

Beulah

Land News

We've Moved!

Ever since we bought our homeplace in the country outside Seguin, Texas we have called it Beulah Land (hence Beulah Land News as the name of this newsletter). It was twenty acres of South Texas countryside covered with trees and abundant wildlife. We had intended to spend our golden years there. However, God had other plans.

Last spring as we were driving through the Appalachian mountains on one of our roadtrips, it hit us like a lightning bolt—God told us we should move to the mountains in East Tennessee. We proceeded to put our place in Texas up for sale and finally found a house in Gray, Tennessee (in the Tri Cities area) to call home. October 3 we moved into our new home.

We are now better positioned to do our work. The living expenses are lower, and the responsibility of caring for less than one acre of land is far less than caring for twenty. Ann is enjoying being closer to her mother and being back in the land of her birth.

Nick was a little traumatized when he had to give up his Texas drivers license for one from Tennessee. He has never lived anywhere but Texas. He still drives his truck with a Tennessee tag on the back and a Texas tag on the front. So far, local law enforcement has not objected.

We have traded our Beulah Land in Texas for a Beulah Land in Tennessee. We are so blessed by God that He has allowed us to enjoy each place in its own time.

First Steps in Practicing Community Development – Part One

Three major questions come to mind when beginning community development work.

- I. What is community development?
- II. What do you and your organization think about people?
- III. What do you know about the territory and its people?

I. What is community development?

Community development is a *process* that over time increases the will and capacity of people to give direction to their futures. Developing community is about ordinary people gaining, creating and using civic power on their collective behalf. (People clarify the futures they want for their communities, and learn how to develop power and use it.)

Establishing high-quality civic interaction is a challenge. People may have to learn to be advocates for themselves and learn how to work together.

When people create a shared vision of a desired future and learn to work together, programs and projects such as better housing, jobs, education, health improvements may or may not be the first results. They may be a part of what happens, but they are not the goals. (Remember the major goal is people taking charge of their lives.)

II. What do you and your organization think about people?

This step often requires soul-searching on our part. How we think about people determines how we treat them. If we think of poor people as having no skills, we run the hazard of feeling better than they are

and looking down on them. If we remind ourselves how Jesus loved the poor, we can reflect Jesus' love for them through working together.

A basic assumption of community development is that people are capable, have assets and almost unlimited potential. At the same time, people may not be aware of their assets. Through working together we can all refine a sense of "we can do it."

When we believe that people have capacities to do well, we work *with* them, not *for* them. We go beyond charity, to helping them identify their gifts, strengths and talents. Basing community development on the assets of the citizens is a new way of doing community work. We start with *where the people are* instead of starting with promoting our own agenda.

III. What do you know about the territory and its people?

Community development involves the *whole* community. Do you and your group know the economic, social, historical, and political background of the area? Learn about the history of the *whole* area. We often know a lot about our own neighborhood, circle of friends or area, and need to learn more about the total community.

Get started by recording, recording, recording! Your knowledge increases when you write down (on 3x5 cards, computer discs or notebooks) what you learn about the territory. Look up census data. Become familiar with the whole community. Look for spots you've missed. Mark on a map the parts of the

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area you've seen. Identify the remaining areas you should explore.

Talk with people – ask them what they are interested in. Ask them who else might be interested in these areas. Patterns will appear to you – some people may be interested in better schools for their kids; others may focus on health care, etc.

Learning about the whole area is an ongoing project for those doing community development. Getting people together requires a lot of background work to bring people face-to-face on a level playing field. Meeting people from all socioeconomic levels and social circles expands our knowledge of the community and can help us identify ways to get people together based on their passions. Both rich and poor people may be interested in better schools – getting them together to work on a shared interest can help them learn to work together, increase understanding and get the job done.

In Part Two we will discuss forming networks and working together to accomplish community goals.

If you have feedback about this article, contact the Skippers or Doris Littrell at dlittrell3@centurytel.net

Emergency!

The big event for this month was Nick's emergency appendectomy. On November 6 as we were getting ready to go to church, he was doubled over in pain. At the local emergency room his condition did not improve. He was admitted to the hospital. The next morning his appendix was removed. He came home, but had difficulty eating and drinking. He was in intense pain once again. Back to the ER he went. He stayed two nights on his second visit until the doctor was sure that he would be able to eat and drinking without pain. He is home now and doing fine. Thank you all for your prayers. They were answered.

Back to School...Almost

In our last issue, we told you about our plans to attend the Community Development Academy which is a part of the University of Missouri in St. Louis. We registered, paid for the room and board and waited for the class to begin.

In the meantime, we sold our property in Texas and had to take two househunting trips to Tennessee to find a place to live. Once we finally found a house, we had to go back to Texas and pack up everything to move to Tennessee. As a result, we had to postpone attending the Academy. We will try again in March when Course 1 of the three part community development curriculum is offered again.

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We Need You!



Nick & Ann Skipper

In order for us to do the work that God has called us to do with Partners in Hope we need your prayer support and your financial support. We ask you to partner with us as we serve in Partners in Hope.

Please designate your contribution for Nick & Ann Skipper's ministry and send it to:

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