



Prospecting for Resources 'Outside the Box'

BY CHARLOTTE UNDERWOOD

"Around the network, NeighborWorks® organizations use a range of creative and imaginative techniques to leverage volunteers, in-kind donations and financial contributions." Ten years ago, this opening line introduced the article, "Unusual Resources," written by Prentice Bowsher (*facts, figures and bright ideas*, Vol. 12, No.6, November/December 1993). The article highlighted "unusual" techniques several network organizations used to leverage resources in their communities.

For instance, in Manchester, New Hampshire, a golf tournament raised \$5,000; NHS of Corvallis organized a one-day volunteer work-a-thon; the Southern District wholesaled VISTA volunteers to network organizations in Georgia, and used state tax credits in Florida to encourage property donations; and in Texas, financial partners funded the capital costs for rehabbing and providing necessary furniture and equipment for a new NHS office.

As we focus on increasing minority home ownership (see "A Symposium Report," page 44), finding "unusual resources" becomes even more critical. Today, unusual resources may translate to mean "innovative" products and ideas. However, as we seek to find and create those innovative solutions, let's not overlook the most important resource of all – people.

As National NeighborWorks® Week has blossomed, it has almost institutionalized the coordination of large cadres of volunteers and significant business contributions in revitalizing selected houses, or a block, or a neighborhood. NHS/Boise, for instance, hosted 2,300 NeighborWorks® Week volunteers this year. The Children's Museum of Memphis hosted a housing fair with United Housing. Other examples abound.

For those working in the community development field, look closely at those persons you represent. A wealth of knowledge, ideas and talent lies within each of them. Have you studied the capacity of each of these individuals and what he or she could bring to your organization and its mission?

Think of yourselves as gardeners. To yield healthy plants and flowers, you must provide seeds with

sufficient water, soil and nutrients in order for them to flourish. Imagine the enormous potential that exists by including perspectives represented by a diversity of cultures and backgrounds.

Admittedly, trying to be all-inclusive when seeking innovative resources may not be the quickest or easiest way to accomplish our work; but the rewards are so much sweeter. ■

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