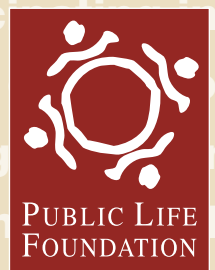




HELPING CITIZENS **make a difference**

2009 ANNUAL REPORT | 2010 PRIORITIES

... • lending a hand • serving on boards, commissions and committees • sharing ideas • speaking out • conducting research • asking questions • sharing concerns • offering a special skill to a nonprofit • moving things forward • participating in public forums and workshops • serving on ad hoc committees • seeing a need and filling it • shaping a vision • convening stakeholders • collaborating • listening and learning • engaging in civil dialogue • finding common ground • making a proposal • signing a petition • suggesting something for Owensboro-Daviess County that you saw somewhere else • writing an op-ed column • identifying best practices • presenting an inspiring speaker • raising funds for a good cause • helping to get out the vote • organizing a rally • participating in a panel discussion • speaking to a civic club • mobilizing support • improving your neighborhood • helping to get a candidate elected to office • promoting citizenship • attending public meetings • contacting officials • writing a letter to the editor • ...



Charging Ahead in Challenging Times

Bullish initiatives

The early months of 2009 were consumed by a massive effort to restore power, repair damage and manage the cleanup from a devastating ice storm. This was followed by a far-reaching recession, several plant closings and alarming unemployment.

Despite these challenges and, in some instances, amid a notable degree of public outcry, local leaders and citizen participants charged ahead with ambitious community development initiatives, capital projects, and programs in government, education, health care, social services, the arts and more.

Like any community, Owensboro-Daviess County can point to progress, shortcomings and challenges – challenges that require cultural change, additional resources, shifts in priorities, or hinge on matters beyond local control.

To instill a sense of belonging and civic spirit, to build trust between the public and its officials and institutions, and to garner broad support for bold proposals, it is more important than ever for our community to foster meaningful citizen involvement.

In 2009, the Public Life Foundation of Owensboro continued its efforts to integrate the public into the mainstream of community decisions and public policy. Our goal has been, and will continue to be, to shape a culture that is increasingly informed, engaged and empowered, civic participants who are respectful of other points of view and effective in their efforts to make a difference.

To achieve these ends, the foundation promotes a three-phased process of

information → deliberation → action



information

In 2009, the foundation (and collaborating groups) produced articles, issue briefs/dialogue guides, exercises and presentations on community and economic development, health and health care, environment, social issues, education, community appearance, governmental policies and taxation, the arts, civic engagement and more.

Articles

- Top 10 issues to track in 2009
- Redeveloping the Executive Inn property: Assessing planning and financing options
- A community vision for the Executive Inn Property
- Miller House restoration raises the bar
- McAuley Clinic expanding capacity
- Planning commission staff finds Pleasant Valley Road hospital site “questionable”
- Reflections on the hospital plan
- National civic engagement initiative update
- “We the People” group updates
- Integrating civic engagement into community decision making
- Incentive policy: Public funds for broad economic development efforts and downtown plan warrant thorough public airing
- AmericaSpeaks founder speaks to local “We the People” audience
- The RFP for the Downtown Hotel: An opportunity to demonstrate an open and transparent process
- Riverport committee can stress that it will be guided by principles
- “We the People” II: You can help shape the event
- Should we draw the line on coal-fired power plants?



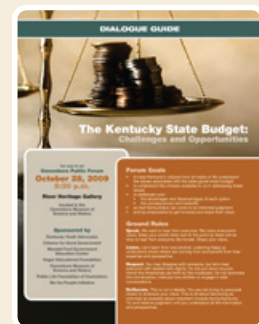
Issue Briefs/Dialogue Guides

- Financing the downtown master plan: Analyzing the options
- The Executive Inn Property: Our Community Vision
- Privatizing the Riverport (prepared by Mayor’s Advisory Committee)
- Community Spirit, Community Unity: How can we bring about a stronger sense of community and public discussions that are civil and respectful?
- Openness and Transparency (focus group exercise)
- The Kentucky State Budget: Challenges and Opportunities (prepared in conjunction with Kentucky Youth Advocates)



Reports on Forums, Workshops and Focus Groups

- The Executive Inn Property: Our Community Vision (report on workshop)
- Citizens talk about community spirit and unity (report on forum)
- A Community Openness and Transparency Report Card
- State Budget (report on forum)



Presentations

- Tax disparities in Owensboro-Daviess County
- Openness and Transparency Pledge for local officials (Citizens for Good Government)

deliberation

Downtown Plan - Insurance Tax

The foundation and the We the People organization coordinated a series of public forums connected with the downtown master “placemaking” plan; however, the foundation was unable to organize a timely independent public forum on the options for financing the downtown plan prior to the public hearings conducted by city and county governments. Most local officials supported an increase in the insurance premium tax to finance the \$80 million governmental portion of the plan.

The foundation ultimately spoke out in favor of the tax increase as an expression of support for the 650 participants in the “We the People” Town Meeting who recommended that the transformation of downtown Owensboro be one of our top community priorities.

While many citizens were critical of the tax increase, others supported city and county officials for their leadership and willingness to make unpopular decisions that they believe are in our community’s best interest.

Institutionalizing Public Dialogue and Deliberation

A citizens group was convened to brainstorm how our community can integrate public dialogue and deliberation into the decision making process.

Taxation in Owensboro-Daviess County

Several presentations and discussions with community groups to examine disparities and implications in our local tax structure.

Openness and Transparency

A focus group exercise examined how well openness and transparency characterized the decision making process on 12 major community decisions based on six criteria.

The results were reviewed in a follow-up meeting and discussion with local officials.

Community Spirit, Community Unity

A public forum and round table discussions about how we can bring about a stronger sense of community and public discussions that are productive, civil and respectful.

The Executive Inn Property: Our Community Vision

A Saturday workshop in which the public was allowed to help shape a community vision for the redevelopment of 17 acres along the riverfront (formerly the site of the Executive Inn). Participants reviewed three thematic options that emphasized public assembly and tourism, community recreation or residential and project concepts that could fall within those themes. Sample plans illustrated various ways

in which the projects could be configured on the site. The workshop featured roundtable discussions and dozens of additional suggestions by workshop participants.



The Kentucky State Budget: Challenges and Opportunities

A public forum on the financial challenges facing state government. Presentation by the Kentucky Tax and Budget Initiative (a project of Kentucky Youth Advocates). Dialogue guide prepared by a local steering committee set forth various options, advantages and disadvantages, pros and cons.

Health Care and the Faith-Based Community

A public forum to engage local churches in health care issues conducted by Nancy Jo Kemper, director of the Kentucky Council of Churches.

Other Public Dialogue

The foundation helped promote various public meetings and opportunities for civic dialogue conducted by other organizations, including:

- **Cash Creek Coal Plant:** Public hearing
- **Owensboro Medical Health System:** Series of town meetings on the proposed new hospital
- **Committee to study the privatization of the Owensboro Riverport:** Public forums and committee meetings
- **Northern Kentucky University Civic Engagement Conference:** Sponsored 20 representatives from local colleges

action

“We the People” Action Teams

Project Manager Shelly Nichols coordinated efforts to implement the recommendations that came forth from the “We the People” Town Meeting.



Citizens stepped up to ...

- promote expanded recycling (preferably curbside)
- support downtown redevelopment by serving on committees, attending hearings and participating in workshops, etc.
- assist with a campaign to register eligible youth for K-CHIP health insurance
- encourage more openness and transparency by drafting a pledge for elected officials, bringing in speakers and more
- support a community bikeways initiative
- convene a council of social service providers and educators to foster community participation in education
- participate in Junior Achievement mentoring programs
- plan a luncheon speaker's program on innovative economic development initiatives
- plan a forum on future energy options
- plan a candidate's forum
- support programs that help low-income individuals and families get on their feet through the Green River Asset Building Coalition



Community Dental Clinic

For several years, as a result of an obvious need expressed in a series of meetings with dentists, school and public health officials, the foundation has been a leading advocate for a community dental clinic to serve low-income Medicaid and uninsured patients. Through the leadership of the Green River District Health Dept., JAT Mountjoy and the generosity of many donors, the clinic opened in late August at Mayfair Square, employing four part-time dentists, a hygienist, two dental assistants and an office manager. In its first four months, the clinic served more than 650 patients and expects to serve more children as mandatory dental screening for children in K-2nd grade becomes a school policy in August 2010.



The Hager family's Progeny Fund and the Goodfellows Club, a charity established by the Hager family 94 years ago, are among the major contributors.

Advocates for Responsible OMHS Development (AROD)

During the last months of 2009, the foundation provided administrative assistance to a group of citizens who were asking questions and sharing concerns about the OMHS plan to build a new hospital.

AROD's initiative was a demonstration of responsible citizen action. The group had nothing to gain personally from any hospital plan and they had the best of intentions. They chose to be involved in order to better understand the proposal and to ensure that the public's interest was being served. They conducted their affairs in a civil manner. AROD's concerns were augmented by the results of a SurveyUSA poll that indicated two to one public opposition to moving the hospital.

Kentucky Commission on Philanthropy

In 2009, the foundation was invited to help organize a new statewide coalition of philanthropic organizations to foster information sharing, collaboration and impact.

In October, the first annual philanthropy summit occurred in Frankfort. A delegation from the foundation attended. The foundation and the Progeny Fund were among the sponsors. The special focus of the conference: to explore how foundations can leverage their dollars to improve early childhood education and children's health.

Key Community Challenges & Opportunities for 2010

Jobs/Economic Development

- Jobs! Jobs! Jobs!
 - ♦ Jobs for the short term through retraining and retooling
 - ♦ Jobs for the long-term by dramatically improving the education of our workforce and “growing our own” jobs for the 21st Century
- Aggressively market local facilities and programs for entrepreneurs
- Develop and support niche opportunities in biotechnology, research, distribution, transportation and other areas

Health & Health Care

- Adopt the most responsible plan for a new/expanded hospital
- Prepare for another potential wave of H1N1
- Reverse childhood obesity trends
- Reduce child abuse and neglect
- Reduce smoking, particularly by pregnant women
- Attract primary care physicians

Local Government

- Prevent/prepare for the impact of state government shortfalls:
 - ♦ unfunded mandates
 - ♦ reduced state reimbursements for inmates at the county detention center
 - ♦ underfunded employee pension program
 - ♦ delays or cancellation of authorized transportation projects
- Act on the recommendations of the citizens committee that examined the feasibility of privatizing the riverport
- Change the tax structure that encourages business and residential projects to be built in the county rather than the city
- Promote more city-county cooperation, partnerships and consolidation of departments when warranted

Downtown

- Continue progress on downtown “placemaking” plan
- Develop a community-based plan for the 17 acre Executive Inn property
- Attract anchor office projects to downtown
- Assemble downtown land to lure private investment
- Attract commercial homebuilders and mixed-income housing to downtown and the downtown fringe
- Relocate the state office workers, Judicial Center and Social Security offices to the downtown

Education

- Attract and retain the best possible classroom teachers
- Ensure high quality early childhood education
- Improve our high school graduation rate

- Reduce the number of high school graduates who need remedial work to be admitted to postsecondary institutions
- Adjust to state budget cuts
- Address the disparities in city-county school taxes

Transportation

- Reroute or slow truck and thru-traffic in downtown
- Properly maintain the Cary Bridge
- Complete the east corridor connection
- Sustain and expand commercial flights
- Promote property near airport for air cargo/maintenance
- Explore collaboration with river, rail, and road commerce
- Begin implementation of bikeways plan

Environment

- Develop short-term/long-term regional energy plan. Consider phasing out polluting plants while diversifying into clean and sustainable alternatives.
- Enforce environmental regulations
- Track special concerns, e.g.: mercury emissions, waste from large scale chicken and hog farms, safety of coal slurry ponds, etc.
- Expand recycling

Social Issues

- Assist struggling low-income families: earned income tax credit, financial literacy, job counseling, parenting, etc.
- Expand best practices in the fight against substance abuse
- Link positive role models and mentors with troubled youth

Aesthetic Appeal/Quality Of Life

- Incrementally enhance the new community entrance from the Natcher Bridge
- Toughen ordinances to eliminate eyesores
- Beautify medians and boulevards
- Promote high architectural standards
- Restrict billboards and overwhelming commercial signs
- Incrementally bury overhead utilities
- Position arts organizations for sustainable funding

Community Unity & Spirit

- Create opportunities for meaningful public participation in major decisions
- Insist on openness and transparency in government, public agencies and community institutions
- Establish ground rules to foster civility in public dialogue
- Celebrate community successes, attributes and volunteerism
- Instill community pride and create a greater sense of community
- Facilitate and celebrate philanthropy

About the Foundation

Founders: John and Marjorie Hager (1996)

Mission: The Public Life Foundation facilitates broad and meaningful citizen participation in community decisions and public policy.

Values: We value the voice and concerns of all, particularly those who are poor and marginalized. We attempt to empower citizens from all walks of life through an open, just and democratic process. We promote stewardship, volunteerism and a community that solves problems by overcoming divisions between rich and poor, urban and rural, liberal and conservative, or any division based on race, power, or wealth.

Process: The foundation embraces a process that involves three important tasks: gathering information, public deliberation, and action. The foundation's approach is collaborative, not confrontational. We seek to bring people together through dialogue, deliberation, and civil debate. The foundation is open to advocacy (as a form of action), but that advocacy should be the end result of information gathering and open deliberation.

Foundation Endowment: \$7.2 million (\$6.4 ave. value 2009)

Operating Budget: \$320,000 (2009)

Legal Status: Private, nonprofit 501(c)3 operating foundation

Board of Directors

Denny Alford*	Marjorie Hager
Susie Alford	Stewart Hager, Ph.D.
Rodney Berry	Yolla Hager*
Dave Boeyink, Ph.D.	Bill Speciale
Bruce Hager	Sally Wood
Lia Hager*	

*ex-officio

Staff

Rodney Berry, President
Kathy Strobel, Office Manager/Board Secretary
Shelly Nichols, Director, We the People Initiative
Sally Wood, Progeny Fund Grants Administrator

Office Space/In-Kind Support For:

Jean Davis O'Neal, Goodfellows Club Annual "Roll Call" Campaign
Sue Trautwein, Assistant to Mr. Hager

Professional Advisors

Public Life Advocate Editorial Board:

Dave Boeyink, Ph.D.
Indiana University School of Journalism
Former Editorial Page Editor, *Messenger-Inquirer*

Fran Ellers
Former *Courier-Journal* reporter

John Hager
Former Editor and Publisher, *Messenger-Inquirer*

Ed Staats
Former Bureau Chief, Associated Press, Kentucky Bureau

