2,500
Misc.		3,000
Personnel		217,725
Postage		2,200
Printing and Copying		500
Professional Development		500
Professional Fees		6,500
Projects*		
<i>Public Life Advocate</i>	45,000	
Citizens Committee on Education	1,000	
Citizens Health Care Advocates	3,000	
Coalition for the Poor	1,000	
Goodfellows Club	1,000	
PRIDE	3,000	
Unity Coalition	1,000	
World Affairs Council	1,000	
Panels, Forums	5,000	
Other (conference, Go Vote, etc.)	<u>1,500</u>	
Total		62,500
Rent		16,800
Repairs		500
Supplies		5,000
Taxes		15,000
Technology		12,000
Utilities		<u>3,575</u>
 TOTAL		 \$369,625

\*Direct project expenses are in addition to staff support and in-kind contributions of office space, meeting room, work space, use of computer, phone, cabinets and shelving, copier, printer, postage machine, equipment, and supplies.