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Family Scholar House: Educational Program Breaks Cycle of Poverty for Single Parents in Louisville

By Faith Weekly

In May 2013, Katherine Barnett graduated from Spalding University with a business degree in accounting and a 3.6 GPA. Not an easy feat for Barnett—a high school dropout who earned her GED (with a perfect score) and attended Eastern Kentucky University for a semester before transferring to Jefferson Community Technical College (JCTC) in Louisville with a 1.7 GPA. Then, while attending JCTC part-time, she became pregnant. Friends referred her to a program called Family Scholar House (FSH), which offers comprehensive and holistic services to single parents enrolled in college.

As a pre-resident student (those receiving some services but waiting for housing), Barnett received an educational evaluation conducted by FSH and discovered that she has dyslexia, a learning disability. Her poor performance in school was attributed to this disability, and the discovery also revealed the need for her to attend a college with shorter semesters because of her limited attention span. Barnett enrolled in Spalding University, which offers six-week courses. She used to think she wasn't smart, but once she knew about her learning disability and received proper educational tools, she was able to soar. During her entire time at FSH, Barnett maintained a



The Children's Garden at the Stoddard Johnston Scholar House Campus | photos courtesy Marian Development Group LLC

4.0 GPA. Today, she is the program manager for the Louisville Asset Building Coalition. "I believe they (FSH) are so successful because they believe in people who don't believe in themselves," Barnett said. "It is already difficult to go to school and have a family. The only thing I know that makes it easier is FSH. You have to do a lot to be in the program. You have to be involved. You have to do your volunteer work,

meet with your case worker, meet with your academic advisors. But all of that helps you in the process of graduating and getting all of the advantages that you can't get on your own. To have all that housed in one spot, so you don't have to go to 50 different buildings or not know where to go—on top of the housing aspect—[is critical] to get you through college with a child."

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Family Scholar House

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Eventually Barnett became a resident at the Downtown Scholar House Campus—currently one of four FSH campuses in Louisville—which is in close proximity to Spalding University. She praised the support that she received from her social worker and academic advisor, as well as the support of the other students, who offered to watch each other's children so their classmates could focus on studying. "It's really hard to find support like that. They know what you're going through because they are going through it, too," Barnett explained.

FSH was founded in 1995 as Project Women by representatives of six orders of nuns who recognized the power of education in changing the course of lives; they had a mission to help single parents earn college degrees. Cathe Dykstra, FSH's president and CEO (although she prefers the title "Chief Possibility Officer"), joined the program in 2005, when it con-

sisted of four mothers and four staff members. In 2008, the name was officially changed to Family Scholar House Inc. Dykstra accelerated the program's growth by expanding services and outreach to mothers and children. That growth has propelled the program. In 2012, FSH's 10 staff members served 2,023 families, 3,027 children and 238 pregnant women.

With the help of Marian Development Group, FSH has been able to build their four Louisville campuses. In 2008, in partnership with the University of Louisville's College of Education and Human Development, they opened the Louisville Scholar House Campus with 56 apartments, a full-service academic services center and a child development center. The Downtown Scholar House Campus opened in 2011 with 54 apartments; an academic services center was completed in 2012. The Stoddard Johnston Scholar House Campus opened in December 2011 with 67 families and a

full academic services center. The Parkland Family Scholar House Campus opened in August 2013. All units are Section 8 apartments; residents are required to pay 30 percent of their earned

income toward their rent. Before moving in, residents are required to take four sessions of financial education.

"The expansion of our physical sites has been driven by the needs of our families," said Dykstra. "We are not a housing program. We are an educational program with a housing component." FSH is currently housing 215 families—208 single mothers and 7 single fathers. But the program serves 10 times that many through nonresidential services. Every time a new campus opens and FSH receives publicity, the waiting list increases. There are plans for additional campuses in Louisville.

In 2012, FSH's 10 staff members served 2,023 families, 3,027 children and 238 pregnant women.

"Over the last few years, we've had interest from other communities in replicating our model and very positive feedback from the Department of Education about the comprehensive and holistic nature of our model. That has led to the development of the affiliate program. Our first affiliate just opened in Pikeville, Ky., and additional programs are coming—not just in our region, but nationally. We provide technical assistance, and that cost is covered by the affiliate," explained Dykstra.

"We really believe that our model is so powerful that it is important that we share what

we've learned—best practices as well as mistakes made that can be avoided with some technical assistance," she continued.

The typical cost of building a new campus ranges from \$9.5–\$11.5 million, according to Jake Brown, a developer. Factors such as location and whether the land is donated or acquired can impact the cost of development. "Generally, we utilize the LIHTC [low-income housing tax credit], historic tax credits, local or state funding sources for HOME dollars, or affordable housing trust dollars. In some cases, we will utilize mixed financing through a local public housing agency. We've done that on two

projects in Louisville," Brown explained.

FSH is a very intentional program and is not easy. But every requirement is paired with support to help participants complete that goal. Students must meet with both an academic advisor and a case manager twice a month (one visit with the case manager in the office and the other at home); attend peer support once a month; be a full-time student at all times; maintain a 2.0 GPA; volunteer in the community a minimum of four hours a month; save a minimum of \$10 at least once a month to their own savings account, called a Future Fund,

Typical kitchen in a Family Scholar House apartment



which is administered by FSH; and have their children enrolled in age-appropriate education. Each apartment is inspected every month.

Dykstra notes that FSH's success rate is way above expectations for a program of its kind. The organization boasts a success rate, defined as graduating from an accredited college or university, of almost 86 percent; 75 percent of graduates exit with stable employment, 61 percent continue graduate studies, and 98 percent complete the program without a repeat pregnancy. Within 90 days of graduation, two-thirds of graduates are off public subsidy. Although a 2.0 GPA is required, the average is 3.0; in the spring 2013 semester, 23 participants earned a perfect 4.0 GPA, and 41 participants earned a 3.5-3.9.

"Employers love our graduates," Dykstra said. "They have a tremendous work ethic; they are exactly who you want in your work environment. That kind of dedication and motivation while also raising children and working says a lot about who that student-parent is. Regardless of what they majored in or what they want to do ... who they are is what matters most. They also are fabulous role models for their children."

Dykstra's leadership and ability to articulate the FSH story so well are contributing factors to the program's success, according to Adam Hall, FSH board member and Fifth Third Bank assistant vice presi-

dent. "She knows every detail of the organization, inside and out, so it is pretty compelling to anyone outside the organization, especially funders who like data," he said.

Hall added that the program is comprehensive in the way it helps the people that FSH serves. Once parents become part of the program, they have access to all the resources they may need to navigate through college to a first job after graduation. "If you equip people with resources, low- and moderate-income people from distressed communities can succeed," he stated.

Hall attributes the success of FSH in helping to attract the best board members from across sectors—law, business, education, banking and high-level competencies. At every board meeting, a participant shares their journey to FSH and explains how it has changed their life. Hall credits these stories with enabling the board to set aside petty disagreements, allowing them to focus on work that needs to be done.

FSH plans to continue its expansion, helping many more single parents graduate from college and continue on a successful life journey.

Faith Weekly is a senior community development specialist at the Louisville Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis.



Health Around the Corner

ChrisBoswell | iStock | Thinkstock

By Kara Lubischer

In most St. Louis communities, corner stores, convenience stores and gas stations are a common part of the food-retail landscape. They serve as places to get a snack, grab a quick sandwich or purchase basic household goods. Many also sell tobacco, alcohol and other items. While some store façades

partners in creating healthy, vibrant and strong neighborhoods. Across the country, communities have begun working with corner stores, bodegas and rural groceries to increase access to healthy, affordable foods by making changes that improve both the store environment and the food inventory offered.

In 2009, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Each store owner is paired with a grocery professional who serves as a mentor; together they identify healthy inventory options with existing distributors, identify new suppliers and improve store layout.

have fallen into disrepair or become a neighborhood nuisance due to loitering or other safety issues, others have become part of the neighborhood's social fabric and are a gathering place for neighbors.

Therein lies both the opportunity and challenge of working with small retailers in St. Louis. These stores can be seen as nuisances, or they can be seen as potential

estimated that 23.5 million Americans do not have easy access (i.e., access within one mile of residence) to full-service supermarkets. While there may be a corner store nearby, most lack fresh fruits and vegetables, and low-fat snack or beverage options. Residents are left with a diet of high-priced, processed foods, which ultimately

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Insight Park: Visioning for the Future of Oxford and Ole Miss

By Teresa Cheeks Wilson

Oxford, Miss.—home to the University of Mississippi, better known as “Ole Miss”—has been named by USA Today as one of the top six college towns in the nation; by American Express as one of the best small towns in America to do business; and by Forbes as one of the fastest growing small towns.

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the population of Oxford is 18,916; that’s a 60.91 percent change from 2000, when it was 11,756. What contributed to that growth? Is it the rich history, the small-town charm or the culture the town has to offer? Ask someone what comes to mind when they think of Oxford and they will most likely say the arts, good food, Ole Miss football and a great place to live. Oxford is on many “best” lists for a reason; it’s considered by some as the “Oasis of the South.”

What some might not know about Oxford is that it is home to a growing health care and technology community, including Insight Park, a 19-acre research and business park that

offers opportunities for collaborative research, academic resources and more. “Insight Park was envisioned as a way to encourage the commercialization of intellectual property developed at the university, and as an economic driver for the region,” says Jake Jenkins, manager of facilities and technical resources at Insight Park. “Our focus in Oxford and at the university is to build a community in which we want to live and to create jobs. Not just any jobs—specifically, those in the knowledge-based economy, which includes health care, information technology, biopharmaceutical research and engineering.”

With funding from the National Institute of Standards and Technology, as well as buy-in from the university and local elected officials, Insight Park was built and opened in January 2012. It consists of Innovation Hub, a modern building with high-tech amenities and acres of land adjacent to the campus that can be leased out to other entities. “I believe that companies that had not considered locating in this area have given us serious consideration because of what

we provide,” stated Jenkins. Innovation Hub offers high-end technology and space that will accommodate any size business. Its amenities include:

- Access to an executive conference room and two training spaces
- 24/7 card-key access
- Cutting-edge data network and security systems
- Shared common spaces (e.g., kitchen facilities and lounge areas)
- Wet and dry lab facilities
- Opportunities to utilize shared business office equipment
- Executive in Residence on-site at the Hub to provide mentorship and counseling for new CEOs

Insight Park has a fiber-optic network that offers tenants a wide range of Internet capability, rare for the region. But the biggest attraction is the university. People working with Ole Miss—including interns, consulting services and those licensing intellectual property or contracting with the university to provide support for research operations—have access to many of its resources. “We have the physical and

intellectual infrastructure to plug a business in and help them to be something greater than what they already are,” says Jenkins. Presently, negotiations are under way with a health care auditing firm to lease more than 1,000 square feet of office space in the Park and employ MBA students from the university. They have projected 12 initial jobs, with future growth potential.

Ole Miss isn’t the first university to build a research park, so the university’s executives knew that it would be an economic catalyst to kick-start the local economy, create jobs and attract new companies. In August 2013, the unemployment rate in Oxford was 6.6 percent, with future job growth expected to be 30.8 percent over the next 10 years (www.homefacts.com). Research parks have been very effective in creating high-wage jobs, launching new companies and providing entrepreneurs access to business training, a qualified workforce and local university resources. They are also credited with creating jobs—locally, regionally and statewide.

“Insight Park’s economic impact to the university and to Oxford is job creation. If they create a successful company, they will create a lot of jobs. The goal is to create jobs and economic activity for the area,” says Bill Rayburn, CEO, chairman and co-founder of FNC, a collateral-management technology company serving mortgage lenders. Rayburn’s idea for

FNC grew out of Ole Miss, and the university provided support for the company to get off the ground. FNC is the first company of its kind and has been on the list of fastest growing private companies at Inc.com several times.

The primary focus of Insight Park is innovative, technology-based enterprises with ties to the university. One such organization housed in Innovation Hub is Social Data Services (SDS). William Ault, a junior at Ole Miss, started SDS to develop iPhone and Android applications. Ault always wanted to start his own business and even

Research parks have been very effective in creating high-wage jobs, launching new companies and providing entrepreneurs access to business training, a qualified workforce and local university resources.

launched a few as he was growing up. He's been with the Park since it opened; he worked as an intern for about two years, doing everything from laying cable to setting up the new networking communications system in the building.

Following his internship, Ault wrote a business plan, submitted a proposal and was accepted as a tenant. He has occupied the incubator with several other tenants since the summer of 2013. He loves the Park because of its affordability, convenience and access to intellectual resources. "If it had not been for Insight Park,

I really have no idea where I would have started my business venture. I couldn't think of a better place," he said. Ault works with four other programmers and hopes to release SDS's first Android application in 2014. His plans for the future include expanding the business by employing more Ole Miss students and fostering an entrepreneurial culture. "I hope it catches on," he says.

Jon Maynard, president and CEO of the Oxford-Lafayette County Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Foundation, feels that Oxford is the logical place to locate

health care and life-sciences businesses. "Something that differentiates Oxford from other cities in Mississippi as an economic target is that we like to pursue these types of businesses, which require the skills that have been acquired at Ole Miss. Insight Park is a key location for us to place those jobs and companies. It's located in the Health Care Zone, and these kinds of businesses want and need to be close to the university. There's enough space at Insight Park that if we worked collaboratively with the state of Mississippi, the city and county, the university



Insight Park's amenities include wet and dry lab facilities. | photos courtesy Insight Park

and private investors, we could develop the space into something that's world-class, which would attract many companies in one spot, including pharmaceutical, health care, IT, natural products research and manufacturing."

Insight Park's growth has moved far ahead of what was initially projected. Currently, there are approximately 63 people working at the Park, including interns and tenants. Of the available 65,000 square feet of lease space, only 8,000 square feet are unoccupied. That space will likely be leased quickly, due to easy access to scarce resources.

As for the future of Insight Park, the university and Oxford, "I think that the research park will grow beyond the first building in the next five years. My hope is to expand our business incubation operation and partner with private companies to build other facilities on the land that

makes up the research park. By working with the city and regional economic developers, I think we will see some sort of technological nexus built in Oxford," Jenkins says.

So, in a few years, when residents are asked what comes to mind when they think of Oxford, maybe they will say innovation, technology, health care and a great place to work.

Teresa Cheeks Wilson is a community development specialist at the Memphis Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis.

Anchor Institutions in the Mississippi Delta

Mapping Relationships Between Community Anchors and Socioeconomic Indicators

By Brandon Farber

The Mississippi Delta is a region rich in culture but lacking in economic prosperity. With some of the highest poverty and unemployment rates in the nation, predominantly African-American communities are aiming to emerge from a tattered past.

Following the Civil War, African-American residents endured many economic hardships fueled by racism and segregation, including deteriorating infrastructure and scarce employment opportunities. Many migrated north to cities like Chicago and Detroit, which saw their African-American populations grow by approximately 40 percent between 1910 and 1930. During the second half of the 20th century, the increasing mechanization of agricultural labor and foreign competition for manufacturing jobs propelled a second wave of migration that has seen the total population of the Delta region fall by almost half since 1940, leaving vacant homes and abandoned businesses in its wake.

While farming and factory jobs have declined, service

occupations that pay near-poverty wages have grown, targeting the nearly 18 percent of the adult population in the Delta that has less than a ninth-grade education. This has led to widening income disparities, not only between white and African-American Delta residents, but also between African-Americans in the Delta and those residing elsewhere in Mississippi. A report from the Task Force for the Revitalization of the Delta Region found that, in 2007, the median household income for African-Americans in the Delta was 23 percent lower than that of African-Americans in the rest of the state, an alarming testament to the degree of blight unique to the area.

In many respects, the Mississippi Delta is a regional example of how intersecting socioeconomic variables can erode entire communities. As a result, the area has become a focal point of community and economic development efforts.

Anchor Institutions

While there exist countless proposals for what the Delta requires most to promote

community recovery and progress, one particular resource for development lies in the anchor institution and its capacity to leverage jobs, wealth and community improvements. Anchor institutions are place-based entities with human and economic ties to their surrounding community. The institution and its community are naturally interdependent, as the welfare of one can have enduring consequences on the welfare of the other. For this reason, anchor institutions often utilize their economic and human resources to invest in the people, businesses and infrastructure that surround them.

Typically identified as a hospital or university, anchor institutions can also include large

In 2007, the median household income for African-Americans in the Delta was 23 percent lower than that of African-Americans in the rest of the state.

corporations, utility companies, and financial, cultural or religious institutions. Nationwide, universities and hospitals alone own assets in the trillions of dollars and spend billions. With such immense resources, anchor institutions maintain the capacity, incentive and—arguably—the responsibility to invest in job creation, business development, workforce training, infrastructure improvements and a multitude of other social and economic development strategies for their host communities.

Data and Mapping

In an effort to determine the impact of anchor institutions on communities in the Mississippi Delta, where a single employer can be a lifeline for an entire community, a mapping project was completed utilizing U.S. census data and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software. With assistance from the Memphis Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, 16 counties were identified as comprising the Mississippi Delta. These counties were then broken down into the 126 corresponding census tracts, and poverty and unemployment data from the 2011 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates were matched to their tract.

A total of 14 anchor institutions were also selected based on their estimated contributions relative to the size of their host communities. Variables such as clients served, workers employed and financial investments in the community were all considered and weighted against the total population of the surrounding area. Having established the research area, collected the necessary data and identified the qualifying institutions, this information was joined using GIS software. Two maps were produced,

FIGURE 1
**Anchor Institutions and Poverty
 in the Mississippi Delta**

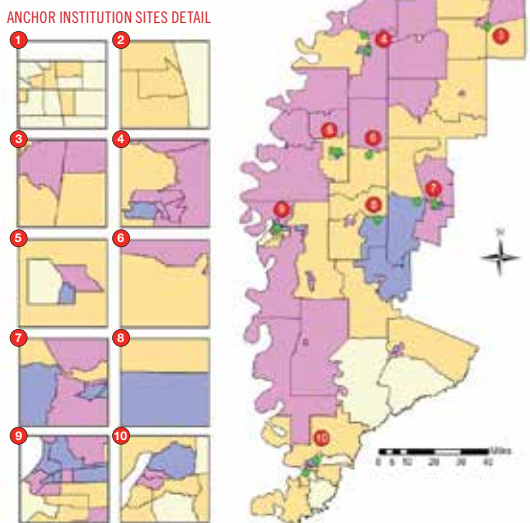
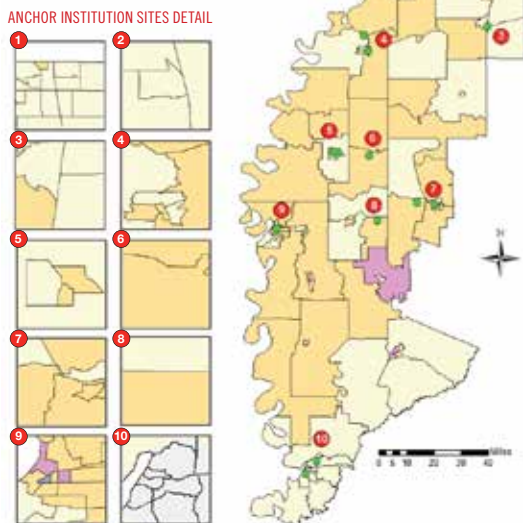


FIGURE 2
**Anchor Institutions and
 Unemployment in the
 Mississippi Delta**



KEY U.S. Census Data Percent Poverty (Fig. 1) or Unemployment (Fig. 2)
 0-15 15.1-30 30.1-45 >45 Census tracts Anchor institutions

SOURCE: American Community Survey, 2011. Map by Brandon Farber

illustrating poverty and unemployment rates in Mississippi Delta census tracts and how these indicators corresponded to the locations of anchor institutions. (See Figures 1 and 2.)

Results

When the data from the 14 census tracts that included an anchor institution is averaged against the 112 tracts that did not, no significant difference was found when accounting for margins of error. The average poverty rate for census tracts that hosted an anchor institution was 27.7 percent, compared to 26.9 percent for tracts without a major employer. Similarly, the average

unemployment rate for host tracts was 15.1 percent, compared to 14.6 percent for tracts that did not include an anchor institution.

Opportunities for Collaboration

Why might the success of anchor institutions in the Delta pale in comparison to other areas? While by no means a holistic representation of the obstacles facing Delta communities, the results from this research could be a testament to the longstanding, chronic socioeconomic challenges that have become synonymous with the region. These outcomes offer an opportunity for community development

professionals to explore and harness the potential of anchor institutions to leverage jobs and wealth, and to promote recovery and progress in struggling communities. Despite the results from this study, one hypothesis is that the data would reveal an even poorer outlook if the institutions identified for this project did not exist. While further research is necessary to determine possible mediating variables, the ways in which an anchor institution engages a community and whether or not it carries a defined “anchor mission” is potentially where discrepancies like the ones illustrated in this research can arise.

Nevertheless, community development professionals in the Mississippi Delta could familiarize themselves with these establishments and actively pursue these resources. An opportunity exists for anchor institutions and community advocates to work together to take the necessary steps to transform their communities for the better. How available resources are leveraged during times of austerity is critical to meeting community and economic improvement goals, and collaboration with anchor institutions can provide a cornerstone to this endeavor, especially in rural America.

For the small towns of the Mississippi Delta and countless others across the United States, an anchor institution can often be the single indispensable factor necessary for the continued existence of an entire community. With the welfare of so many dependent upon these establishments, it is important not to underestimate the potential they have to impact the Delta.

Brandon Farber is a graduate of the George Warren Brown School of Social Work at Washington University in St. Louis. In 2013, he was a practicum student in the Community Development department at the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis.



Joe Neri is the CEO of IFF, developing the organization's strategies for growth to strengthen nonprofit corporations and the

communities they serve. He has worked in comprehensive community development for more than 25 years in areas including child care facilities, charter schools and affordable housing. He provides national commentary on community development finance and the nonprofit sector, and is a member of the Community Development Advisory Council (CDAC) for the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis.

Neri also has created or been involved in IFF's Real Estate Services division, Children's Capital Fund program, Research division, lending program and Charter School Capital Program. He significantly broadened the affordable housing lending program to include real estate development, consulting with municipalities on housing plans and acquiring foreclosed homes for nonprofit corporations.

One of America's leading nonprofit community development financial institutions (CDFI), IFF strengthens nonprofits and their communities through lending and real estate consulting. With total managed assets of more than \$270 million, IFF helps nonprofits finance, plan and build facilities that are critical to their mission and success. The organization serves nonprofits in the Midwest, with a focus on those that serve low-income communities and special needs populations. For more information on IFF, please visit www.iff.org.

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.

Charter School Anchors St. Louis Neighborhood Revitalization

By Joe Neri

The fortunes of St. Louis' Fox Park neighborhood mirror those of many urban areas across the country—after decades of dwindling population, remaining residents were left grappling with poverty, crime, limited healthy food options, and a lack of safe, affordable housing. But the story of Fox Park is one of renewal, of community groups banding together and investing resources and services to engender a renewed vision for the future. Fox Park is again on the upswing, attracting new residents and creating a vibrant sense of community.

“Putting a school in a community is the first building block to creating a vital and effective community.”

—St. Louis Mayor Francis Slay

Community leaders attribute much of the momentum in Fox Park to the opening of the KIPP Inspire Academy—part of the KIPP national network of free, open-enrollment, college-preparatory charter schools with a track record of preparing students in underserved communities for success in

college and in life. A locally based coalition called SUTAK (St. Louisians United to Attract KIPP) organized the effort to establish KIPP's first location in the city, with the widespread support of community leaders and the ongoing sponsorship of Washington University in St. Louis.

KIPP Inspire identified an ideal location in the shuttered DeSales High School—an abandoned, vandalized eyesore that could once again become a vital community anchor. While charter schools receive public funds for operations, they do not receive facilities aid. KIPP thus needed to secure affordable financing to upgrade the DeSales facility, undertake needed repairs and bring the building up to code. The St. Louis office of IFF, a leading nonprofit community development financial institution (CDFI), stepped in to provide a leasehold loan to make needed improvements and prepare the school for its 2009 grand opening.

A School that Demands Commitment

The KIPP model requires the engagement and commitment of not just students, but families and community leaders as well. The time and intensity of the KIPP program is greater than most traditional public schools.

Students are in school from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. and complete two hours of homework each night. They attend classes on Saturdays and their school year starts in July. Overwhelmingly, the students come from low-income and minority families in underserved neighborhoods.

Many fifth-graders come to KIPP Inspire performing several grade levels behind in math and reading. Yet once enrolled, they persist in exceeding expectations: By the time they reach eighth grade their average achievement is higher than that of their peers in the state of Missouri. In 2009, 34 percent of fifth-graders at the school tested at grade level in math, and 22 percent in English, according to results from the Missouri Assessment Program. By the end of seventh grade, their passing rates had about doubled, with 67 percent at or above grade level in math, and 44 percent in English.

At KIPP Inspire's inaugural eighth-grade graduation ceremony in May 2013, School Leader Jeremy Esposito announced that the class of 2017, consisting of 72 students, was promoted to 26 of the most prestigious public, private and parochial college-preparatory high schools across the St. Louis region, including Metro Academic and Classical

High School, Chaminade College Preparatory School, Rosati-Kain High School, Grand Center Arts Academy, MICDS and Gateway STEM High School. Based upon this initial success, KIPP plans to eventually operate five schools in the St. Louis region—elementary and middle schools in north and south St. Louis and a centrally located high school.

Catalyst for Neighborhood Revitalization

Beyond the academic benefits to its students, neighbors say the KIPP charter school has become a catalyst for community revitalization. The success of KIPP Inspire has extended beyond the school grounds and engaged the entire community in a shared sense of purpose. Crime is observed by residents to be down, housing is being renovated and there is a renewed sense of pride in the air. As an anchor, the school is attracting more middle-class families and businesses to invest in the Fox Park neighborhood.

Since its investment in KIPP Inspire, IFF has continued to work with local organizations that provide child care, education, healthy food options, affordable housing and many other services for the neighborhood. In the housing sector, IFF made a \$1.2-million loan in 2012 to DeSales Community Housing Corporation, a non-profit organization promoting investment and revitalization in low-income, underserved

neighborhoods. With the financing, DeSales was able to renovate 11 units in its 130-unit Compton Hill Apartments, one of St. Louis' largest neighborhood-based apartment communities.

Ensuring quality, affordable child care options and access to healthy food for families are additional important elements of community development. For more than 125 years, the SouthSide Early Childhood Center has provided St. Louis families with comprehensive child care services, either on a sliding scale basis or free of charge to those who qualify. The Center has recently taken on healthy food initiatives, promoting healthy eating habits to students, as well as offering onsite cooking classes for parents and in-home nutrition visits.

As the number of clients and programs has grown, SouthSide has grown beyond the capacity of their facility. In 2012, the Center hired IFF real estate consulting services to plan for and structure a New Markets Tax Credit to enable the construction of a new 19,000-square-foot facility. The new building will allow SouthSide to serve an additional 42 children from all income levels.

An IFF loan has transformed an abandoned grocery store into a Save-A-Lot, as part of IFF's Healthy Food Access initiative. The LEED-certified project brings healthy food at affordable prices to Fox Park, currently considered a food desert by the U.S. Department

of Agriculture, and is providing jobs for 30 local residents. Opened in December 2013, the Save-A-Lot also hosts grocery shopping, nutrition and cooking classes through a partnership with Casa de Salud, a nearby health center.

Just five years ago, Fox Park residents lacked easy access to quality affordable housing, affordable fresh and healthy food, quality education and child care services. Thanks to the efforts of KIPP Inspire, DeSales, SouthSide Early Childhood Center, Save-A-Lot and other local organizations, the community environment has clearly improved. Partnering with IFF, these organizations have spearheaded economic development while investing in health and wellness, education and early childhood care.

Moving forward, IFF will continue to work with local leaders to bring client organizations together to facilitate the planning and marshaling of resources in support of additional community development projects, including affordable housing for KIPP Inspire teachers. Though challenges certainly remain, Fox Park presents a community that has turned a long corner toward a promising future.

Have you HEARD

Register for 2014 Reinventing Older Communities Conference

The sixth biennial conference, co-sponsored by the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, will be held May 12-14 at the Loews Philadelphia Hotel. The conference will explore how communities can grow and strengthen their economies by creating opportunities for all residents. More than 400 community developers, advocates and planners; government leaders; bankers; researchers; foundation representatives; business leaders and students are expected to attend.

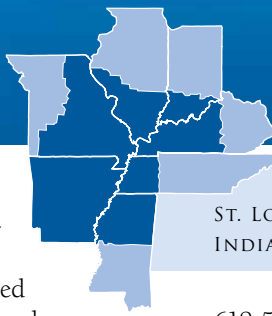
Speakers will include **Raj Chetty**, William Henry Bloomberg professor of economics, Harvard University; **Angela Glover Blackwell**, founder and CEO, PolicyLink; **Mark Zandi**, chief economist, Moody's Analytics; and others.

Registration is now open. For more information, visit the conference's webpage at www.philadelphiafed.org/community-development/events/2014/reinventing-older-communities/.

2014 Assets & Opportunity Scorecard Available

Released annually, CFED's *Scorecard* explores how well residents are faring in the 50 states and the District of Columbia and assesses policies that are helping residents build and protect assets along five issue areas: financial assets and income, businesses and jobs, housing and homeownership, health care and education. It is the leading source of state-level data on financial security and policy solutions. The 2014 *Scorecard* assesses states across more than 130 outcome and policy measures in these five areas to determine the ability of residents to achieve financial security. The *Scorecard* is available at <http://assetsandopportunity.org/scorecard/>.

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.

U.S. Treasury Recognizes Champion Community Investments as a Certified CDFI

Southern Illinois Coal Belt Champion Community Inc., doing business as Champion Community Investments (CCI), has been designated by the U.S. Treasury as a Certified Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI). CCI is also the recipient of a \$600,000 grant from the Treasury's CDFI Fund, which will further boost CCI's financial resources to help small businesses and microenterprises in the five counties served by the organization: Jackson, Williamson,

Franklin, Jefferson and Perry.

Being a certified CDFI brings several benefits to CCI and to the region, including the ability to learn more about organizational capacity-building, loan underwriting and improved marketing. It also makes CCI eligible to expand its working relationships with the financial services industry through Community Reinvestment Act investments.

CCI is also able to participate in business loans with area banks. Loan information and applications are available at www.ccinvestments.org, or call

618-536-2424 for an appointment with Small Business Development Center staff.

Fourth Quarter Housing Market Conditions Report

Mortgage delinquencies continued to decline across all seven states that comprise the Federal Reserve's Eighth District during the fourth quarter of 2013, according to the St. Louis Fed's latest Housing Market Conditions report. The quarterly report provides a snapshot of housing market

conditions across the U.S. and in the Eighth District, which covers the states of Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri and Tennessee. The report also now includes data for the District's four main Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs): Little Rock, Louisville, Memphis and St. Louis. View the most recent report, as well as archives of previous reports, at www.stlouisfed.org/community_development/HMC/.

Health Around the Corner

continued from Page 3

leads to the growing obesity epidemic and numerous other health issues.

Due to the positive association between the retail environment and diet, one objective of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Healthy People 2020 plan is to increase the percentage of persons with access to a retailer that sells the various healthy foods recommended in the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, including fruits and vegetables, whole-grain foods and low-fat dairy products. In

order to meet this objective, healthy retailer programs have become a promising strategy for closing the food gap across the country.

To improve access to healthy, affordable foods in city neighborhoods, the St. Louis Healthy Corner Store Project was launched in 2011 as a collaboration between University of Missouri Extension, the city of St. Louis departments of Health and Public Safety, and the St. Louis Development Corporation. In partnership with communities and corner store owners, the project delivers a comprehensive approach that combines community development, small-business

support, nutrition education and greater availability of affordable, nutritious foods.

What makes the St. Louis program unique is the emphasis on building demand for healthy foods through a nomination process. Neighborhood

store and a leadership group in the community. In doing so, the project attempts to address both supply and demand with a goal of lessening the potential burden on participating stores. Initial demand is created by a neighborhood organization

Participating stores have ... average[ed] a 25 percent increase in healthy food shelf space.

stores must be nominated to be a part of the program by a resident-driven neighborhood association, community-based nonprofit, school or faith-based organization. The nomination requires the identification of both a neighborhood corner

committing to support the store through the nomination. This demand then lowers the risk to the retailer who will be increasing the store's supply of healthy inventory. Nominations are evaluated based on a variety of factors related to community

support, neighborhood characteristics, local health data and store capacity. Each neighborhood and store works with the project for one year.

Once selected, each store owner is paired with a grocery professional who serves as a mentor; together they identify healthy inventory options with existing distributors, identify new suppliers and improve store layout. Stores receive small merchandising supplies such as produce baskets and project signs, as well as the *St. Louis Healthy Corner Store Project Resource Guidebook* filled with tips on food safety, storage and merchandising. The original goal was to increase the percentage of healthy food inventory by five percent per store after one year. Participating stores have far exceeded this goal, averaging a 25 percent increase in healthy food shelf space.

The nominating organization forms a neighborhood leadership team that organizes a variety of community education and outreach activities. Limited funding is available for related expenses. Each team defines their own activities; they have identified and organized a variety of successful programs, including a neighborhood healthy food festival, youth cooking competition, bike rack installation at a corner store, and a healthy eating poster competition with the winning posters displayed at the store.

The project acknowledges that simply increasing

availability of healthy foods is not enough to have a large-scale impact. Education is key. Therefore, education is provided in each store and in the community. Point-of-decision prompts are placed by healthy products to make the healthy choice easy for customers. Taste tests are held at each store using recipes developed by the team that utilize products typically sold at small neighborhood stores. Nutrition education classes, taught by professionals from University of Missouri Extension and co-hosted by the neighborhood leadership team, are held in each community. As a result, nearly 400 customers have sampled recipes at store taste tests and more than 80 residents have attended nutrition education classes over the last year.

While communities have a variety of strategies at their disposal to improve diets and reduce obesity rates, working with retailers is a win-win approach to improving community health. Participating stores get free publicity and community support for increasing revenue from healthy food sales. Community members gain access to healthier food options and education about nutrition. The St. Louis Healthy Corner Store Project serves as a local model for closing the food gap by working with existing small food retailers, establishing partnerships with community-based organizations and providing nutrition education to St. Louis neighborhoods. To learn more

about the St. Louis Healthy Corner Store Project, please visit www.extension.missouri.edu/stlouis/healthycornerstore.aspx.

Kara Lubischer is a community development specialist with University of Missouri Extension.

BRIDGES

Bridges is a 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.

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Celebrate National Financial Literacy Month

St. Louis Successes

By Chelsea Dyer

April is National Financial Literacy Month, so it's an appropriate time to shine a spotlight on initiatives that bring together community partners to improve consumer financial awareness in the St. Louis metro region. For those who sponsor and participate in events, financial literacy is an important life skill that benefits many individuals throughout their lifetimes. "Whether in taking out a student loan, buying a house or saving for retirement, people are being asked to make decisions that are difficult even if they have graduate training in finance and economics," noted Richard Thayer, economics professor at the Booth School of Business at the University of Chicago. At the St. Louis Fed, financial literacy also plays a critical role in building strong household balance sheets and healthier, more prosperous communities overall.

Money Smart Week St. Louis Offers More than 200 Neighborhood-Based Classes

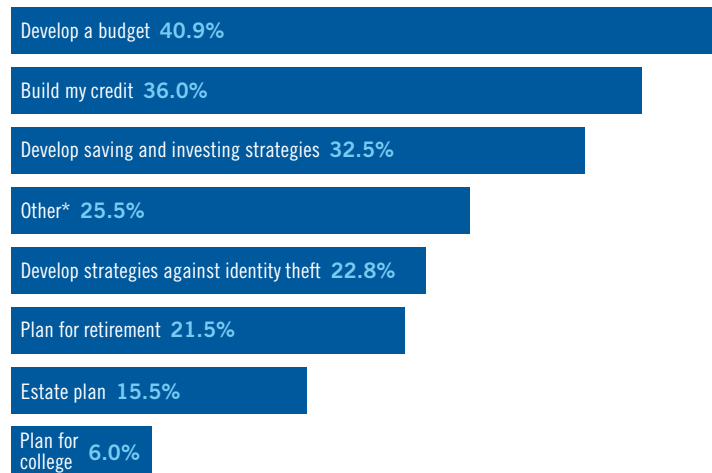
Money Smart Week began in 2002 when more than 40

Chicago-area organizations that worked together to promote financial literacy convened as a council through the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago. The effort was designed with the long-term objective of creating a knowledgeable population of consumers who have a basic grasp of financial literacy and, even more important, know where to seek resources when they have questions. These sessions allow local providers to gauge consumer understanding of various financial issues and tailor their range of services to meet client needs.

Now in its third year, Money Smart Week St. Louis, held April 5-12, 2014, offers programming from more than 100 partners dedicated to providing financial literacy education workshops across the metro St. Louis area to participants of varying socioeconomic levels. The events are free and completely focused on education; no sales pitches, predatory practices or gimmicks are allowed. The local effort will offer more than 200 classes on topics such as saving for a child's education, budgeting, teaching children to be money smart and saving for retirement. (Visit [www.](http://www.moneysmartstlouis.org)



What did you learn during Money Smart Week 2013 that you will apply in the next 30 days?



* Additional responses included topics such as the Affordable Care Act, health insurance, disseminating information shared with clients, caring for elderly parents and interviewing techniques.

moneysmartstlouis.org for an online calendar of events by county, ZIP code, date or topic.)

The concentration of financial education classes not only benefits consumers and highlights the need for financial education in the region, but also aids participating agencies by helping to foster new relationships among service providers. "It's a chain reaction," explained Debbie Irwin, who co-chairs Money Smart Week St. Louis. "More sponsors lead to more events offered, which in turn generates

more awareness, thus ultimately producing greater outcomes."

Money Smart Week St. Louis is sponsored by the Greater St. Louis Financial Education Collaborative through its host, United Way of Greater St. Louis. The Collaborative is a group of more than 130 nonprofit and private-sector partners, including the St. Louis Fed, with the mission of increasing information and access to financial education, as well as asset-building opportunities throughout the region.

And while Money Smart Week events focus on a week in April, the Collaborative uses its newly launched Money Smart St. Louis web site to extend the reach and impact of resources and events throughout the year. “We hope the web site will raise awareness of trustworthy financial literacy

98 percent of survey respondents who attended a 2013 Money Smart Week St. Louis class reported that the session was valuable or very valuable and that they would recommend the session to a friend.

tools and empower all individuals, but especially low-income consumers, to learn more about personal finance and make informed decisions when it comes to spending, saving, banking, borrowing and investing,” Irwin said.

Bankers Unite To Teach Children To Save

Do you know many second-graders who can define *borrowing*, *saving*, *savings goal* and *interest*? You might, if their St. Louis area classroom participates in the national Teach Children to Save program. This effort is designed to educate

elementary school students at an early age about the importance of saving. Since it began more than 17 years ago, this program has partnered with commercial banks to reach more than six million students. This year, the St. Louis Fed will team with 11 community

96 percent of survey respondents who attended a 2013 Money Smart Week St Louis class said they were likely to very likely to take action on something they learned in their Money Smart Week class.

banks during the week of April 7-11 to bring lessons of saving into second-grade classrooms via a simple storybook-style lesson plan. Commercial bank partners include Enterprise Bank, Commerce Bank, First Bank, Midwest Bank Center, Regions Bank, BMO Harris Bank, the Bank of Edwardsville, Simmons First National Bank, Midwest Regional Bank, the Business Bank of St. Louis and Pulaski Bank.

“The St. Louis Fed has been cooperating with the Missouri Council on Economic Education and area banks to conduct ‘Teach Children to Save Day’

for more than 10 years,” said Mary Suiter, assistant vice president of economic education at the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. “The children participate in several activities and receive a ruler made from shredded currency. This year we expect to reach 212 second-grade classrooms and 5,600 students,” Suiter said.

St. Louis to Hold First Financial Empowerment Fair

A partnership between the Office of the Treasurer in the city of St. Louis and local community agencies has resulted in the organization of the city’s inaugural Financial Empowerment Fair. The April 26 event, to be held at Harris-Stowe State University during National Financial Literacy Month, will feature an address by John Hope Bryant, CEO and founder of Operation Hope, as well as educational activities and resources for the entire family from numerous banks, credit unions, and state and federal agencies. Attendees can learn about second-chance bank accounts, credit counseling, the unclaimed property database, identity theft and new opportunities available through MOST, Missouri’s 529 College Savings Program.

“St. Louis tops the nation in the number of minority households that are either unbanked or underbanked, and we are twice the national average in overall unbanked households,” said Tishaura Jones, city of St. Louis trea-

surer. “The goal of this event is to educate and empower the citizens of our region to make better choices with their money and avoid using predatory financial services.”

The full-day fair is co-sponsored by Harris-Stowe State University, the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis and United Way of Greater St. Louis.

Involving the local government through the city’s Treasurer’s office sends a clear message to residents about the importance of the mission. The cooperation and coordination of different St. Louis entities, in both the public and private sectors, demonstrates how the region is fighting for its citizens to be financially literate. “We are excited about providing this opportunity for the community,” added Jones, “and we want consumers to walk away feeling empowered to change their financial future.”

How does your community celebrate National Financial Literacy Month? Look for similar initiatives throughout the Federal Reserve’s Eighth District and join in the celebration, either as a partner or an attendee. Improve consumer financial awareness and make a difference in your community.

Chelsea Dyer is a graduate student at the George Warren Brown School of Social Work at Washington University in St. Louis and a practicum student in the Community Development department of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis.

RESOURCES

8 From the Eighth Audio Podcasts

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.

- **Six Myths About the Future of Small Towns: Milan Wall**
www.stlouisfed.org/community_development/multimedia/audio/8-From-the-Eighth/six-myths-future-small-towns.cfm
- **The Scholarship Foundation of St. Louis: Faith Sandler**
www.stlouisfed.org/community_development/multimedia/audio/8-From-the-Eighth/scholarship-foundation-stlouis.cfm
- **Memphis' Start Co. (formerly Launch Your City): Eric Mathews**
www.stlouisfed.org/community_development/multimedia/audio/8-From-the-Eighth/memphis-start-co.cfm

- **Louisville's 55,000 Degrees: Mary Gwen Wheeler**
www.stlouisfed.org/community_development/multimedia/audio/8-From-the-Eighth/Wheeler.cfm

St. Louis Collaborations Directory

This document is a living directory of significant collaborations in the St. Louis region and is intended as a resource for grantmakers. It was compiled based on surveys of and conversations with members of the grantmaking community, as well as online research.

http://centerforgiving.org/Portals/0/Nonmember_STL%20Collaborations%20Directory_Updated%201-28.pdf

New Hamilton Project Low-Income Family Papers

The Hamilton Project released two new discussion papers that offer innovative ideas for improving the economic security of low-income families in the U.S., and a series of economic facts about America's struggling lower-middle class.

- **Giving Secondary Earners a Tax Break: A Proposal To Help Low- and Middle-Income Families**
www.hamiltonproject.org/papers/giving_secondary_earners_a_tax_break/
- **Strengthening SNAP for a More Food-Secure, Healthy America**
http://www.hamiltonproject.org/papers/strengthening_snap_for_a_more_food-secure_healthy_america/
- **A Dozen Facts about America's Struggling Lower-Middle Class**
http://www.hamiltonproject.org/files/downloads_and_links/THP_12LowIncomeFacts_Final.pdf

Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program—A Promising Initiative for Rental Assistance

This paper reviews previous evaluations of the FSS program conducted by academic researchers, nonprofit organizations, and government entities, and augments the review with information collected directly from FSS program staff.

Asset-Oriented Rental Assistance, New America Foundation: http://assets.newamerica.net/publications/policy/asset_oriented_rental_assistance

First Evaluation of NMTC Program

This first formal evaluation of the NMTC program is nation- and program-wide in scope.

New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) Program Evaluation Final Report, Urban Institute: <http://www.urban.org/publications/412958.html>

Harvard's Joint Center for Housing Studies Releases Biennial Rental Housing Report

Weak income growth and rising rents have created severe affordability problems for American renters.

America's Rental Housing: Evolving Markets and Needs: http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/sites/jchs.harvard.edu/files/jchs_american_rental_housing_2013_1_0.pdf



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CALENDAR

APRIL

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West Tennessee Nonprofit Conference—Jackson, Tenn.

Sponsor: WestStar Leadership Program
Contact: Virginia Grimes at 731-881-7298
<http://www.utm.edu/departments/weststar/events.php>

3

Strong Towns: The Intersection of Land Use, Transportation, and Financial Resilience—Fayetteville, Ark.

Sponsor: University of Arkansas
<http://uacs.uark.edu/Events/View/20943>

10

Off the Beaten Path: The Economic Impact of Rural Tourism—Audioconference

Sponsor: Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis
www.stlouisfed.org/bsr/EI_CDAudioConference/

10–11

Critical Conversations on Sustainability: Energy—St. Louis, Mo.

Sponsor: Webster University
www.webster.edu/sustainability/conference/

12

Let's Get Money Smart Financial Empowerment Workshop and Resource Fair—St. Louis, Mo.

Sponsors: Metropolitan St. Louis CRA Association, Webster University
<http://mslcra.org/news/webster-university-offers-free-finance-classes-at-lets-get-money-smart-financial-empowerment-resource-fair/>

14

Entrepreneurship Summit—Conway, Ark.

Sponsor: University of Central Arkansas, Community Development Institute
<http://uca.edu/cdi/entrepreneurship-summit/>

16–18

Neighborhood Redevelopment Conference: Healthy Communities – Redevelopment from the Inside-OUT—Memphis, Tenn.

Sponsors: City of Memphis Division of Housing and Community Development, Memphis Housing Authority
www.cityofchoice.org/nrc

28–29

19th Annual Rural Development Conference: Igniting Opportunity—Murfreesboro, Tenn.

Sponsors: USDA, Tennessee Dept. of Economic & Community Development, Tennessee Valley Authority, Tennessee Tech University
www.rurdev.usda.gov/TN-Home.html

28–MAY 1

Tennessee Basic Economic Development Course—Nashville, Tenn.

Sponsor: University of Tennessee Institute for Public Service
<https://cis.tennessee.edu/train/programtraining/TNEDPT/Pages/TBEDC.aspx>

MAY

5–7

The Power of MICROBUSINESS: Aligning for a New Economy—New Orleans, La.

Sponsor: Association for Enterprise Opportunity (AEO)
www.aeoworks.org/index.php/conference

8–9

The Balance Sheets of Younger Americans: Is the American Dream at Risk?—St. Louis, Mo.

Sponsors: Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, Washington University in St. Louis
www.stlouisfed.org/community_development/events/?id=507

12–14

Reinventing Older Communities: Bridging Growth and Opportunity—Philadelphia, Pa.

Sponsors: Multiple
www.stlouisfed.org/community_development/events/?id=535

13

Board Governance—Conway, Ark.

Sponsor: University of Central Arkansas, Community Development Institute
<http://uca.edu/cdi/board-governance/>