

# bridges

SPRING 2015

INDEX

4 Preparing and Promoting Communities through Economic Analysis

7 CDAC SPOTLIGHT  
Designing Opportunity:  
Ending Generational Poverty and Re-establishing Economic Stability in Rural America

9 Building Creative Communities

## Community Counts: Activating All Families To Save for Higher Education

By Amanda Jones-Layman

In the face of a constant barrage of messages about the skyrocketing costs of college, Indiana families are hearing a new message: Every little bit helps. Promise Indiana (the Promise), a grass-roots effort that began in Wabash County and is expanding to counties around the state, is dedicated to moving the needle on families saving and youth pursuing education beyond high school.

The Promise began with a belief that all families should be empowered to save and that a community can rally together to counter the messages that the size of the account balance is what matters. For families, particularly low- and moderate-income (LMI) families or those whose children will be first-generation college students, this shift in mindset is critical to build the belief that college is attainable.

A dedicated account for educational savings (e.g., College Choice 529 Direct savings accounts) fosters a child's development of an identity that

---

**“The Promise engages entire communities to surround kids with a message that increases hope: ‘Adults believe in me and are saving for me.’”**

---

“I am someone who goes to college.” LMI youth with an account are three times more likely to attend college than similar youth who do not have an account.<sup>1</sup> Even small balances matter. LMI youth with 529 accounts with a balance of \$1 to \$499 are four times more likely to graduate from college than similar youth without an account.<sup>1</sup>

The Promise engages entire communities to surround kids with a message that increases hope: “Adults believe in me and are saving for me.” Community foundations, schools,



faith communities, YMCAs and youth-serving agencies, service clubs, economic development groups, institutions of higher education, businesses and local governments all participate in the Promise by providing funds to match monies youth raise for their accounts. Community members champion students early in their schooling by encouraging them and

>> continued on Page 3

Students from O.J. Neighbours Elementary in Wabash County learn about the value of saving from the Business Department at Manchester University.

# Calendar

## JUNE

- 9 **Financing Rural Development: Untapped Potential, Unmet Need, Ample Opportunity**  
*Webinar*  
**Sponsor:** Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis  
**Visit:** [https://bsr.stlouisfed.org/EI\\_CDAudioConference/#26/financing-rural-development-untapped-potential-unmet-need-ample-opportunity](https://bsr.stlouisfed.org/EI_CDAudioConference/#26/financing-rural-development-untapped-potential-unmet-need-ample-opportunity)
- 11 **Connecting Communities: Key Findings from the Federal Reserve Board's Survey of Household Economics and Decision-making of 2014**  
*Webinar*  
**Sponsor:** Federal Reserve System  
**Visit:** <https://bsr.stlouisfed.org/connectingcommunities/>
- 15 *Call for Papers—Submissions Due*  
**Intent vs. Impact: Evaluating Individual- and Community-Based Programs**  
**Sponsor:** Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas  
**Visit:** [www.dallasfed.org/cd/events/2015/15intent.cfm](http://www.dallasfed.org/cd/events/2015/15intent.cfm)
- 15–19 **ABCD Festival 2015**  
*Ribby Hall Village, Preston, England*  
**Sponsor:** Asset-based Community Development (ABCD) Institute at Northwestern University  
**Visit:** <http://abcdfestival.org/>
- 16 **The Role of Education in Wealth Accumulation**  
*Springfield, Mo.*  
**Sponsor:** Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis  
**Visit:** <http://www.cvent.com/d/rrqxxd>
- 18–19 **2015 Policy Summit on Housing, Human Capital, and Inequality**  
*Pittsburgh, Pa.*  
**Sponsors:** Federal Reserve Banks of Cleveland, Philadelphia and Richmond  
**Visit:** [www.clevelandfed.org/Newsroom and Events/Events/2015/Policy Summit](http://www.clevelandfed.org/Newsroom%20and%20Events/Events/2015/Policy%20Summit)
- 24–27 **NCDA Annual Conference—CDBG: 41 Years of Building Strong Communities**  
*Arlington, Texas*  
**Sponsor:** National Community Development Association  
**Visit:** <http://www.arlington-tx.gov/ncda/>
- 30 **Community Reinvestment Act Bankers' Roundtable**  
*Bentonville, Ark.*  
**Sponsor:** Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis  
**Contact:** Drew Pack at [andrew.a.pack@stls.frb.org](mailto:andrew.a.pack@stls.frb.org)

## JULY

- 14–15 **Community Development Institute—Strong Families ↔ Strong Communities**  
*Ithaca, N.Y.*  
**Sponsor:** Community & Regional Development Institute at Cornell University  
**Visit:** [http://cardi.cals.cornell.edu/sites/cardi.cals.cornell.edu/files/shared/CDI2015\\_SAVE-THE-DATE\\_5-5-15.pdf](http://cardi.cals.cornell.edu/sites/cardi.cals.cornell.edu/files/shared/CDI2015_SAVE-THE-DATE_5-5-15.pdf)
- 15 **Community Development Outreach Listening Session**  
*Louisville, Ky.*  
**Sponsor:** Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis  
**Contact:** Faith Weekly at [faith.e.weekly@stls.frb.org](mailto:faith.e.weekly@stls.frb.org)
- 16 **Connecting Communities: Racial Wealth Inequality**  
*Webinar*  
**Sponsor:** Federal Reserve System  
**Visit:** <https://bsr.stlouisfed.org/connectingcommunities/>
- 19–22 **CDS 2015 Conference—Creativity and Culture: Community Development Approaches for Strengthening Health, Environment, Economic Vibrancy, Social Justice and Democracy**  
*Lexington, Ky.*  
**Sponsor:** Community Development Society  
**Visit:** [www.commm-dev.org/2015-conference](http://www.commm-dev.org/2015-conference)

## AUGUST

- 3–6 **Community Development Institute 2015**  
*Conway, Ark.*  
**Sponsor:** University of Central Arkansas  
**Visit:** <http://uca.edu/cdi/enrollment>
- 17–21 **NeighborWorks Training Institute**  
*Philadelphia, Pa.*  
**Sponsor:** NeighborWorks America  
**Visit:** <https://trainingevents.nw.org/onlinereg/Login/Login.aspx>

## SEPTEMBER

- 28–  
Oct. 2 **SAVE THE DATE! Collective Impact Summit**  
*Vancouver, Canada*  
**Sponsor:** Tamarack: An Institute for Community Engagement  
**Visit:** <http://events.tamarackcommunity.org/collectiveimpacts summit>

## Community Counts

>> continued from Page 1

contributing to their accounts—even if it's just \$5.29.

Through grass-roots efforts, the Promise is increasing saving in communities around Indiana, a state where only 11.7 percent of youth under the age of 18 have a 529 account.<sup>2</sup> Given the positive outcomes associated with educational savings, as well as the ways it contributes to a child's identity and likelihood to pursue education beyond high school, the opportunity to make an impact by increasing the number of youth who have these accounts is enormous.

The Promise puts intentional systems in place so families can become their own solution. Promise communities partner with local schools to integrate 529 enrollment during registration events, right alongside signing up for the bus or school lunch. Each family that opens an account receives an initial \$25 investment from an enrollment sponsor, along with the opportunity to receive an additional community match of \$75 by raising their own contributions from their champions. To date, the Promise has helped 3,249 youth in four Indiana counties establish a 529 account.

The ease of signing up at school removes some of the biggest barriers for families—lack of time, lack of access to a reliable internet connection or a computer, and simply putting savings at the bottom of a long list of things to do to help their child be successful. At the school events, teachers and school staff can reinforce the message that every child has a bright future and families should be looking forward to the day when their elementary student will head off to college. The Promise helps increase awareness

of 529 accounts and, more importantly, the benefits of families taking action to save.

Families with an annual household income of more than \$100,000 were far more likely to be aware of a 529 plan prior to the Promise (78.62 percent). Yet of that same group, only about half were using a 529 account to save for their child's higher education. Moderate- and low-income families were less likely to have heard of a 529 prior to the Promise (37.34 percent and 20.81 percent of families, respectively), and they were even less likely than their higher-income peers to be using a 529 to save (only 2.5 percent of low-income families and 9.9 percent of moderate-income respondents).

As a result of the Promise, low-income respondents were 10 times more likely to be saving using a 529; moderate-income families were four times more likely to be saving. Even the higher-income group saw a boost in 529s as a result of the Promise—an increase from 38.62 percent to 62.72 percent. So far, the Promise has generated more than \$581,819 in savings for higher education.

There is power in a community coming together to spread the message that families can save, and that even small amounts matter. Contextualizing 529 accounts, which may be foreign, in a familiar process (e.g., registering a child for school) helps families move to action. Of those aware of 529s prior to the Promise, only 8.89 percent reported they had heard of them through their child's school. As a result of the Promise, that increased to 70.93 percent.

College savings accounts can be a powerful tool for families of all income levels, and they are key for helping youth build a college-bound



Kindergarten students from LaGrange County are excited about college after visiting Trine University.

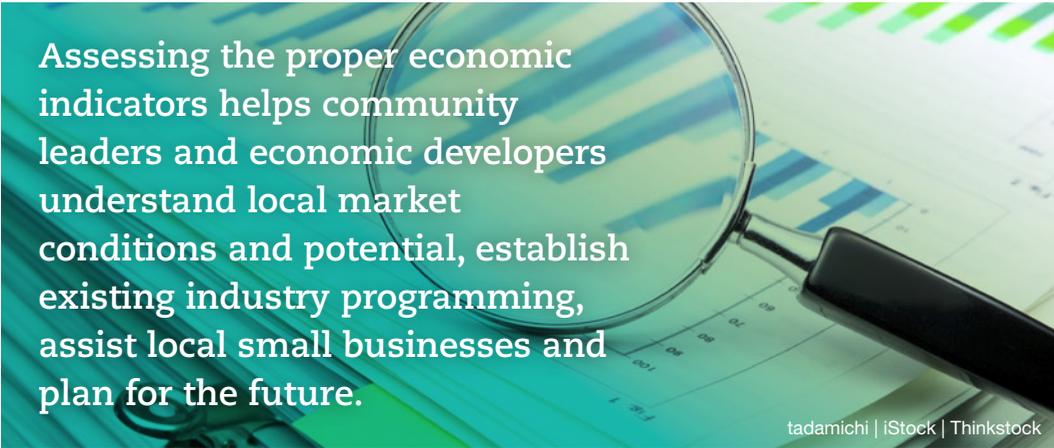
identity. Bringing an entire community together to champion saving can move families to take that all-important first step.

Amanda Jones-Layman provides operational support for Promise Indiana as vice president of academic engagement for the Wabash County YMCA.

## REFERENCES

- 1 [Building Expectations, Delivering Results: Asset-Based Financial Aid and the Future of Higher Education \(2013\)](#). The University of Kansas School of Social Welfare, Assets & Education Initiative.
- 2 [College Choice 529 \(2014\)](#).

# Preparing and Promoting Communities through Economic Analysis



Assessing the proper economic indicators helps community leaders and economic developers understand local market conditions and potential, establish existing industry programming, assist local small businesses and plan for the future.

tadamichi | iStock | Thinkstock

By Mark S. Goodman

“What does your local economic development agency do?” In the public’s eye, economic developers are viewed as community marketers, but there is so much more we’re supposed to be doing. Economic developers’ missions generally align with support of business development (attraction, creation, retention, and expansion of business and industry), which will also include those factors impacting business development—addressing workforce, housing, primary education, and quality of living issues and opportunities, among others. Clearly, it’s about both preparing *and* promoting communities as great places to live, work, play and invest.

To accomplish this, the economic developer must work within a realm that is both art and science. So, marketing just may be an art form. However, measuring the local economy one chooses to market and that economy’s opportunities for new and existing

business is very much a science! Perhaps this (social) science aspect of the job is understood the least, even among some economic developers. This article will focus on some of the practical methods that have proven most effective in measuring economic realities, and that effectively support efforts to convey local and regional strategies and decision-making. Specifically, retail analysis (identifying a community’s market area and the dollars it is capturing or losing) and economic impact analysis (measuring the worth of a company or program to a community or region in terms of jobs, income and revenues) will be discussed.

## Retail Analysis

I have been increasingly involved in assisting communities in retail analysis and working with mayors, Main Street programs or local economic developers. Retail activity indicates economic well-being in those communities dependent on the sales tax. Additionally, as an economic sector, retail

and service are absolutely crucial to a community for several reasons. First, they are jobs creators or maintainers. Second, the sales tax collections generated from local retailers are critical to maintaining and growing communities. Third, the availability of products and services wanted and needed by consumers is a quality-of-living pillar for communities. Retail selection gives residents incentive and opportunity to spend their money locally, making them less likely to move outside the community, either to shop or to relocate totally to an area with greater amenities and retail options.

I find that the best place to start is in the measurement of a community’s market or “trade area.” Where are shoppers coming from? Where should they be coming from? If a community’s retail and service establishments have customers, they have a trade area.

## Measuring Trade Areas

There is nothing more accurate than a properly conducted survey to assess a trade area. The survey can be as simple as collecting, organizing and mapping the ZIP codes of the customers supporting local businesses. National chain stores use this method, and *we* can do the same thing as the big retailers by organizing with local businesses to conduct a trade area survey. In fact, having local businesses participate in a survey is a terrific program concept for a chamber of commerce and its participating businesses.

Another method for measuring trade-area boundaries includes the use of models. Some models

measure a market for a community based on travel time. For instance, a trade area might be measured as a 20-minute drive time from the city. Other models measure *retail gravity* by calculating trade-area boundaries based on the distance to competitive markets and the size of the local market relative to competitors, either in terms of population or volume of existing retail activity. Figure 1 provides an example of a gravity model measuring the trade area of the city of Blytheville, Ark.

#### Who Makes Up Your Trade Area?

Once the trade-area boundaries have been calculated, the next step is to identify the number of people within those boundaries, how much money they have and spend, and what they spend their money on. The real value-added quality in a trade-area study is found here—in the demographic and consumer spending assessment—as it shows local leaders just how many spending dollars are available in their communities and the surrounding areas. Assessments are generally built on a number of factors, including total number of people within the trade area by age and other breakdowns; number of households within the trade area; median household income of trade-area residents; projections of future population, housing and income; and available dollars to be spent on multiple retail categories, from groceries to clothing, restaurants and many others.

#### Measuring Retail Capture and Leakage

Retail capture and leakage analysis measures the dollars from the trade area (or other geography) from which a business should be drawing its customers and compares that amount with the actual dollars spent. The fact

is that retail leakage is devastating many rural communities, and that is all about consumer choice. Why do people spend their money somewhere else? Business hours, selection, price, internet shopping and other factors impact consumer decision-making. Strategies to change this paradigm of leakage require active participation of elected leaders, businesses and citizens!

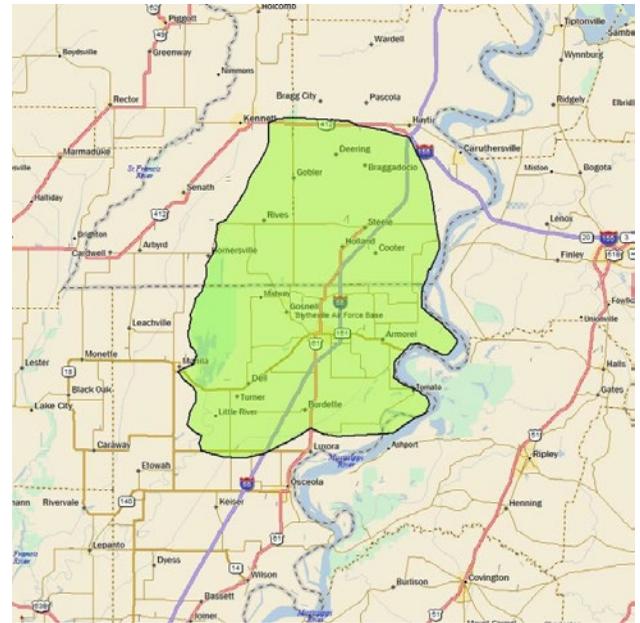
#### Economic Impact Analysis

As previously stated, economic developers focus their energies on business development. Analyzing what a business (whether existing, future or potentially lost) means to the community and region in terms of jobs, income and revenues is critical to successful business development. This kind of evaluation is known as *economic impact analysis* and is a method of calculating the economic effects associated with a change in economic activity or an employment and income change (e.g., the location of a new business). Those measuring economic impact use quantitative models (there are several available) to assist in calculating these effects. Each model relies on state and national data sets, and on *input-output tables*, which identify economic linkages between each and every business type.

#### Measuring Economic Impact

Economic impact analysis is not an exact science. However, when properly performed, it will provide the best estimate of activity, either the current activity of an existing industry or the potential of a prospective business. So what is a business' contribution to a community and region? An existing industry employing 100 people, for example, with employee benefits packages, the spending of salaries and

FIGURE 1  
Gravity model measuring the trade area of Blytheville, Ark.



the spending of the industry itself generates other economic activity in the community and beyond. This is the *multiplier effect*. Those 100 jobs are really responsible for fostering a number of other jobs in the community and region, including everything from construction to manufacturing, retail/service, transportation, finance, government and others. From a community's perspective, this economic activity equates to city revenues and fees, etc.

#### Multiplier Effect (What It Is and Is Not)

When it comes to multipliers and economic effects, all businesses are not the same. Companies that build a product in a community and sell it outside of the area bring new money into the area as a result. Consequently, they generally have a larger multiplier effect on the region. Businesses such as

>> continued on Page 6

## Preparing and Promoting

>> continued from Page 5

retail and service industries typically have a smaller effect, as they generally move money around the economy through local transactions. An exception to this is the tourism industry, where retail and service activity bring new money into the area by attracting tourists whose spending contributes to the local economy.

Multipliers are calculated for employment, income and economic output. Typically, the economic developer or community leader is interested in employment, income activity and multipliers. If a company employing 100 people is responsible for creating an additional 100 jobs in the area economy, they would have a multiplier

## Economic Impact Is Regional

We've all heard of neighboring communities fighting over the location of a business. Just as significantly, there are cases where a community is losing a large business and its neighbors do not come to their support because it doesn't involve them. What we know is that economic impact is truly regional, and regional participation is critical to realize the maximum impact for all. After all, a company may locate in one community, but its employees come from many and they bring paychecks to their hometowns!

## Regional Application of Analyses

Now more than ever there needs to be regional participation in economic development. The flow of consumer dollars and people between

This is a great example of using data and analysis to drive economic development decision-making.

## Where Do I Go for Help?

Retail and economic impact analyses are tedious; economic impact analysis, in particular, is very complicated. But the analyses are arguably critical to successful economic development. In fact, impact analysis is a powerful marketing tool in support of economic development programming and existing industry efforts. For more information on selected models for each, please contact the author. (Contact details are at the end of the article.)

Communities and economic developers generally rely on third-party providers to do this work. Consultants and university or government research agencies often are used for both retail and impact analysis. However, models and data can be designed or purchased (along with the training to use these models) for those interested in doing the analysis themselves. Your choice of external assistance will depend on how much you are able to spend, how quickly you need the results and how often you want to conduct such analyses.

---

Mark S. Goodman, CECD, is director of the Center for Economic Development Education, Institute for Economic Advancement, University of Arkansas at Little Rock. Email him at [goodmangroupusa@earthlink.net](mailto:goodmangroupusa@earthlink.net).

---

## “The economic developer must work within a realm that is both art and science.”

---

of 2.0 (i.e., total employment of 200 divided by direct employment of 100). Generally, employment or income multipliers greater than 3.0-3.5 are not seen, though they do exist.

It is also important not to confuse the multiplier with the *turnover* of dollars in the local economy. Multipliers can be innocently misrepresented as the number of *transactions* (rounds of spending) in the local economy that the money from an initial business transaction goes through (which can be as high as 10 times) before it leaves the community. This is not a multiplier of 10, but rather 10 rounds of spending turnover! There may or may not be any relationship between multipliers and turnover.

employment centers and local markets travels in all directions. This flow can be quantified and suggests that one community in a region is economically linked to other communities in the same region as if they are a part of an economic ecosystem.

A good example of regional economic development analysis can be found in a project currently underway with the East Arkansas Planning and Development District, where retail analyses (and other assessments) have been conducted for each of the counties and major communities across the region. When complete, the analyses will support business development, existing industry support, strategic planning and other regional initiatives.

# Designing Opportunity: Ending Generational Poverty and Re-establishing Economic Stability in Rural America

By Terrance Clark

It is never too late for a once economically thriving community to recover, regardless of its size or physical location. Seven years ago, my business partner Will Staley and I chose our new home of Helena, Ark., as an ideal place to prove this thesis. In the years since, we have successfully created a new model for community and economic development in the Delta in the form of Thrive, a hybrid nonprofit design firm.

Our mission is to design opportunity in impoverished regions of rural America in an effort to increase economic mobility and decrease rural brain drain. Everything we do at Thrive involves a strategic application of the design thinking process, which is an iterative methodology that relies heavily on exploration of ideas and problem solving.

What we have found is that the creative process used to design a powerful brand or new product is very similar to both the steps an entrepreneur takes when launching a business and the path community organizers follow when working to restore their cities. At Thrive, we are involved in both of these scenarios with the work we do locally; as we grow, we plan to expand our model to other rural areas in our country suffering from generational poverty and drastic population loss.

After many years of running Thrive, I have learned that a nonprofit

is still a business, and that there are no large amounts of grant funding just waiting around the corner. Funds are becoming increasingly difficult for nonprofits to secure. This is especially true in rural areas that cannot compete with the better roads and larger populations found in urban areas across our country. In lieu of this fact, Thrive has grown a successful graphic design services business that does commercial work for great clients who pay for our time and ideas. The revenue we collect from these services creates an additional diverse revenue stream, which makes the organization less reliant on grant funding.

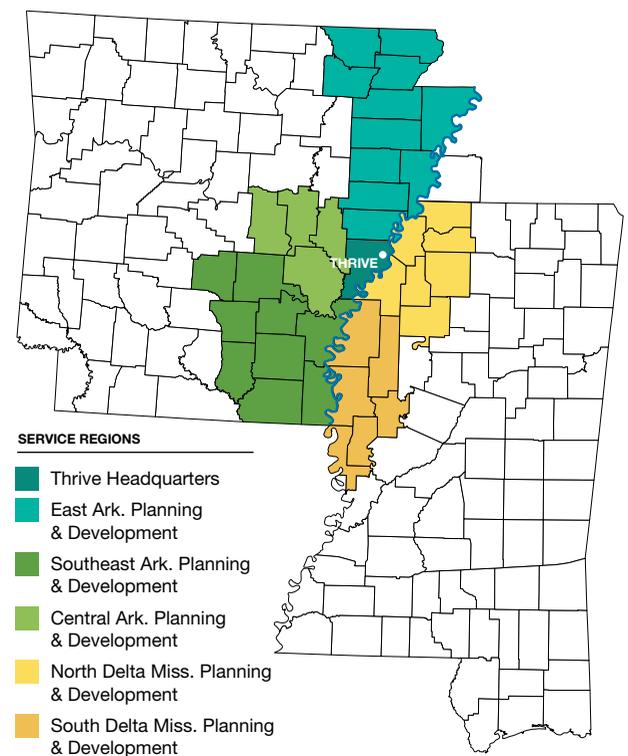
In an effort to keep our entire graphic design workload mission-centric, we tend to focus on clients from within the Delta as well as organizations that are working to alleviate poverty regardless of their location. These clients range from individuals working to start small businesses and create jobs to local city governments and agencies or nonprofits that focus on community and economic development. It is an evolving funding model for us, and one we intend to grow large enough to cover a majority of our annual operating expenses.

To provide a bit of history on the origin of Thrive, Will and I met at the Kansas City Art Institute in 2001 as we were each pursuing bachelor's degrees in design. We were surrounded by many progressively minded professors

and mentors who impressed upon us the importance of using our design training and skills to make the world a better place. I still talk to many of these professors, and it is their insight—along with additional people and mentors we have met since—that has helped Thrive become what it is today.

>> *continued on Page 8*

FIGURE 1  
Thrive's Delta region service map



## Designing Opportunity

>> continued from Page 7

After working as a designer in the private sector, I missed the altruistic environment and motivation that art school had provided. Around 2006, Will and I reconnected after he had spent a summer researching in Helena. We began having long discussions about establishing our own platform to use design as a tool to improve low- and moderate-income communities in rural America. Soon after these discussions began happening weekly, I quit my job and moved to New York City

### CDAC MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: TERRANCE CLARK



Hailing from Bloomington, Ill., Terrance Clark obtained a bachelor of fine arts degree in design from the Kansas City Art Institute in 2005. After working in the exhibit/signage design industry in Kansas City, he earned a master's degree in design management at Pratt Institute in New York City in 2009 and has worked at Thrive ever since.

In addition to managing the business administration and development activities at Thrive, Clark serves as the director of the Helena Entrepreneur Center. As the co-founder of Thrive, he works with new and existing business owners to develop long-term business plans and marketing strategies. Clark is also involved with many regional organizations; he is a board member for the East Arkansas Crossroads Coalition and a steering committee member for Sonny Boy Blues Society in Helena.

Clark's ability to work with small-business owners and his personal creative background make him uniquely qualified to lead Thrive as the organization grows into new regions in the Delta. He joined the Community Development Advisory Council (CDAC) for the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis in 2014; he brings a perspective from a rural community within the Bank's District.

CDAC members are experts in community and economic development and financial education. They complement the information developed through outreach by the District's Community Development staff and suggest ways that the Bank might support local efforts. A list of current members is available at [www.stlouisfed.org/community-development/about-us/community-development-advisory-council](http://www.stlouisfed.org/community-development/about-us/community-development-advisory-council).

to pursue a master's degree in design management from Pratt Institute while working to create the preliminary version of Thrive.

Will had just completed his master's degree at Pratt as well and began taking on freelance design jobs while working as a policy fellow at the Clinton Foundation in Manhattan. As Thrive started in New York, we started focusing on making initial connections in Helena. It was this investigative process that helped us begin to understand a feasible way for Thrive to become part of the revitalization of the city.

Today, Thrive has entered its sixth official year of operation and its third year with two additional full-time graphic designers on staff. The next few years will decide many things for our organization's future, and we have many goals we intend to achieve.

business incubator; and the Cherry Street Fair, a monthly street fair (April to September) in historic downtown Helena. To date, we have had more than 110 individuals complete our 8-week business development class; more than 20 of those entrepreneurs either launched or expanded their businesses, creating or saving more than 50 jobs. Our street fair, which features live music, local vendors and activities for kids, has grown from 150 people per event to an average turnout of around 500. In addition, we have launched a garden-based education program, regularly contribute our abilities to helping neighborhoods attain a voice in local government and work to inform the voting public about contested races in our county. More information on our projects and the people we work with can be found at [www.thrivecenter.org](http://www.thrivecenter.org).

---

**“Our mission is to design opportunity in impoverished regions of rural America in an effort to increase economic mobility and decrease rural brain drain.”**

---

We hope to grow Thrive by looking to the 27 counties immediately surrounding Helena that make up the Planning and Development Districts in eastern Arkansas and northern Mississippi (see Figure 1). From these counties and other major populated areas within our region, we plan to make new contacts and capture design contracts to both grow the reach of Thrive's mission and become more financially stable.

Within the last two years, we have reached a critical mass with two of our major programs: the Helena Entrepreneur Center, a countywide

It goes without saying that Thrive is my dream job, and my work there matters greatly to me. My co-workers and I get to work with incredible people, dedicate our lives to community service and take a seat at the table when it comes to the designer's role in the makeup of community revitalization. In time, it is our goal to bring this opportunity to others by taking Thrive to a national scale and recruiting a new generation of young creatives to take an active role in community revitalization in rural America.

# Building Creative Communities

By Kathy Moore Cowan

So, how did I find myself in Colquitt, Ga., a small town of about 1,600 people located in the southwest corner of the state, for the 2015 Building Creative Communities conference? Better yet, how did a small town attract so many people from as far away as China, Nepal and Aruba, as well as graduate students in social work and city and regional planning? Walking through the town, I witnessed evidence of community pride, confidence and high self-esteem. The people are friendly. The court square is clean. Many buildings have been renovated and are occupied. There are murals and beautification projects. There is life and activity. You can see that this is a healthy community that can tackle whatever comes its way. After reading about Colquitt in several case studies through the years, I was anxious to see the town for myself, to witness firsthand how this small town built a cultural tourism industry that brings 55,000 visitors annually and fosters creativity, leadership and inclusivity into building community.

It is hard to believe that in 1990, Colquitt was located in the ninth-poorest congressional district in the U.S.; more than half the population had moved to nearby cities to find work. Colquitt community leader Joy Jinks says, “We were desperate. We needed something here to turn things around, but there was no industry that was going to come to Colquitt, Georgia.” They did not want the solution to be the typical economic development options for small towns—solid waste dump, prison, chicken-processing plant.

While attending a conference in New York in 1990, Jinks met Richard Owen Geer, a Chicago theater director and doctoral student at Northwestern University. She expressed concern about Miller County’s economic decline and the growing number of youth who left the region after graduation. Geer told her about his theory that performance could be used as a community-building tool—if a community collected and retold their own stories, people would be empowered, the community would bond, and boundaries of race, social class, age and gender would be erased. Jinks told him that they were looking for a way to revitalize their community and to celebrate their rural heritage; Geer was looking for a community to try out his theory. Six months later, they met with the Colquitt/Miller Arts Council and decided to use the talent of the residents to forge an alternative economy based on cultural tourism. “Swamp Gravy” was born.

“Swamp Gravy” debuted on October 12, 1992. The play is based on true stories of Colquitt residents and relies on a cast of 75-125 local and regional volunteers. It is professionally directed, designed and choreographed. Each year, new stories are collected and transformed into an original play, which is performed 32 times each year in March and October.

Since its start, amazing things have happened with “Swamp Gravy”:

- Performed at the Kennedy Center in November 1996
- Performed at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics; received the Cultural Olympiad Award

>> continued on Page 10



TOP: The renovated Cotton Hall Theatre, 60-year-old home of “Swamp Gravy.”

MIDDLE: Colquitt’s Court Square, where several of the town’s new businesses have started.

BOTTOM: “Neighbors,” one of 16 storytelling murals installed in downtown Colquitt with a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

## Building Creative Communities

>> continued from Page 9

- Sold more than 140,000 tickets, 72 percent to out-of-town visitors
- Produced two music recordings; published 14 plays and four books of oral history
- Hosted annual Building Creative Communities conference with Florida State University since 2006
- Started the New Life Learning Center, an after-school elementary tutorial and enrichment/art activity center
- Spun off a youth theater company
- Renovated five historic buildings, including Cotton Hall Theatre (60-year-old cotton warehouse), the play's home
- Created a cultural center for entrepreneurship; several businesses have started in the downtown area—Tarrer Inn, Market on the Square—and an entrepreneur has created a soundstage in the industrial park, where movies are filmed
- Started the Community Development Corp. of Southwest Georgia, which has built a 32-unit affordable housing complex, launched a small-business incubator and established a youth entrepreneurship program
- Facilitated installation of public art—16 storytelling murals downtown were started in 1999 with a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts as another

art-based strategy to draw tourists all year long; Colquitt was designated Georgia's First Mural City by the state legislature

- Hosted the Global Mural, Arts and Culture Tourism conference in 2010
- Started Swamp Gravy Institute—Consultants have shared this national/international model for art-based community revitalization in communities in 15 states and several foreign nations
- Brought millions of dollars into a community that was dying; cultural tourism now provides more jobs and revenues than any other industry in Colquitt

Colquitt has become a national and international model of rural and economic development. The arts industry is a powerful force for economic development nationwide. In communities, small towns, rural and urban areas across the country, the arts industry attracts investments, residents and visitors; provides jobs; supports local businesses; and provides revenue to local government. "Swamp Gravy" demonstrates that art initiatives can be an effective component of economic development programs.

The community acknowledges the role of leadership, vision, commitment and dedication in their success, but residents believe it is creativity that makes them different. In "Colquitt-Miller County, Georgia: Benchmarks of Progress 1976-2006," author Karen Kimbrel writes:

---

**“Colquitt, Ga., has become a national and international model of rural and economic development.”**

---

“What makes this community different from other small rural communities in the U.S. is that magic ingredient—Creativity. Creative communities are different from traditional community and economic development models because creative communities rely on human potential, knowledge, and capabilities as opposed to tangible goods and deliverable services. Also, rather than being physical place-focused, they are about human spirit. They are about building the human infrastructure that leads to self-confidence and high self-esteem. When a person has these two basic components, that person has a foundation on which to grow, develop, and achieve any goal he or she may set.

“When creative projects enter the picture, people can establish new and exciting networks to obtain social and economic entrees where before only walls existed preventing their entrance. It is about the realization that the sky is the limit when a community works together for a common goal despite dismal demographics in regards to declining population, high rate of poverty and low educational levels. Creative strategies can and do break down barriers when the ‘norm’ only continues to support the status quo.”

From the beginning, Colquitt residents realized the importance of human capital. It is evident in their mission: “To involve as many people as possible in a theatrical experience that EMPOWERS individuals, BONDS the community and STRENGTHENS the local economy while crossing the boundaries of race, social class, age and gender.” Perhaps this is the town’s

# SPANNING the Region

The region served by the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis encompasses all of Arkansas and parts of Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri and Tennessee.



greatest accomplishment. “Swamp Gravy” has united the community, connected people who had not previously worked together and empowered them to take on other projects. It literally has helped Colquitt reject a slow death, renew the community’s spirit and prosper.

Kathy Moore Cowan is a senior community development specialist at the Memphis Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis.

## RESOURCES

- <http://swampgravy.com/about-us/>
- <https://www.stlouisfed.org/Publications/Bridges/Summer-2009/How-a-Small-Town-in-Georgia-Survives-on-Swamp-Gravy>
- [https://bsr.stlouisfed.org/EI\\_CDAudioConference/#14/off-the-beaten-path-the-economic-impact-of-rural-tourism](https://bsr.stlouisfed.org/EI_CDAudioConference/#14/off-the-beaten-path-the-economic-impact-of-rural-tourism)
- [https://bsr.stlouisfed.org/EI\\_CDAudioConference/#2/economic-development-in-rural-communities](https://bsr.stlouisfed.org/EI_CDAudioConference/#2/economic-development-in-rural-communities)
- [https://bsr.stlouisfed.org/EI\\_CDAudioConference/#5/transforming-communities-through-creative-placemaking](https://bsr.stlouisfed.org/EI_CDAudioConference/#5/transforming-communities-through-creative-placemaking)
- <https://www.stlouisfed.org/community-development/multimedia/8-from-the-eighth/six-myths-about-the-future-of-small-towns>
- <http://ric.nal.usda.gov/rural-tourism>
- <http://www.nal.usda.gov/ric/ricpubs/tourism.html>

### Arkansas CDFI Merger

In late 2014 two Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) in Arkansas announced they would bring their expertise and resources together by merging. The Community Resource Group (CRG), based in Fayetteville, and alt.Consulting, based in Pine Bluff, merged to create Communities Unlimited. Historically, CRG provided technical assistance to rural communities for affordable housing and wastewater solutions; alt. Consulting focused on helping rural communities grow entrepreneurs and small businesses through technical assistance and lending programs, and worked with renewable energy and energy efficiency in smaller rural communities in the Delta. The mission of Communities Unlimited is to move rural and under-resourced communities in areas of persistent poverty to sustainable prosperity. They serve seven states: Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Texas. To find out more, visit [www.communitiesu.org/](http://www.communitiesu.org/).

### Delta Regional Authority Awards \$1.5 Million in New Investments

The Delta Regional Authority (DRA) awarded \$1.5 million in new investments across the organization’s footprint to transform workforce development in the communities it serves. The resources specifically fund technical assistance and capacity-building for communities and regional clusters with a particular focus on younger and underserved populations to meet the needs of business and industry. The new investments are a part of the DRA’s Reimagining the Delta Workforce initiative. To learn more, visit <http://dra.gov/newsroom/press-release/delta-regional-authority-awards-1.5-million-in-new-investments/>.

### Louisville’s Beecher Terrace Receives “Choice Neighborhoods” Grant

In January, Louisville received a \$425,000 Choice Neighborhoods planning grant from the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for Beecher Terrace, a public housing development in the city. According to Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer, the planning process will take about two years to develop a road map to transform the Russell neighborhood through housing, education and other key aspects of life there. While the money is not for building, the planning grant is the first step.

HUD Secretary Julian Castro announced \$3.2 million in grants to six cities, including St. Louis. HUD’s new Choice Neighborhoods Initiative is a successor to the HOPE VI program that provided millions of dollars to rebuild other complexes in the city. For more information on the initiative, visit [www.hud.gov/cn](http://www.hud.gov/cn).

### New Grant Opportunity for Creative Placemaking in Tennessee

The Tennessee Arts Commission has designed a Creative Placemaking Grants Competition to help build stronger communities through the arts. It specifically focuses on the use of arts or cultural assets to enhance the distinctive character of local Tennessee places for positive economic and community outcomes. Creative placemaking provides the opportunity to animate public and private spaces, rejuvenate structures and streetscapes and improve local business visibility and public safety. It brings diverse people together to build shared understanding of culture and community. This grants competition offers opportunities for applicants to build on the distinctiveness of place.

The Commission expects to provide five to ten awards ranging from \$5,000 to \$8,000 for projects that occur in one place. Applications that involve partnerships of two or more towns, cities and/or counties can request up to \$10,000. At least two awards will be made to eligible rural applicants. A total of \$50,000 in grants will be awarded for FY2016.

More information and grant applications are now available online at <http://tnartseducation.org/grants/fy2016-17-creative-placemaking-grant-program>. The deadline for submissions is midnight (CT) July 17, 2015. For questions, contact Shannon Ford at 615-532-9796 or Hal Partlow at 615-741-2093.

**Change in Regional Executive for Memphis Branch**



**Martha Perine-Beard**, vice president and regional executive of the Memphis Branch of the St. Louis Fed, has retired after 43 years of service. After receiving her master’s degree in economics from Washington University, Perine-Beard began her career at the Bank as a management trainee, was named an officer in 1978 and served as the head of the Memphis Branch since 1997. In addition to her responsibilities at the Bank, Perine-Beard plays an integral part in the Memphis community by serving on several boards, most notably the United Way of the Mid-South, the Memphis Regional Chamber, Memphis Tomorrow, Baptist Health Care Corporation, Mid-South Minority Business Council and St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital. She has been honored for her community work by Leadership Memphis, the United Way of the Mid-South, the Memphis Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Memphis Woman* magazine, the *Memphis Business Journal*, *Grace* magazine and Girls Incorporated.



Succeeding Perine-Beard is **Douglas Scarboro**, whose experience includes serving as chief learning officer for the city of Memphis and executive director of the Office of Talent and Human Capital, where he was responsible for the education and development of all city employees. He also worked as the director of community engagement at The Leadership Academy, now the New Memphis Institute. Scarboro holds a bachelor’s degree in political science from Morehouse College, a master’s in business administration from Campbell University, and a doctorate in higher and adult education from the University of Memphis. He recently completed the Senior Executives in State and Local Government program at Harvard Univer-

sity’s John F. Kennedy School of Government. Scarboro serves on the board of several local education and entrepreneurial organizations, including EmergeMemphis, Start Co., Memphis College of Art, New Leaders Memphis and Teach For America Memphis.

**Federal Reserve Board Announces Community Advisory Council**

The Federal Reserve Board recently created a new advisory council—the Community Advisory Council (CAC). The Board is accepting [Statements of Interest](#) through **June 12, 2015** from individuals who wish to serve on the CAC. The Board plans to fill the 15 seats on the CAC with a diverse group of experts and representatives of consumer and community development organizations and interests, including such fields as affordable housing, community and economic development, small business, and asset and wealth building. The Board expects to announce the appointment of CAC members in the fall of 2015.

**CFPB Pilot Program Examines Consumer Saving**

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) has announced a new research pilot program analyzing the effectiveness of practices designed to encourage positive saving habits. The research will focus on saving behavior among low- and moderate-income prepaid card users who often do not have access to traditional bank accounts and who may face unique challenges building regular saving habits. More information is available at [www.iaced.org/2014/12/cfpb-announces-new-research-program-examining-consumer-saving/](http://www.iaced.org/2014/12/cfpb-announces-new-research-program-examining-consumer-saving/).

**Immigrant Entrepreneurs Are Reinventing Main Street**

According to a new study based on an analysis of U.S. census data from 2000 to 2013 and reported jointly by the nonpartisan Fiscal Policy Institute and the Americas Society/Council of the Americas (AS/COA), immigrant entrepreneurs accounted for virtually all the growth in “Main Street businesses” during those

years. In 2013, immigrants made up 13 percent of the U.S. population and 16 percent of its labor force, while they made up 28 percent of the owners of these small independent businesses, which include retail, accommodation and food services, and neighborhood service businesses. David Kallick, author of the report, said, “These are businesses that don’t often get a lot of attention from economic development officials, and don’t have huge profits. But they play a big role in neighborhood revitalization, and they can be an important economic step up for the entrepreneurs.” Immigrant-owned businesses earn \$13 billion annually, provide a critical source of first jobs for many in the American workforce, and “play an important role in generating neighborhood-level economic growth by making these areas attractive places to live and work,” according to the report. View the report at <http://www.as-coa.org/sites/default/files/ImmigrantBusinessReport.pdf>.

## **Exploring Innovation in Community Development Webinars**

This webinar series from the Community Development department at the St. Louis Fed allows community development professionals from across the Eighth Federal Reserve District to connect with industry experts to hear and discuss current developments and initiatives. Topics vary and are of interest to economic development professionals, financial institution representatives, community advocates and policymakers. Recent sessions include a series of three webinars focused on soft skills in workforce development:

- **Cultivating Soft Skills in Workforce Development: Early Childhood Initiatives**
- **Cultivating Soft Skills in Workforce Development: K-12 Initiatives**
- **Cultivating Soft Skills in Workforce Development: Higher Education Initiatives**

## **8 From the Eighth Audio Podcast**

*8 From the Eighth* is a podcast series from the Community Development department at the St. Louis Fed. Through interviews with experts (consisting of eight questions), listeners learn about current community development challenges—and successes—in the Eighth District, helping them to understand both the problems and the solutions. Podcasts cover a variety of topics, including innovative strategies and emerging trends related to community development. The audio for all sessions is archived at <https://www.stlouisfed.org/community-development/multimedia/8-from-the-eighth/>.

- **Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE)** — Small businesses form the backbone of our nation's economy and are at the heart of thriving communities. Behind every small business is a dedicated and passionate entrepreneur who has worked tirelessly to start and grow the company. Learn from Angela Lewis, City Manager for the Network for

Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE), about how the organization is cultivating an entrepreneurial spirit among middle and high school students living in low- and moderate-income communities.

## **The Demographics of Wealth: How Age, Education and Race Separate Thrivers from Strugglers in Today's Economy**

This three-part series of essays from the Center for Household Financial Stability at the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis is the result of an analysis of data collected between 1989 and 2013 through the Fed's Survey of Consumer Finances, including interviews with more than 40,000 heads of households during that time period. The essays examine how a family's race or ethnicity, educational attainment and age are related to its ability to thrive financially. Read the first two essays at [www.stlouisfed.org/household-financial-stability/the-demographics-of-wealth](http://www.stlouisfed.org/household-financial-stability/the-demographics-of-wealth).

## **Report on the Economic Well-Being of U.S. Households in 2014**

This report from the Federal Reserve Board's Division of Consumer and Community Affairs provides a snapshot of the financial and economic well-being of U.S. households and the issues they face, based on responses to the Board's Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking (SHED). The report provides new insight into numerous topics of current relevance to household finances, including economic security and emergency savings, savings and spending behavior, housing and living arrangements, banking and credit access, education and student loan debt, and retirement planning. This is the second year that the Board has conducted the survey and published this report. Access the report and download the survey data at [www.federalreserve.gov/communitydev/](http://www.federalreserve.gov/communitydev/).

## **Consumers and Mobile Financial Services 2015**

This report from the Federal Reserve Board provides information on how

consumers access their bank's services using mobile phones ("mobile banking"), how they make payments for goods and services using mobile phones ("mobile payment"), and the use of mobile phones to inform shopping and other financial decisions.

## **Promoting Pathways to Financial Stability: A Resource Handbook on Building Financial Capabilities of Community College Students**

This free online resource from the Boston Fed is designed for community college personnel, potential partners and supporters with an interest in empowering students to better manage their financial lives. It is critical to helping students navigate financial decisions they may be facing currently as well as those that could affect their prospects for future financial wellness.

## **Where Did the Jobs Go?**

The Brookings Institution has created an interactive map showing the change in where jobs are located from 2000-2012. Search the map by MSA or hover over it to get specific information at the census tract level.

## **Take Five with Bill Emmons: Why We're Not Worried About the Economy's First-Quarter Stumble**

In this video, Bill Emmons, assistant vice president at the St. Louis Fed, provides an overview of the U.S. housing recovery, including recovery in the Eighth Federal Reserve District. District states are recovering, but not as fast as some parts of the country.

# bridges

*Bridges* is a quarterly publication of the Community Development Office of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. It is intended to inform bankers, community development organizations, representatives of state and local government agencies and others in the Eighth District about current issues and initiatives in community and economic development. The Eighth District includes the state of Arkansas and parts of Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri and Tennessee.

**Yvonne Sparks**

Community Development Officer  
and Executive Editor  
314-444-8650

**Daniel Davis**

Senior Community Development  
Manager and Managing Editor  
314-444-8308

**Maureen Slaten**

Senior Editor  
314-444-8732

Community Development Staff

Little Rock: **Drew Pack**  
501-324-8268

Louisville: **Lisa Locke**  
502-568-9292  
**Faith Weekly**  
502-568-9216

Memphis: **Kathy Moore Cowan**  
901-531-5110  
**Teresa Cheeks Wilson**  
901-531-5109

St. Louis: **Mike Eggleston**  
314-444-8610  
**Jeanne Marra**  
314-444-6146

The views expressed in *Bridges* are not necessarily those of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis or the Federal Reserve System. Material herein may be reprinted or abstracted as long as *Bridges* is credited. Please provide the editor with a copy of any reprinted articles.

Free subscriptions are available by calling **314-444-8761**, emailing [communitydevelopment@stls.frb.org](mailto:communitydevelopment@stls.frb.org) or visiting [www.stlouisfed.org/subscriptionspage](http://www.stlouisfed.org/subscriptionspage).



## FEDERAL RESERVE BANK of ST. LOUIS

CENTRAL to AMERICA'S ECONOMY®

P.O. Box 442  
St. Louis, MO 63166

[STLOUISFED.ORG](http://STLOUISFED.ORG)

**FOLLOW THE FED**  
[stlouisfed.org/followthefed](http://stlouisfed.org/followthefed)

