

The official publication of the Public Life Foundation of Owensboro

PUBLIC LIFE

June 2004 – Volume 1, Issue 1
Owensboro, Kentucky

Advocate

TOP CHALLENGES TEN

FACING OWENSBORO
& DAVIESS COUNTY

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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.

PUBLIC LIFE *Advocate*

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ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Public Life Foundation of Owensboro will convene periodically citizens from all walks of life to identify public concerns and examine the impact of the *Public Life Advocate*. We welcome the participation of all on this Advisory Council. If you are interested in serving, please contact us.

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Letters to the editor are limited to 200 words. The *Public Life Advocate* reserves the right to edit for clarity and brevity, and to withhold publication based on editorial judgment and relevance. Submitted letters become the property of the Public Life Foundation of Owensboro.

Send letters to the editor to letters@plfo.org.

RANKING PROBLEMS,
IDENTIFYING OPPORTUNITIES:

TOP
CHALLENGES
TEN
FACING OWENSBORO
& DAVIESS COUNTY
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Challenging Times. To launch our publication, we present an overview of pressing community concerns and pose a series of strategic questions. We welcome your impressions and your own ranking.

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EDITOR'S NOTES

Arming Citizens with Information



by Rodney Berry

Like the short farmer who can't find his way out of the corn, we sometimes feel overwhelmed by the information that smother us: around-the-clock news, talk shows, columns, editorials, special interest propaganda, polls, advertising, and email. How do we make sense of it all? What path do we follow? Who do we believe?

...help us build a network of concerned citizens who are willing to transcend their private concerns and invest in the greater good and their role in it: their public life.

Indeed, too much information can leave us without a sense of direction, particularly when we don't trust its reliability. But it takes information to get our attention about a public issue. It might be disturbing data that shocks us, a public policy that infuriates us, or a tragic impact on a family that touches us. Information is the fuel that sparks our decision to get involved.

We need information presented clearly and objectively. We need to trust in the integrity of information, confident that it is not tainted by public relations spin or pressure from advertisers. Armed with reliable information, we are better prepared to deliberate, come to responsible judgment, and lead or join forces with others to make a difference.

Through our new publication, the *Public Life Advocate*, we hope to help you discover how you can make a difference, by providing you with information you can trust, in a form you can understand.

We hope to lift the level of civic dialogue on pressing issues facing our community. We will examine education, health care, taxation, government structure, economic development, and other challenges that are pivotal to the future of Owensboro-Daviess County.

Some topics warrant in-depth treatment; others will be framed in a more concise, outline form. We will publish monthly, but special bulletins will be necessary from time to time to be responsive to issues and pending decisions.

Readers are encouraged to respond, to challenge our views or information, to offer alternative strategies, and to engage in dialogue with others who share a common interest.

We welcome the participation of all, and ask that you help us build a network of concerned citizens who are willing to transcend their private concerns and invest in the greater good and their role in it: their public life. ■



ABOUT THE PUBLICATION

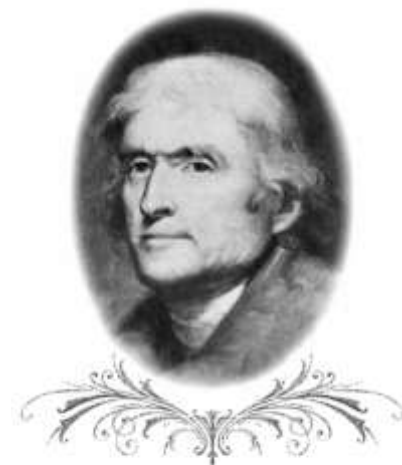
The *Public Life Advocate*, published monthly, is committed to be a trusted resource of information and analysis of public concerns and community issues. The *Advocate* is a community-driven publication, grounded in a commitment to be "of the people, by the people, and for the people."

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



**RANKING PROBLEMS,
IDENTIFYING OPPORTUNITIES:**

TOP CHALLENGES TEN

**FACING OWENSBORO
& DAVIESS COUNTY**

by Rodney Berry

Top Ten Challenges Facing Owensboro & Daviess County

The 2004 primary election campaign for Owensboro mayor and city commission elevated the level of dialogue concerning public issues facing Owensboro-Daviess County. An even closer, more-intensive examination of community problems and possibilities likely will take place during the fall campaigns.

Candidates revealed their priorities. The Messenger-Inquirer regularly examines public issues in its columns and editorials. The Greater Owensboro Chamber of Commerce recently declared its legislative wish list. And labor organizations, environmental groups, neighborhood alliances, and other groups have positions on their key issues.

Now, to complement these views, the *Public Life Advocate* presents its top ten challenges facing Owensboro-Daviess County as an impetus for more extensive community dialogue. This dialogue should value the voice of all; openly examine options; facilitate creative and collaborative problem solving; and mobilize the collective skills, energy, and capacity of our citizenry.

Readers may argue that other issues, problems, or opportunities should be higher community priorities. We welcome all responses that endorse or challenge our rankings.

To participate in this e-dialogue, point your Web browser to www.plfo.org or send an email to us at letters@plfo.org

What do you identify as the most pressing issues facing Owensboro-Daviess County? What challenges are pivotal to our development, our quality of life, our sense of community? We offer our top ten, in reverse order:

10. Bolster Political Influence

Owensboro-Daviess County has not benefited from elected officials in key positions of leadership since Wendell Ford served as Governor and U.S. Senator and Don Blandford was Kentucky Speaker of the House. Notwithstanding the appointments of former state representatives Brian Crall and Mark Treesh to important administrative positions in the Fletcher administration, we clearly need more clout in Frankfort and Washington.

Government funding is not a panacea for community progress. But without it, vital projects such as the Natcher Bridge and the U.S. Highway 60 extension, Owensboro Community and Technical College, or the airport runway extensions and control tower most likely would not have come about.

Senator Mitch McConnell has been instrumental in procuring funds for our riverfront improvements. Governor Ernie

Fletcher supports the proposed Advanced Technology Center. But we need local elected officials with leveraging influence if Owensboro-Daviess County is to bring home more of the net out-flow of \$53 million in local tax revenues that goes to Frankfort annually.

STRATEGIC QUESTIONS:

- How can we help local elected officials gain leadership positions in Frankfort?
- What can be done to strengthen the western Kentucky coalition and legislative caucus?
- Should we retain public affairs specialists to cultivate relationships and promote the best interest of Owensboro-Daviess County in Frankfort and Washington?

9. Redevelop Our Urban Area

The appeal of a city is directly related to its distinctiveness. And the distinctiveness of a city is not conveyed in its homogenized suburban commercial franchise clusters and cul-de-sac subdivisions. We need more places that are uniquely Owensboro.

Why continue to build into prime agricultural land... when underdeveloped properties exist where infrastructure already exists? In the recent decade, our community has not grown; we've just spread out.

Owensboro's government housing initiatives and the Habitat for Humanity program increase home ownership and expand affordable housing options for many low-income residents. In recent years, we have seen several new bank buildings, a new police headquarters, renovation of the former A & P building, several church expan-



Utilizing resources. Over the years, Owensboro has continued to expand into prime agricultural land. But investments in areas that are infrastructure-ready will revitalize the urban areas of our city and give distinction to our community.

sions, new Brescia University dormitories, and new housing along the riverfront west of downtown.

These are notable exceptions, but major private developments have not been attracted to our older residential neighborhoods and commercial areas for some time.

For our urban area to be trendy, we must secure residential investments that appeal to young singles, couples without children, and empty nesters – for upscale as well as low- and moderate-income people. Complementary commercial developments will follow, but like the housing developments, they may require an infusion of support for land acquisition, parking, green space, or loan subsidies by the public sector or a quasi-public development corporation in order to attract private investment.

We need underused properties developed; we need renovations, restorations, and creative adaptive reuse of warehouses and industrial properties. Distinctive projects such as these would enhance character and vitality in our urban areas.

The justification is obvious: Why continue to build into prime agricultural land (that requires an expansion of streets, sewers, drainage systems, water lines, natural gas pipelines, electric power, fire stations, police beats, sanitation routes, sidewalks, streetlights, parks, and schools), when underdeveloped properties exist where such infrastructure already exists? In the recent decade, our community has not grown; we've just spread out.

STRATEGIC QUESTIONS:

- What hurdles must we overcome to attract private investment for redevelopment:

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Preventing pollution problems. Should we draw the line on coal-burning power plants in this area?

Bush administration has “misrepresented scientific knowledge and misled the public about the implications of its policies.”

STRATEGIC QUESTIONS:

- Are the construction and operating jobs created through power plants worth the environmental tradeoff?
- Environmental advocates are often labeled as fanatics, while business interests and many government officials are viewed as indifferent on environmental issues. What needs to be done to engage all the stakeholders and the public in respectful and productive dialogue?
- What environmental standards do we want to set for our community, and are we prepared to absorb the cost?

7. Examine Government Restructuring

Finding ways to enhance efficiency in the management of government services is always preferred over increases in taxes and fees. We should always learn from the “best practices” of other city and county governments. Efficiency is not the only benchmark of progress, of course. Effectiveness, expanded services, and a system that is more user-friendly are also worthy goals of local governmental administration – even when there is no cost savings.

And then there is the issue of fairness: an equitable sharing of the financial burden of government.

Case in point: A city resident receives the same services – garbage pick-up, police and fire protection, sidewalks, parks, etc. – as her next door neighbor, but because the neighbor works just outside the city limit line, he pays significantly less.

Opposite case in point: A county resident receives limited services where he lives, the sheriff and fire department’s response time is slower, but because he works in the city, his taxes are significantly higher than those who work in the county.

These examples point to a local tax structure that is fraught with unfairness.

There are three options to improve efficiency, effectiveness, and fairness in local government: 1.) collaborate on a higher level; 2.) combine departments when it makes sense; and 3.) combine governments.

There have been sporadic, laudable efforts and suggestions to address these issues: a city-county parks master plan; a

land acquisition, public safety, a weak market?

- Should a public/quasi-public authority acquire underdeveloped properties and solicit proposals from developers and renovators?
- What kind of redevelopment will give the most distinction to our community – riverfront development, conversion of industrial properties and warehouses to loft apartments, townhouse and commercial developments?

8. Embrace Higher Environmental Standards

Due to increased environmental regulation, the Ohio River is less polluted than it has been in 50 years. Unfortunately, during periods of high water, Owensboro’s combined storm and sewage system continues to dump raw sewage into the river. Consequently, Owensboro residents are fortunate that their drinking water is extracted from underground aquifers rather than the river.

However, there is growing concern over groundwater pollution from industrial wastes, agricultural fertilizers and pesticides, and the proliferation of large-scale hog and chicken production facilities in Daviess and surrounding counties. The safety of food produced from these operations is also increasingly and legitimately questioned by environmental groups.

Throughout our region, riparian zones (natural growth that parallels streams and

ditches) have been stripped clean to expedite drainage. Consequently, these waterways take in even more agricultural chemicals and can no longer sustain the natural ecosystem. Not until trained volunteers began taking samples a few years ago could the condition of the tributaries in the Green River system be documented.

Since the installation of scrubbers at its power plant in 1995, OMU reports that sulfur dioxide emissions have been reduced by 90 percent. But what will be the quality of our air if permits are issued for the 22 proposed coal-burning power plants in Kentucky, including one on the Green River at the Henderson-Daviess County line?

Other environmental concerns range from often abandoned and leaking gas station tanks and septic tanks, to the capacity of our landfills, illegal dumping, open burning, and the lack of curbside recycling. Some claim that one-third of the mussel population and one-half of the private water wells in our area are threatened.

Business officials often perceive environmental regulations as extreme, administratively cumbersome, and costly. And those added costs are passed along to the consumer.

Meanwhile, state environmental officials are unable to enforce regulations already in place, and budget cuts will reduce the capacity even further. And at the federal level, the current administration is criticized routinely for its environmental policies. Just two months ago, the Union of Concerned Scientists (60 influential scientists, including 20 Nobel Laureates) reported that the

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central 911 dispatch center; countywide police and fire protection; an occupational tax proposal for those who work in the county.

While these initiatives are explored, while city and county governments collaborate, there is no downside to an objective assessment of the advantages/disadvantages, costs, and consequences of each of the three options. If we are to consider merger again, we need civil discourse with citizens from all walks of life in all sections of the county around common goals of efficiency, effectiveness, and fairness in government: a community-building experience, not a repeat of the divisive experience of the past.

STRATEGIC QUESTIONS:

- Are citizens ready to begin this discussion again?
- Who should lead an effort to objectively prepare information on options for city-county government management – including unification?
- How can we transcend provincialism toward an emphasis on the greater good?

6. Heal Divisiveness

Owensboro-Daviess County is not unique in being subject to tensions among community groups, but episodes are troubling nonetheless.

Urban-rural tensions were pointed to in a Neal Pierce study commissioned by the *Messenger-Inquirer* more than ten years ago. These tensions were amplified in the previous governmental merger debate and most recently in a proposal for a modest ordinance to regulate the location of large-scale poultry production facilities.

Police-African American tensions reached a tipping point in 2001 following the fatal shooting of an African-American youth and the subsequent internal investigation some perceived as perfunctory. This attracted a KKK squad from parts unknown, whose rally was countered by an unprecedented demonstration of community unity.

Union-management tensions have been spasmodic but at times intense. Most recently, union organization efforts at Owensboro Medical Health System reflect employee discontent with management at our largest employer. Two medical staff votes of no-confidence in the former president/CEO underscore challenges the new CEO will inherit at the hospital.

The increasing presence of Latinos in our community, and their willingness to endure



Come Together. Tensions between urban and rural citizens, racial and ethnic groups, union and management, the powerful and the alienated undermine our sense of community.

substandard housing conditions, has generated compassionate responses from churches and service groups. Others, particularly those who feel threatened by a potential decrease in nearby property values, feel alternate locations would be more appropriate for Latino communities.

Citizens of Owensboro - Daviess County can readily observe the changing demographics of our community. Some join in celebrations of diversity through the Multi-Cultural Festival, Cinco de Mayo event, and RiverPark Center presentations tailored for diverse audiences.

The 1999 Doble Report documented a growing resentment over a perceived small group of influential people who make key decisions for the community, behind the scenes, with little or no meaningful public input. Important steps have been taken subsequently to engage citizens in substantive dialogue on an array of issues, but a chasm of distrust still divides many citizens from those in positions of leadership and power. Whether the proposal is for a boost in the occupational tax or a new Wal-Mart, many citizens complain that they do not have ample time to gather information and organize before decisions are made. We need institutions that are willing to embrace openness, transparency, and public dialogue beyond the legal requirements of open meetings and public hearings.

STRATEGIC QUESTIONS:

- What more can be done to instill a stronger sense of acceptance of other races and cultures into community life?
- Should local farmers and other businesses hire foreign workers, even though they suspect they reside here illegally?
- What is the legal and moral obligation of our community to provide housing for all our residents?
- How can we convince more leaders and community institutions to be open and transparent with the public?
- How can public hearings be more meaningful and productive?

5. Strengthen Our Economic Base

Public opinion studies, focus groups, and campaign platforms point to economic development and the need to attract higher paying jobs as a clear community priority.

Some data and trends are troubling: even with two incomes, many families have much less buying power than in the past; even with a full-time worker, many families live in poverty.

There are, however, positive signs in the economy: increases in homebuilding, higher retail profits, and construction of new banks

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all support the notion that Owensboro is a healthy market.

Despite these mixed signals, given our disadvantages (lack of interstate highway access, ample air connections, or a large university to supply workforce needs) our community will not create, retain, or attract jobs without an aggressive economic development program.

Multiple strategies must be used on a parallel track, all spokes in a wheel of progress. But an effective program must be adequately funded and feature enticing, prudent incentives. It must make available a distinctive, educated workforce. It must maximize niche opportunities and energize existing business with fuel for expansion.

And finally, an effective economic development program must not only focus on the business climate, but also the “people” climate. For many young entrepreneurs and highly educated workers in the information-knowledge economy, the appeal of a community trumps the job offer in choosing where to live. Owensboro-Daviess County cannot rely on its wholesome reputation; it’s not good enough to be a “nice place to raise a family.” To be competitive, we must enhance the contemporary livability of our community through arts and entertainment, appealing shopping destinations, bustling civic space, ample parks and pathways, and other amenities.

STRATEGIC QUESTIONS:

- Are we investing the resources necessary for a comprehensive, effective economic development program?
- Does our program need to be retooled to focus adequately on the “people climate” as well as the “business climate?”
- Should incentives be based on entry-level wages?
- Should we, as have some communities, adopt a living wage ordinance?
- Should we concentrate efforts in a few key areas (i.e., spin-offs of Large Scale Biology in biotechnology)?

4. Reach All with an Exceptional Education

“A high quality of life and economic success for all Kentuckians depends overwhelmingly on the quality of the education they receive.”

— Partners for Kentucky’s Future

The evidence is clear: communities that attract employers with the highest paying jobs, where more new businesses take root and blossom, are places where there are more educated people. We are not a well-educated people.

In Owensboro-Daviess County, only 17 percent of our adult population has a college degree – less than the state average (and Kentucky ranks near the bottom of all states).

Thirty-eight percent of our adults function at the two lowest levels of literacy. A quarter of our high school freshmen will not graduate.

Yet we have much to celebrate: award-winning schools; students who excel and win scholarships; innovative workforce training, fine arts, foreign language, and student physical education programs; a model Head Start program.

Across Kentucky and in our community, considerable progress has occurred since the implementation of school reform a decade ago. Progress could be undermined, however, with state education budget cuts.

A high quality education is fundamental to our community’s future and the economic well being of our citizenry. But as we acknowledge successes, we must also reach the struggling student, those who are not prepared for school and lag behind, those with learning disabilities, and those who endure pressures from impoverished, abusive, or neglectful home environments. We must instill a greater sense of possibilities for all students, lift our graduation rate, and instill a higher value of learning into the very fabric of community life.

STRATEGIC QUESTIONS:

- What can be done to ensure continued progress in education despite the imminent funding cuts?
- How can we further distinguish ourselves from other communities in education?
- How can we instill a higher value of education and lifelong learning into homes and neighborhoods, workplaces, churches, and other organizations?

3. Reverse Substance Abuse Trends

Alcohol and drug abuse – particularly the proliferation of methamphetamine use – is the culprit for most of the crime and social disruption in our community. Prosecutors estimate that 85 percent of crime is related to substance abuse. Most cases of child or spouse abuse are rooted in alcoholism. The epidemic is with us, and we must find a

more effective way to address it.

It’s certainly not that nothing has been done. Many agencies assiduously focus on ways to tackle prevention, intervention, and treatment. New programs through the courts, health care organizations, social service agencies, churches, private counseling firms and others address addiction problems.

There is general agreement of the need for a juvenile facility and safe haven (as an alternative to jail). But there is disagreement among substance abuse professionals regarding other gaps in services. Most stress the need to fund existing agencies at a higher level so services can be expanded; others feel we need new facilities and programs.

Those who seek escape through drugs, and those who chase the quick bucks through manufacturing or merchandising, must discover more promising possibilities for their lives through treatment, counseling, education, and mentoring.

STRATEGIC QUESTIONS:

- Some citizens feel that too much is already being done for alcoholics and drug abusers. In their judgment, abusers created their own circumstance and must accept responsibility for change. Should this be our community response?
- Do we need new facilities and programs for substance abuse, or should we increase funding of existing agencies so they can expand services?
- What can be done to ensure effective collaboration among all service providers?

2. Improve Access to Health Care

The recently released Green River District Health Report Card revealed that the percentage of adults in our region who have no health insurance nearly doubled in one year – from 12 percent to more than 21 percent.

Some claim that this is by choice – young people risking that they will stay healthy. Others conclude that as more employers withdraw health insurance benefits or require greater employee participation, many people have no choice but to take their chances.

When that happens, of course, the emergency room becomes the primary care center, or those who are ill postpone treatment until conditions are serious. Others, who are insured, end up paying the bill through higher costs and insurance premiums. Meanwhile, health care costs are the leading cause of bankruptcy. (Chapter 7 personal bankruptcy filings in the Owensboro district

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Family bonds. Good parenting skills and a stable environment can help ensure that children will grow up to be responsible, successful individuals.

increased from 1,572 in 1999 to 2,447 in 2003.)

Several key local initiatives offer promise in providing better care for the uninsured and underinsured of our community. The school nurse program (supported by OMHS and the health department) provides a neighborhood resource for health care, improving the immunization rate, preventative care, and education. The McAuley Clinic (supported by OMHS, county government, and the health department), Free Clinic (supported by volunteer physicians and nurses), and a proposed primary care clinic in the new Daviess County Health Center offer alternatives to expensive emergency room care. The proposed Daviess County Community Access Program (DC-CAP) will provide a coordinated system of care for the uninsured through participating physicians and pharmacies.

A system of care and more accessible primary care should reduce the non-emergency charity care at the OMHS emergency department, improve preventative care and patient education, thereby reducing hospital utilization, a leading factor used by insurance companies to justify high premiums in Daviess County.

Of course, these initiatives to improve access to health care must be balanced by assiduous efforts to keep more people healthy in the first place. Healthy Horizons, the Lifestyle Summit, and the Fit for Life

program reflect innovative community efforts to improve nutrition, reduce smoking, and increase physical activity. Citizens are demanding protection from second-hand smoke; parents are insisting on healthier snacks in school vending machines; and advocates are pushing for more swimming, exercise, soccer, and ice skating facilities. While financially intimidating, the collective impact of these investments is sure to improve community health, fitness, morale, and productivity.

STRATEGIC QUESTIONS:

- Does our community need yet a third clinic for the uninsured? Should one or more clinics be combined?
- Why does our community have fewer primary care physicians per capita than nearly every other major city in Kentucky?
- Should our hospital emphasize community health over specialty care?
- Will the public support a significant shift of funds from treatment to education and prevention?

1. Nurture of Youth

Most of our local social problems are rooted in home environments in which children are victims. Children need stability and nurturing, and when that does not occur, when there is abuse or neglect, deeply rooted physical, mental, and emotional scars often result in disruptive behavior, poor school performance, and a recurring cycle of generational poverty and crime.

Some parenting is indeed criminal, when children are exposed to violence, physical, sexual, drug, or alcohol abuse. A failure to pay child support saddles many single parents with debts and an unfair burden of care. More than one in three births occur outside of wedlock and less than half of obligated child support payments are collected locally.

Most single parents are caring and responsible, but more than 40 percent live in poverty, and there are more than 2,400 households in Daviess County with women alone parenting children under 18 years of age.

In many instances, poor parenting skills (rather than criminal intent) are to blame. Tragically, many parents simply don't know better. When a child is not read to, when they are not taught their colors or toilet trained at an early age, when they enter school with limited life experiences, they are behind from the start and may never catch up.

Most foster care parents offer a caring safe haven, but when children are shuffled from one home to another, one school to another, they do not have opportunities to bond and trust and develop self-confidence. Yet some children rise above their circumstances, even children from single parent families and those from poor families who reside in public housing projects.

To reverse the cycle of poverty, to reduce crime and abusive behaviors, we must improve family life for children. We must encourage parents to share the burden and joy of child rearing, to be responsible and learn parenting skills, seek help, and provide a stable, nurturing environment for their children.

STRATEGIC QUESTIONS:

- Should we provide more support for single parents to help them continue their education or job training?
- Will intensified enforcement improve the child support collection rate?
- What more can be done to encourage parental responsibility?

WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE TOP CHALLENGE FACING OUR COMMUNITY:

10. Bolster Political Influence
9. Redevelop Our Urban Area
8. Embrace Higher Environmental Standards
7. Examine Government Restructuring
6. Heal Divisiveness
5. Strengthen Our Economic Base
4. Reach All with an Exceptional Educational
3. Reverse Substance Abuse Trends
2. Improve Access to Health Care
1. Nurture Our Youth


...or do you feel other priorities are more important?

Share your views with us by visiting our website at www.plfo.org or send an email to letters@plfo.org.

Substance Abuse :

Seeking common ground toward a community strategy

by Thomas E. Gaston



The debate over using money from the hospital reorganization to prevent and treat substance abuse has raised questions about the size of Daviess County's problem, what's being done about it, and what else might help.

The substance abuse problem here is substantial. Police estimate that 85 percent of arrests in Owensboro are related, directly or indirectly, to abuse of drugs or alcohol. Seventy percent of prisoners in county jail are there because of drug-related infractions or crimes committed for money to support addictions. Homeless shelters, which serve a high percentage of alcoholics and other addicts, are overfilled and turning away men seeking help.

Most local experts believe the problem is growing. That's because of methamphetamine, or meth, a cheap and highly addictive drug which has become epidemic in Western Kentucky, according to local police and mental health providers. Treating meth addicts takes longer than treatment for other addictions, and meth addiction, alone or in combination with other dependencies, now accounts for "a good 80-90 percent" of addicted people in the Daviess County Detention Center, according to Jailer David Osborne.

This community has resources to build on, but significant gaps remain. Addiction services are provided by several local agencies, including Owensboro Medical Health System (OMHS), River Valley Behavioral Health (the community mental health center), the Boulware Mission and Pitino Center (homeless shelters), and Owensboro Area Shelter and Information Services (OASIS, a spouse abuse shelter). But Owensboro still has a shortage of space for the long-term, intensive treatment which some addicts need. It also lacks enough halfway housing for addicts as well as a safe place for intoxicated people to sober up as an alternative to jail.

Community leaders and the public lack the information to make important decisions about filling the gaps. Perceived turf battles and poor communications among advocates and leaders of local substance abuse agencies have hindered efforts to close those gaps; so has the lack of hard data to document the scope of the problem and effective solutions. At the same time, some efforts to serve more addicts are moving forward.

How big a problem?

Because addiction can lead to life on the street, one way to assess the problem is to take stock of homelessness. On any given night, about 230 people will find housing in Owensboro's shelters and halfway or transitional houses.

But many more need help. For example:

The Boulware Mission has turned away more than 1,200 people in the last three years, said center director Rosemary Lawson. And that's after admitting an average of 36 to 45 men per night, many more than the 26 the center can comfortably house.

OASIS has seen an increase in residents who are alcoholics or addicts. That percentage has risen from about 30 percent to 50 percent in recent years, according to Executive Director Rebecca "Becky" Hagan.

There isn't enough halfway housing to meet the need; qualifying parolees, for instance, wait from 30 days to six months for it.

In addition, those who provide treatment for substance abuse say that case loads are growing, and that the incursion of meth addiction here presents unprecedented challenges.

Among those providing outpatient treatment for addicts are OMHS, River Valley, and private mental health professionals. OMHS also provides inpatient detoxification in a program that generally serves about four people on any given day.

"Our case load never goes down. Year by year it always goes up," Ronsonlyn Clark said of the outpatient treatment program she oversees at River Valley.

Local participation in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) has also risen steadily – by about 60 percent in the last 15 years, according to AA sources, with a particular increase in the number of 14-16-year-olds seeking help.

Law-enforcement officials and treatment professionals alike point out that addiction problems span the community, affecting every socioeconomic group. As former sheriff's Det. Sgt. James Acquisto put it, "These people are not gutter bums."

"Most of them are good people who made bad decisions. And they come from all walks of life. Most people would be shocked to learn that they have some among their acquaintances. This problem affects every citizen of Daviess County."

A new wrinkle

In general, Owensboro's treatment efforts have been aimed at alcoholics, who still comprise the majority of addicts, as well as people addicted to illegal drugs. But

meth addicts require more intensive services and progress more slowly.

"It changes so much of the brain chemistry that it takes a very long time (six months to a year) for (addicts) to settle down and grasp the concept of treatment," said Clark. A meth addict "is not like the kind of client we've seen coming into treatment for the last 50 years."

That's partly because one use of meth can create addiction in a susceptible person, says Dr. David Lippman, an Owensboro internist. "It activates the dopamine system (or the reward system) in the brain."

Meth has also become popular because it's so easy to acquire, law enforcement officials say. Acquisto worked narcotics for the Daviess County Sheriff's Department until recently, when he left for a job with state government.

"A new recipe arrived here about six years ago (that) makes meth inexpensive, especially here," Acquisto said. "It uses anhydrous ammonia, which is plentiful around here, and Sudafed cold medicine and lithium batteries that are also easy to get."

Added Lt. David Thompson, community affairs officer of the Owensboro Police Department's Criminal Investigation Division, "A person can take \$100 to \$110 worth of materials and cook up \$900 to \$1,000 worth of dope, but the stuff is so addictive that they don't usually sell it. They end up consuming it themselves."

Lawson, of the Boulware Center, said she recognizes that meth is unmatched in the speed with which it destroys people.

Still, she emphasized that the actual numbers of lives destroyed by meth and other street drugs do not compare with those wrecked by alcohol. Estimates are that 75 percent of Americans drink and that 10 percent of those will eventually develop a drinking problem.

"Alcohol is by far the worst," she says. It just takes years longer.

It's also more common today for alcohol addiction to be accompanied by addictions to other drugs, treatment professionals say. Multiple addictions have become so common, said Hagan of OASIS, that the center routinely sends clients to the hospital for drug tests if they question whether the client is owning up to the extent of her addiction.

Where are the gaps?

One of the greatest challenges in treating the most serious substance abusers is providing the long-term residential support needed to see them through inevitable setbacks – a challenge that has grown as the number of meth addicts has risen.

While homeless shelters have



On the rise: Alcoholics still make up the majority of local addicts; local participation in Alcoholics Anonymous has risen 60% over the past 15 years.

addressed this challenge for some addicts, they don't have enough space for everyone, and there are no long-term residential treatment facilities for many of the addicts the shelters don't serve – the non-poor who are not homeless and addicted teen-agers, whose ranks are increasing.

Support for long-term treatment also requires halfway housing for addicts who have been released from a hospital or prison – a particularly vulnerable time when they are most likely to relapse.

However one of the community's two halfway houses for men, New Horizons, serves only about a third of those needing service. Lighthouse Ministries, which serves only people who have been in trouble with the law, is consistently filled beyond its capacity. And since the closing of the short-lived Jennifer House, halfway housing for single women not at risk of domestic violence (who have an option in OASIS) is virtually nonexistent.

There are also short-term needs. The OMHS emergency room will accept patients whose condition is serious from alcohol or drugs, but for others, there is no place except jail to sober up safely. And police and some treatment providers say that jail isn't the best place for them.

Why haven't we filled the gaps?

There are various reasons why Owensboro still has gaps in these areas, including a lack of hard data that documents the need and the failure of advocates and treatment agencies to reach consensus on the most efficient ways to fill them.

Lack of hard data. Estimates in this article about the extent of the problem are just that – estimates. The data collected by law enforcement officials and treatment providers, while sufficient for their purposes, is not compiled in ways useful to those considering public policy options.

Thus it's difficult to demonstrate to elected officials and the public that

Substance Abuse

there's a need to spend money on the problem – a difficulty which has been in evidence during the debate over spending hospital reorganization money on substance abuse. Both publicly and privately, some key officials admit they are confused by conflicting accounts and recommendations and by the sheer enormity of the problem.

This may be complicated by a general lack of awareness of the causes of substance abuse and addiction and the effectiveness of treatment.

National studies, including studies funded by the federal government, have repeatedly shown that substance abuse treatment has had lasting benefits for addicts. Studies have also shown benefits for the community through a decrease in criminal activity and increase in employment and income.

However in March, Mayor Waymond Morris declared, "The federal government has spent billions pouring vast sums of money into treatment programs without success."

The only solution, he said, is to dry up the demand -- and that means prevention education.

In a recent interview, he reiterated that point. He strongly supports money for prevention, but remains skeptical about using public money for treatment programs.

In addition, there is still a strong sense in some circles that those who abuse alcohol and drugs need to find their own way out of problems they created for themselves. To many, alcoholism is still not accepted as a disease, and addiction is still seen as something that can be overcome with willpower.

Lack of consensus. Over the years, various agencies and programs have stepped forward to meet the growing needs of addicts, at times with no government funding. This has resulted in a cadre of leaders in the field who have developed strong programs in which they are deeply invested.

At the same time, there has not always been coordination among those programs to address overall community needs.

Two years ago, a nucleus of activists including some prominent citizens whose families were grappling with substance abuse formed Community Solutions for Substance Abuse.

Community Solutions gathered representatives from throughout the community and began an effort to identify unmet needs. The coalition's overall goals were to increase public awareness of substance

abuse and decrease the problem in the Owensboro-Daviess County area.

Community Solutions convinced the city and county governments to fund its efforts with \$100,000; it finished its preliminary work in late January, just as word got out that local governments would be dispersing \$7.8 million from the hospital reorganization.

Community Solutions quickly developed a proposal to spend \$2.8 million of the available funds to fill the major gaps it had identified, including the need for a long-term residential treatment facility for addicts. It proposed that the facility be based on the "Healing Place" concept, which relies on peer counseling and other forms of empowerment for addicts.

But several local service providers opposed a separate Healing Place facility. They were represented by the "Continuum of Care," a local coalition of service providers mandated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to reduce duplication and identify unmet needs in housing. Even though Community Solutions and the Continuum of Care had different missions, some of their interests overlapped.

Fundamentally, the disagreement between the two groups was about what kind of treatment should be provided and by whom. Some members of the Continuum of Care do not support the Healing Place approach to treatment; some also argued that long-term residential services could be provided through the expansion of existing programs.

As a result of the conflict, local officials decided not to endorse the Community Solutions plan at all – including recommendations for more halfway housing, services for teen-agers, and a data management system.

County government reserved \$2 million of its funds without designating what they might be used for. After a last minute conference between Daviess County Judge Executive Reid Haire and Owensboro Mayor Morris, they allocated \$300,000 to address substance abuse prevention, without naming a particular agency as recipient.

What else could we do?

At this point, several options have been suggested for local officials, treatment providers and the public as they sort through the community's needs and ways to meet them. These options include:

More dialogue between Community Solutions and the Continuum of Care

group to find common ground and reach consensus on next steps.

Funding for an integrated information-gathering system that will document the extent of the need and effectiveness of community strategies in dealing with substance abuse. Community Solutions originally asked for funding for such a system but dropped it when local officials signaled the group should lower the cost of its proposal.



Growing addictions: Several local organizations have reported an increase in alcoholics and addicts, an issue that needs the cooperation of various community groups.

A campaign to improve public education about substance abuse. At a statewide gathering in Lexington last November, Psychologist Dennis Embry detailed a number of proven, low-cost techniques for mobilizing public opinion to accomplish verifiable changes in public attitudes toward substance abuse.

What's the good news?

In spite of the stalemate over the hospital reorganization money, other substance-abuse treatment and prevention efforts are moving forward:

This spring, Jailer David Osborne will launch a four-to-six month intensive treatment program for inmates at the



The View Today. The current building that houses the Daviess County Public Library was built in 1967.



Preliminary design for a new Frederica Street public library.

Is it time for a larger, new facility?

OUR PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Daviess County Library Board of Trustees released preliminary design plans for a new Frederica Street facility on May 19, 2004. To finance the project, a library tax increase is required and will likely be considered in July or August 2004. This will coincide with the decision to swap properties with Owensboro Public Schools, owners of the site preferred by the library board. To help citizens come to an informed judgment about the proposal, the Public Life Foundation offers the following issue brief.

THE FACTS

Governance

The library is funded by the Daviess County Library District and governed by a board of trustees that has the authority to levy taxes. Trustees are appointed by the Daviess County Judge-Executive from nominees submitted by the trustees and approved by the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives.

Funding

The current library real estate tax rate is 5.6 cents (\$56 per year on a \$100,000 house). This was increased from 4.1 cents in 2003.

Each penny of tax generates \$316,800. Total revenue from the county real estate tax is \$1,774,080. The 2003 increase generates \$475,200 annually. (These funds have not been used for operations.)

The library also receives approximately \$390,000 from taxes on personal and motor vehicles, \$75,000 from state government, and \$80,000 from desk receipts annually. The library receives no federal funds.

Collections

The library has 1.9 books per capita. The minimum standard set by the Kentucky Department of Library and Archives is 2.5 books per capita. Trustees believe the library should offer more than the minimum number of books. But to add more, the library must have more space than its current 45,000 square feet.

Public Use and Services

The library attracts more than 350,000 patron visits annually. Records are not kept on the number of different people who use the library, although there are more than 63,000 library card holders (nearly 70 percent of the population). On average, more than 154 items are checked out per hour.

The library also provides computer access (including Internet and eight subscription databases, plus 52 additionally through the Kentucky Virtual Library), remote access, audio-visual materials, children's library and services, local history and genealogy room, auditorium/meeting room, literacy pro-

grams, outreach to Head Start and daycare facilities, book delivery for homebound, inter-library loan services, reference department, magazines, books-on-tape, CD's and DVD's. The library provides resources for students unavailable in school libraries. And the library is open nights and weekends when school libraries are closed.

Facility

The library is 36 years old and must address major maintenance needs such as roofing, heating and air conditioning systems, elevator, stairwell, and federal requirements for disability access if renovation occurs.

State standards call for 27 additional parking spaces to the current 63 and 24 more computing stations. Shelves are near capacity. Expanding the library at its existing site is complicated by its location. It is contiguous to expensive homes and Owensboro Public Schools property. Building a new library would not cost substantially more than expanding the library to the level the library trustees feel is needed.

OPTIONS, COSTS & CONSEQUENCES

KEEP CURRENT FACILITY AND DO NOT EXPAND

Facing major maintenance projects (cost estimate not available). If maintenance projects are completed, facility limitations will remain, collections and programs will be stagnant.

Maintenance projects could be completed incrementally with no tax increase by using the new revenue from the 2003 tax increase.

BUILD ONE OR MORE BRANCH LIBRARIES

Cost estimate: \$5.4 million per full-service branch for construction, plus \$420,000 in annual operating costs. (Note: This estimate was based on the needs of a high growth area. Branches in other areas would cost less.)

Would still face major maintenance projects at the central library.

Would reduce funding that could otherwise be used at the central library.

In most communities that have library branches, the drive time to the central library is much greater than in Owensboro-Daviess County.

The \$6 million cost of construction could be financed with the \$475 thousand in new revenue from the 2003 tax increase, but that would not cover the major maintenance at the central library or the increased operating costs. Therefore, this option would likely require a tax increase.

EXPAND THE CURRENT FACILITY

Library trustees initially used as a planning framework the mid-range state standard of three books per capita requiring 80,000 square feet. When deemed unattainable, the plan was scaled back to 70,000 square feet.

Cost estimate: \$14.1 million.

If additional floors are added, major costs will be incurred for structural support.

More parking would be required and involve property acquisition in an expensive residential area.

Neighborhood residents have voiced opposition to library expansion into residential neighborhood.

Approximately \$865,600 would be required annually to finance a \$14.1 million expansion (assuming 4.5% over 30 years).

Since the 2003 tax increase generates \$475,200 in new revenue, the balance would need to come from an additional tax increase.

BUILD A NEW FACILITY ON ANOTHER SITE

(recommended by the library trustees)

Cost estimate: \$14.7 million for a 70-75,000 square foot facility. Proposed Frederica Street site offers visibility, accessibility, 125 parking spaces, and room to expand another 20-25,000 square feet.

Owensboro Public Schools officials have expressed interest in purchasing/trading Frederica Street property for the existing library building and property.

Library officials propose a tax increase of 1.5 cents (approximately \$15 per year on a \$100,000 house) to absorb the debt service for a new library. If the increase is approved, the annual library tax will be \$71 on a \$100,000 house.

COMPARATIVE STATISTICS

LIBRARY REAL ESTATE TAX COMPARISONS

(10 most populous Kentucky counties)

Per \$100 Assessed Value

Boone County	7.2 cents
Kenton County	6.9
Campbell County	6.3
Daviess County	5.6
Madison County	3.4
Christian County	not a tax district
Fayette County	not a tax district
Hardin County	not a tax district
Jefferson County	not a tax district
Warren County	not a tax district

LIBRARY TOTAL INCOME COMPARISONS

(10 most populous Kentucky counties)

Income Per Capita

Boone County	\$81.48
Kenton County	41.86
Fayette County	38.80
Campbell County	25.78
Warren County	24.60
Jefferson County	23.99
Daviess County	20.85
Madison County	14.27
Hardin County	7.47
Christian County	7.08

Note: The national average is \$33.64 per capita.

LIBRARY COLLECTIONS COMPARISONS

(10 most populous Kentucky counties)

Books Per Capita

Boone	2.68
Kenton	2.67
Fayette	2.18
Daviess	1.97
Jefferson	1.82
Campbell	1.78
Warren	1.44
Christian	1.23
Madison	1.22
Hardin	.86

Note: The national average is 3.2 books per capita.

REAL ESTATE TAX COMPARISON

Daviess County Taxing Entities

(on a \$100,000 house)

Owensboro Public Schools	\$ 697
Daviess County Public Schools	525
City of Owensboro	261
Daviess County	130
Daviess County Public Library	56
Daviess County Health Department	35
Agricultural Extension	9

2002-2003 CITY-COUNTY FUNDING

Public Protection	\$17,107,398
Parks and Recreation	5,133,635
Public Library	2,110,701

Framing the Issue: Our Public Library

SURPRISING FACTS ABOUT LIBRARIES

The U.S. has more public libraries than McDonald's restaurants.

U.S. libraries circulate more items every day than Federal Express ships packages (5.4 versus 5.3 million)

U.S. library cardholders outnumber Amazon.com customers 5:1.
Americans go to libraries more than twice as often as they go to the movies.

Americans spend more than three times as much on salty snacks as they do on public libraries.

Libraries hold 16 billion books worldwide.

Libraries record more than 1.1 billion visits each year, compared to 204 million sports tickets sold in a year.

Source: Kentucky Library Media Specialists

LEARN MORE

Daviess County Public Library

450 Griffith Avenue
Owensboro, Kentucky 42301
270/684-0211
www.dcppl.org
Contact: Deborah Mesplay: dmesplay@dcpl.lib.ky.us

Kentucky Department of Libraries and Archives

300 Coffee Tree Road
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601
502/564-8300
www.kdla.net
Contacts: Jim Nelson, State Librarian
Chris Bischoff, Library Building Consultant

Public Library Association

50 East Huron
Chicago, Illinois 60611
www.pla.org

Citizens for Tax Fairness

3993 Pleasant Valley Road
Owensboro, Kentucky 42303
270/281-0259

GET INVOLVED

Friends of the Library

Marian Bennett, President
216 West 27th Street
Owensboro, Kentucky 42303
270/684-3955
donb@omuoonline.net

Daviess County Public Library Foundation

Cindra Stiff, President
3000 Frederica Street
Owensboro, Kentucky 42301
270/926-3111
cindrast@kwc.edu

Citizens for Tax Fairness

c/o Gary Boswell
3993 Pleasant Valley Road
Owensboro, Kentucky 42303
270/281-0259

SHARE VIEWS

Daviess County Fiscal Court

County Judge-Executive Judge Reid Haire
P.O. Box 1716
Owensboro, Kentucky 42302
270/685-8424
rhaire@daviessky.org

Commissioner Bruce Kunze

524 Ben Ford Road
Utica, Kentucky 42376
270/733-4175
bkunze1@aol.com or bkunze@daviessky.org

Commissioner Jim Lambert

1650 Copper Creek Drive
Owensboro, Kentucky 42303
270/685-2137
jlambert@daviessky.org

Commissioner Mike Riney

9429 State Route 56
Owensboro, Kentucky 42301
270/229-0210
mriney@daviessky.org

DAVIESS COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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fbran@mindspring.com

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270/685-3131
ellend@brescia.edu

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270/688-3557
stevekw@aol.com

Seeing Both Sides:

Opposition & Support of the Library Proposal

THOSE WHO OPPOSE

Our public library is already better than most communities. We do not need a new or larger library.

Libraries of the future will emphasize electronic information and Internet access over collections and building space.

Many people do not use the library; those who use the library should pay a fee.

Taxes are better used in other areas, or better yet, not extracted from citizens in the first place.

The library board is not an elected body and should not have the authority to tax.

It would be better to expand with neighborhood branches or branches in our rural communities than to build a larger central library.

The library tax was increased from 4.0 cents to 5.6 cents in 2003 (a 40 percent increase); now another 1.5 cent (27 percent increase) is proposed. That is too much of an increase over a two year period.

THOSE WHO SUPPORT

We have an outstanding library, but the library must have more space to continue to improve and serve.

Electronic information and Internet services are popular, but user surveys indicate that books and items for checkout are the strongest determinants for public use.

Library branches are expensive to build and operate and would reduce funds for collections and services at the central library.

Our public library should be the centerpiece of a community that is committed to education and lifelong learning: we should set high standards for our library.

Our library tax is much less than other taxes in our community and less than other counties across Kentucky. Moreover, Kentucky public libraries should not be our benchmark since they rank near the bottom when compared to other states.

Indeed, many people do not use the library. However, many people do not use the ice rink, tennis courts, the fire department, and many other public facilities or services. A first-rate library is an essential component of community life.

The library should be free and open to all people.

The proposal is a win-win-win: a good deal for the library, the city school system, and the community.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

continued from 12

Daviess County Detention Center.

He was motivated by the phone calls he received from family members of inmates who were "desperate to get some kind of help for their loved ones," he said. "All we had to offer was weekly AA and NA (Narcotics Anonymous) meetings."

Guidance from Community Solutions helped Osborne get in touch with the experts who could help him develop a treatment program.

"You hear people say that until (addicts) decide they're ready you can't help these people," Osborne said. "But we talked to the professionals. They told us if you can reach them, many times they will listen and you can change their lives."

To meet the program's \$300,000 cost, Osborne is moving 24 addicted Daviess County inmates into a treatment facility being set up in an unused building.

"Then I will replace those inmates with 24 out-of-county inmates," he said. Payments the jail receives for the out-of-county inmates will cover the cost of transferring five deputies to provide security in the new building and assist with the program, Osborne said.

He is hiring a certified alcohol and drug counselor to run the program. For the first year, Osborne plans to pay the salary from profits on snack sales to the prisoners. After that, he hopes to find federal or state funds to cover the salary.

Daviess County's Drug Court, which began operating four years ago, is graduating dozens of participants. Non-violent drug offenders can avoid imprisonment if they do everything the court requires, or they can be paroled under the court's supervision.

Addicts diverted to Drug Court have the chance to remain with their families and, often, to keep their jobs while they undergo treatment and meet other requirements under the supervision of case specialist Kristi Winkler.

The program started with one participant and now has 50, according to treatment coordinator Lora McCarty. Forty of them will graduate soon, and several others later in the year.

"If they aren't high school graduates, they have to finish or get their GED," McCarty says. In addition, "They have to have a fulltime job and stable housing in a drug-free environment."

Several have done college work and even graduated while under supervision by the drug court, officials said. "I've seen people graduate from Drug Court that I never thought would make it," said Thompson of the police department's criminal division. ■



JUNE Public AGENDA

There are many opportunities to get involved in our community. We present upcoming public hearings, open meetings and neighborhood alliance meetings. Please contact us if your community action group would like its meetings listed by calling 685-2652 or sending an email to info@plfo.org.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 Owensboro City Commission
5:00 p.m.
City Hall | 16 Daviess County Public Library
5:00 p.m.
Library
New library facility/tax increase |
| 3 Daviess County Fiscal Court
4:00 p.m.
Courthouse
2004-05 budget to be considered | Owensboro City Commission
5:00 p.m.
City Hall |
| Midtown East Neighborhood Alliance
5:00 p.m.
Buena Vista Baptist Church | 17 Housing Authority
11:30 a.m.
2161 East 19th Street |
| Seven Hills Neighborhood Alliance
7:00 p.m.
Trinity United Methodist Church | Daviess County Fiscal Court
4:00 p.m.
Courthouse |
| 8 Old Owensboro Neighborhood Alliance
5:00 p.m.
Brescia University Campus Center | Dogwood Azalea Neighborhood Alliance
5:30 p.m.
Daviess County Public Library |
| Shifley-York Neighborhood Alliance
5:30 p.m.
Lewis Lane Baptist Church | 21 RWRA
3:30 p.m.
1722 Pleasant Valley Rd. |
| Hillcrest Area Alliance
6:30 p.m.
Daviess County High School Media Center | Airport Board
4:30 p.m.
Airport Conference Room |
| 10 Citizens Health Care Advocates
5:30 p.m.
Health Department | 22 Apollo Area Alliance
5:30 p.m.
Apollo Heights Baptist Church |
| Owensboro Metropolitan Planning Commission
6:00 p.m.
City Hall | Northwest Neighborhood Alliance
5:30 p.m.
English Park Center |
| Southeast Alliance
6:30 p.m.
Newton Parrish Elementary School | Dugan Best Neighborhood Alliance
6:00 p.m.
Dugan Best Recreation Center |
| 14 Audubon Bon Harbor Area Alliance
6:30 p.m.
Audubon Church of the Nazarene | Wesleyan-Shawnee Neighborhood Alliance
6:00 p.m.
KWC Administration Building, Room 103 |
| 15 Tourism & Convention Bureau
7:45 a.m.
215 East Second Street | 25 RiverPort Authority
12:00 p.m.
1771 River Road |



Citizen Action UPDATE

The Public Life Foundation provides administrative and financial support to various grass-roots citizen initiatives. We welcome updates from others, whether an established organization or an ad hoc group.

The Citizens Committee on Education

Marianne Smith Edge, Co-Chair
msedge@smithedge.com

- produced a 30-day campaign to inform citizens of the impact of proposed state education budget cuts on local schools
- released a study that examined financial and student population trends resulting from a landlocked city school district
- launching "The Learning Community," a program to instill a higher value of education and lifelong learning into the fabric of community life
- developing a community plan for higher education that will integrate and transcend the individual strategic plans of our local colleges and universities

Citizens Health Care Advocates

Dale Taylor, Chair
dalet@wwwv.com

- sponsored a forum examining opposing points of view on the proposed increase in the tobacco excise tax
- sponsored a nurses appreciation event
- supporting efforts to expand health care services for the uninsured and underinsured residents of our area
- developing a series of articles on health and health care
- planning a forum on the midwife program difficulties

Goodfellows Club

Barry Carden, President
bcarden@messenger-inquirer.com

- contributes approximately \$100,000 annually for clothing, coats, shoes, and emergency assistance for disadvantaged youth
- continues the Christmas Eve party tradition for local children
- supporting dental sealant program for disadvantaged youth
- planning benefit tennis tournament

Owensboro Area World Affairs Council

- sponsored a panel discussion: "When do we send in the troops?"
- sponsored presentation by Witness for Peace activist Lorena Parker at Kentucky Wesleyan College: "Plan Columbia: Throwing Gasoline on the Fire"
- developing 2004-05 series to begin in the fall

PRIDE

Susie Tyler, President
gran.view@adelphia.net

- completed successful membership drive (550 members)
- PRIDE delegation attended a seminar on design and community appearance
- met with architects of proposed public library, Wal-Mart, Fifth-Third Bank, and OMHS Cancer Center
- soliciting proposals from firms for a comprehensive design-improvement plan for the new community entrance from the Natcher Bridge and west Parrish Avenue from the airport

Unity Coalition

- sponsored presentation by activist Carlos Earhardt: "Challenges Facing the Latino Community"

IN MEMORIAM:

STEVE KULKA (1953-2004)



Citizens Health Care Advocates and the Public Life Foundation extend sincere sympathy to the family of Steve Kulka, who passed away on May 15, 2004.

Steve was a charter member of CHCA and a current member of the board of directors. He had a special interest in health care for the poor and uninsured.

Despite a demanding work schedule, Steve made time for church and community activities. He was a veteran member of the St. Pius X Church bar-b-q team that annually cooked for the church picnic, Bar-B-Q Festival, and a Louisville charity event.

Steve was a Leadership Owensboro graduate, a board member and former chair of the Owensboro Motorsports Festival.

He was a willing worker, a humble leader, an inspiration to those who knew him, a shining example of how one citizen can make a difference.

Kentucky Commonwealth Conference on

**OPENNESS,
TRANSPARENCY,
and the PUBLIC INTEREST**

OWENSBORO, KENTUCKY • OCTOBER 18-19, 2004