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Hutchinson journalist Kay Johnson reflects on her BCLP experience

Community Leader is a quarterly exchange for news, learning, and connection published by the Blandin Foundation leadership programs for those engaged in the effort to build economically viable communities where the benefits are widely shared.

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Community Leader

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Leadership: Heart of Foundation's focused direction

When Blandin Foundation announced its new strategic focus – called Community Economic Advantage – it was widely trumpeted in the media, including the *StarTribune*, which reported on January 21, that “Blandin’s bedrock strategy will rest on its leadership programs, which have taught leadership and collaborative skills to 3,800 people from 210 communities in the past 18 years.”

Without doubt The Blandin Community Leadership Program (BCLP) and other Foundation leadership programs are at the heart of the Foundation’s effort to

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Community Leader is for community leaders

By Patrick Marx

These days we talk a lot about community leaders, assets and social capital. And though the concepts are relatively new, and sometimes obscure, we know ‘em when we see ‘em.

We know that 3,800 people from 244 communities have earned their pinecones – the badge that identifies Blandin Community Leadership Program (BCLP) alumni.

To us, you are social capital – leaders building community and bridging the chasms between what is and what ought to be. It’s you and your deep and broad networks through which we achieve our mission to strengthen rural Minnesota communities.

We might even think of you as social capitalists – people engaged in the hard

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Leadership: It all adds up to character

David Gergen knows a lot about leadership – advisor to four U.S. presidents, he is now the director of the Center for Public Leadership at Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government.

“People are hungry for good leadership,” said Gergen during his keynote address this January at the Minnesota Horizons conference.

“As a leader you have to communicate in ways that help people understand where you’re trying to go, how you plan to get there and most importantly, people have to trust you as a leader if they are going to go with you on the journey.”

According to Gergen, character is the single most important asset of a good leader. “I have worked for people who were really bright in politics who had no character, and I have worked for people who have a lot of character and are not very bright,” Gergen said, “And I’ll take the person who has character and isn’t very bright anytime over the other.”

Take Franklin Roosevelt, for example. Gergen said Roosevelt didn’t solve the Depression but he was still a great leader. Why?

He kept struggling, and experimenting and telling people the truth. He helped them understand what they were all going

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David Gergen at this year's Minnesota Horizons

Leadership: You have to do it yourself, but you can't do it alone

Pilot leadership programs moving ahead

Three new pilot leadership programs launched with the Foundation's new strategy in January are "becoming dynamic community groups that are directly addressing issues of community economic viability," according to Kathryn Jensen, senior vice president responsible for the Foundation's leadership programs.

Community Advantage Leadership Program (CALP) stresses the link between community leaders and community assets as the chemistry that participants are mixing and will fuel local economic viability. Teams from Worthington, New Ulm, Marshall and Brown County have been actively surveying their communities to identify community assets.

"Worthington doesn't need to focus on its problems. It's about the assets we have, and we build on those assets." Greg Raymo

Kevin Sweeney, editor of the *New Ulm Journal* reported: "The program is based on the idea of local community leaders identifying their community assets and figuring out innovative ways to use those assets in a strategic plan that will stimulate the local economy." [Bruce Fenske, publisher of the

Journal, is active in the community advantage program. Both he and Sweeney are BCLP alums.]

As Greg Raymo, who is active in the Worthington group, told the *Worthington Daily Globe*, "Worthington doesn't need to focus on its problems. It's about the assets we have, and we build on those assets."

CALP teams met in April with Foundation facilitators to begin sorting through all the suggestions and sorting through to identify the best.

Meanwhile in mid-March, the **Blandin Health Care Program** was launched with Cloquet Community Memorial Hospital. "The intent of the Blandin Health Care Program is to keep good quality health care in rural communities," the *Duluth News Tribune* observed. "There also a broader goal... Hospitals can often be a community's economic engine and make the difference between an economically thriving city and one that is dying,"

In June, the Foundation launched another pilot program, the **Blandin Education Program** to begin working with leaders in selected communities to help strengthen community educational institutions.

"Like the health care leadership program, we believe that a community's educational sector is essential for local economic viability," Jensen said.

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through. "Roosevelt created a bridge of hope across rough seas," said Gergen. "He made people believe that if they could just hold on; if they could get through the Depression there was something on the other side."

The Minnesota Horizons conference engages Minnesota state legislators in a broader discussion of the social and economic issues facing our state. This year's program focus was leadership development, and facilitated by Blandin Foundation as part of the Foundation's new strategy launch.

Full audio of David Gergen's speech is at blandinfoundation.org, click "news", "news releases", "Blandin Foundation Presents Leadership Program for Legislature."

Gergen on Trust...

How do leaders maintain trust? David Gergen says it's through:

Candor – truth telling is so important as leaders, goes to the heart of accountability and is what people expect.

Consistency – in words, actions and deeds.

Competence – it doesn't make any difference if you tell people the truth – if you don't know what you're doing, they won't have a lot of trust in you.

Character – the single most important asset of a good leader. "I'll take the person who has character and isn't very bright anytime over the other," states Gergen.

The launch of Blandin Foundation's new strategic direction received broad and deep news coverage and several editorial endorsements from newspapers throughout the state. Here is a sam-



“Blandin Focus: Rural Plight Warrants Response” Editorial, January 27, 2003

“A reliable friend for 60 years [the Foundation] will henceforth direct its \$350 million muscle at projects that can spur Minnesota’s rural economy...The success of Blandin’s leadership programs – 3,800 in 244 cities – has inspired its expansion as part of the Foundation’s new direction...Blandin is also resolved to step up its visibility as government debates policy questions that affect rural areas.”



“Blandin Hits Mark Again” Editorial, January 20, 2003

“Residents of Red Wing and other communities who have participated in Blandin Foundation’s community leadership program well understand the organization’s commitment to the vitality of rural Minnesota. In the future the Blandin Foundation will continue to focus on its long-standing and highly respected rural leadership programs...The new focus is especially timely...The state’s largest rural-based foundation emerges as a key player.”

Duluth News Tribune

“Cloquet becomes epicenter for change” March 11, 2003

“Rural Medicine: Cloquet’s health care community is expected to become national model for rural health care,” said the News Tribune headline. “Cloquet Community Memorial Hospital was selected as the first site for a Blandin Foundation program designed to improve the future for rural hospitals nationwide.”

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Daily Globe

“Local Group Focuses on Worthington Strengths” February 25, 2003

“Worthington doesn’t need to focus on its problems. It’s about the assets we have, and how we build on those assets,” said Greg Raymo (BCLP’99), a leader in the Worthington Community Advantage Leadership Program...We are asking [people] to identify the best things that there are in Worthington. Everybody wants to participate in that because it’s very uplifting.”



“Blandin pilot project comes to New Ulm Project seeks to stimulate local economy”, February 25, 2003

“For the past 18 years the Blandin Foundation has been helping rural Minnesota communities grow by identifying and training community leaders. Now, the Blandin Foundation is starting to help those leaders develop plans for revitalizing and growing their economies.”

Community Close-up

Training for Community Leadership: a Personal Perspective

By Kay Johnson, Hutchinson Leader Staff Writer and BCLP Alum '03

I've always been interested in the concept of leadership. What makes a good leader? Why are some people better leaders than others? Are leaders born or made, or both? To learn more, I applied to the Blandin Community Leadership Program (BCLP) when it was offered to Hutchinson-area residents several years ago.

First try

As I filled out that first application, I kept thinking, "I don't have a chance. I don't volunteer." The selection committee must have seen promise in my enthusiasm because I was selected as an alternate. Going through this process I realized that to make a difference in my community, I needed to get involved. It's one thing to sit on the sidelines and watch the community change; it's another to initiate change and be part of the process.



Kay Johnson took a smile break while completing the goal setting activity

Accepted

When BCLP was offered earlier this year, I definitely wanted to be part of it. When I completed the application it was rewarding to see how things had changed for me. My first application was based on my potential. The second outlined my involvement. BCLP had already made a difference in my life.

This year, about 70 applications were submitted for the 24 openings. The selection of delegates was done by a local group of citizens that included delegates from the original Blandin group, as well as interested parties. The people selected are representative of the community's ethnic and cultural

diversity, varying levels of involvement, occupations and life situations. It was a big day when my Blandin acceptance letter arrived. I felt like the athlete who yells, "I'm going to Disney World."

What I got out of it

Intense is the best word to describe the Blandin five-day retreat. We started with breakfast at 7 a.m. and ended with dinner 12 hours later. In between, we sat through lectures and participated in team activities.

Reflecting on my experience, the most beneficial part was meeting the other delegates and working and socializing with them. I got a chance to glimpse behind the masks we all wear. At the end of the week, I knew more about these people than I did about some of my good friends.

Next on our Blandin journey will be two follow-up workshops, one in July and the other in October. We were assigned homework for the July meeting. To tackle it, the group divided into teams to work on the eight dimensions of a healthy community. I will be working on valuing diversity with Mary Inglis, Alfred Nott and Jeff Haag.

"Reflecting on my experience, the most beneficial part was meeting the other delegates... I got a chance to glimpse behind the masks we all wear." Kay Johnson

I expect the benefits from my Blandin experience will continue to bear fruit in the months and years to come. I anticipate there will be times when I'll say, "I know about that. I learned it at Blandin."

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Northern Lights Takes Top Honors

The Northern Lights Tourism Alliance (NLTA) won first-place in the prestigious National Association of Government Communicators Blue Pencil Awards competition, **Mary Somnis** (BCLP '97) said "We are thrilled to receive this great honor from our peers."

Brian Hiti (BCLP '95) added "This award tells me that the tourism marketing partnership established among the NLTA, Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Agency (IRRRRA), local communications firms and other regional partners is working." Both Mary and Brian work for the IRRRA. the NLTA is a citizen advisory group to the IRRRA, promoting northeastern Minnesota's Wild North as a vacation getaway destination.

News from the Edge

BCLP Alumni **Mark Schroeder, Joan Lester, Tom Boland, Steve Daigle** and **Ken Woods**

from Edge of the Wilderness (Northern Itasca County) recently participated in a USO Concert to raise funds for a state-of-the-art track and field for Bigfork.

This same group, along with **Lonnie Kacon** and **Tim Johnson**, will continue their fund raising efforts with a "Whatever-a-thon" to be held in conjunction with the Edge Festival, June 14.



In other news from "The Edge", BCLP Alum, President of the Edge of the Wilderness Community Center and EdgeWild Player **Patricia Feld** recently portrayed an autocratic 92 year-old woman in Edward Albee's "Three Tall Women". The production raise-funds for the Edge of the Wilderness Fine Arts Center. **Heidi Korstad** has also been active in fund raising for the Fine Arts Center.

Fairmont Frolics in Fruitcake



Before the melodies of Spring filled the air, Fairmont BCLP Alum **Randy Quiring,**

Fred Kramer Jr., Mike Burgraff, Al Pelzer and **Wes Pruett** joined "head fruitcake" **Dave Smith** to beat away the winter blues with fruitcake festivities.

300 spectators applauded 40 registered participants who launched, threw, decorated and recited fruitcake poetry.

"The goal is just to be able to get out of the house and have some family fun," Smith said. "That is all."

If you're an "Alum in Action" we'd love to hear from you.

Send your news to:

bllaplant@blandinfoundation.org

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collaborative work whose profit is the common good -- community where the benefits are widely shared. It's for you that we present *Community Leader*.

Community Leader builds on the old BCLP newsletter. We hope it serves as a useful connection for BCLP alumni around the state and leadership practitioners throughout the country. Connecting is one thing, sharing knowledge is another goal -- to be substantive and, at times, provocative. And, we want *Community Leader* to deliver news about the Foundation, its leadership programs, and other important information about rural community.

As the editor of *Community Leader* Becky LaPlant, is here to serve you. Becky is a new member of the Foundation's communication team. She too treasures her pinecone pin as a '03 alum herself. Becky can be reached at 327-8764 or 877-882-2257; or bllaplant@blandinfoundation.org.

"The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality."

Max DePree, *The Art of Leadership*

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Leaders Wanted:

We are currently seeking community applications for the winter 2004 retreats.

Please contact Malissa Bahr (218)327-8715 or (877)882-2257 for a community application.



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strengthen rural Minnesota communities and its new focus on community economic viability. [See: New Leadership Programs, Page 2]

"The goal? Healthy rural communities where people can make a living and where the benefits are widely shared," said BCLP Director Jim Krile. "BCLP has been streamlined to meet today's challenges."

BCLP develops core leadership competencies, including framing issues and opportunities; building social capital to build effective leadership networks for community action; and mobilizing critical mass. BCLP also concentrates on individual communication and conflict-management skills aimed at gaining effectiveness in initiating and sustaining community change.

"To help advance the Foundation's strategy we take an asset based approach to individual and community leadership," Krile said. "The approach aims to work with leaders to identify, mobilize and leverage their community assets."

"Focusing on problems limits ideas and breeds pessimism," Krile said. "We concentrate on community assets. The idea is to work with leaders and work on community assets to achieve effective change where the benefits are widely shared."

**Leaders + Community Assets =
Viable communities where the
benefits are widely shared**

Leadership: You have to do it yourself, but you can't do it alone