

Art of Hosting

Conversations that Matter



Grand Rapids, MN

Community Engagement
November 2013 - February 2015

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14 Months of Conversational Opportunity

In Just Over One Year...

In just over one year, community citizens of Grand Rapids, who were not familiar with the term Art of Hosting Conversations that Matter, went from showing up at the first three day training with a healthy mix of curiosity and scepticism, to hosting a one day community wide conversation at the first ever Grand Gathering of Itasca County that attracted over 85 people who engaged in 50+ conversations that mattered over a five hour period.

How does a community do this? By being passionate about influencing their future and believing it is possible. And, by having someone pose a question – How can Grand Rapids become a community that hosts its own conversations? – that inspires others to action in the practice of shared leadership and shared responsibility – collaboration at its best.



The Spark of an Idea

During dialogues in 2012, residents of communities in the Itasca County area expressed to the Blandin Foundation a strong interest in developing or improving their civic engagement skills, especially as they sought to be in dialogue on issues that mattered to them. Planning and implementing projects that address local concerns ranging from developing emerging leaders, addressing economic development opportunities or concerns, and improving social infrastructure by strengthening sense of community were all issues high in community members' awareness.

These issues and opportunities can be complex, challenging and often difficult. Finding a way forward requires good civic engagement practices. Many of the participants in these dialogues had participated in the BCLP or the BRCPL program and had an interest in further deepening their engagement skills.

Itasca County area communities wanted to develop greater capacity to engage in civic dialogue to bring people from all walks of life from throughout the communities into creative, constructive conversations about the future and about what they, as citizens and residents, were willing to commit to in their community. Community members were seeking to hold conversations they had not had before because they didn't know how, or

how to begin or how to stay in them well; conversations about possibilities and not just problems to solve; conversations that engage citizens in looking at the wealth and wisdom they already have present in the community and at the many assets they have which can be used immediately to take action.

Good community conversations on important issues offer everyone who shows up the opportunity to speak openly and without fear, to be listened to authentically and respectfully, and to leave feeling an ownership in the outcomes of their conversations. Civic engagement is also about accountability and commitment, a request not only to show up but to engage.



This was the call for a series of Art of Hosting Conversations that Matter trainings of which the Meadowlark Institute was the convener, bringing a variety of skilled co-hosts to Grand Rapids for each of the offerings. The purpose of this project was to provide training in Hosting and Harvesting Conversations that Matter, introducing patterns and practices to build self-leadership and collective problem-solving; to better manage change and to produce social or business impact – and, it worked!


Highlighting AoH in Practice

The Art of Hosting helped me by seeing that when different people come together around a common cause we really can work together to find solutions. We all bring a unique perspective to the table, and can use that unique perspective to address issues that we care about. We are all very capable. It also was a great way to learn how to really listen! Which is a skill I have to use every day. ~LS~

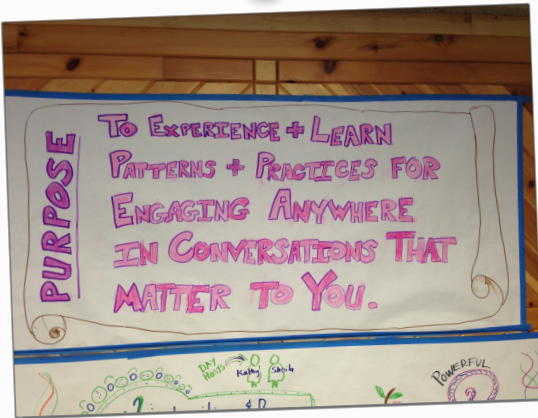
Highlighting AoH in Practice

I would say the Art of Hosting training that several of us from the Bigfork area participated in last year has been very helpful. We've put on a few World Café style gatherings in the community ("Conversations on the Edge") and are currently using some of that information to develop our strategic planning sessions for the hospital. The techniques we learned allowed us to have very engaged and meaningful discussions among participants that had previously been at each other's throats, so to speak. Many thanks for putting on these training sessions and best of luck going forward. ~EA~

The First Convenings

<u>AoH #1 – Nov 2013</u>	<u>AoH #2 – Feb 2014</u>	<u>AoH #3 – July 2014</u>	<u>AoH #4 - Sept 2014</u>
Purpose: Learning patterns and practices for engaging anywhere in conversations that matter to you	Purpose: Learning patterns and practices for engaging anywhere in conversations that matter to you	Purpose: Learning patterns and practices for engaging anywhere in conversations that matter to you	Purpose: Awakening the Possibilities in Us: Patterns and Practices to Host Self, Others, Community
Day Themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inviting Community• Being in Community• Taking it Out	Day Themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inviting Community: Building Relationship• Being in Community: Creating Generative Space• Taking it Out: Designing and Sustaining Action	Day Themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inviting Community: Building Relationship• Being in Community: Working Together on Issues that Matter• Designing and Sustaining Action	Day Themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Awakening to Possibilities• Weaving Possibilities• Welcoming Possibilities
Hosting Team: Jerry Nagel Kathy Jourdain Bob Wing Dawn Ellison	Hosting Team: Jerry Nagel Kathy Jourdain Joe Bartmann Sheila Kiscaden	Hosting Team: Jerry Nagel Kathy Jourdain Sheila Kiscaden	Hosting Team: Jerry Nagel Kathy Jourdain Joe Bartmann Karen Zentner-Bacig
<u>Community Café #1 – February 2014</u>		<u>Community Café #2 – September 2014</u>	
Invitation to a World Café community event		Invitation to a World Café community event	
Wednesday, February 19, 2014 - 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. – Timberlake Lodge		Tuesday, September 23, 2014 - 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. – Timberlake Lodge	
Thanks to support from the Blandin Foundation, two cohorts of local citizens have been trained – in November and now in February - in the Art of Hosting Conversations that Matter. In November several participants explored the possibility of holding a series of community conversations in the Itasca County area. This first conversation on February 19 th will provide an opportunity for those who have been trained, along with others from the community, to use Art of Hosting practices to ask ourselves the question:		Thanks to support from the Blandin Foundation, four cohorts of local citizens will have been trained in the Art of Hosting Conversations that Matter in 2014. Several participants are exploring ways these tools can be used, in an ongoing fashion, to help the Itasca Area become a community that hosts its own conversations. On Tuesday, September 23 rd , all past Art of Hosting training participants are invited to join together in a World Café community conversation. The occasion will provide an opportunity for those who have been trained, along with others from the community, to explore the question:	
How can we become a community that hosts its own conversations?		What is the future we want to live into?	
As a person who has demonstrated your commitment to community, we hope you can join us. You will be glad you did.		As a person who has demonstrated your commitment to community, we hope you can join us. You will be glad you did.	
<div><p>GRAND Gathering OF ITASCA AREA A COMMUNITY-WIDE conversation Saturday, Nov. 22, 2014 10 a.m. to 2:15 p.m. Check-in begins at 9:30 a.m. Grand Rapids High School</p></div>			

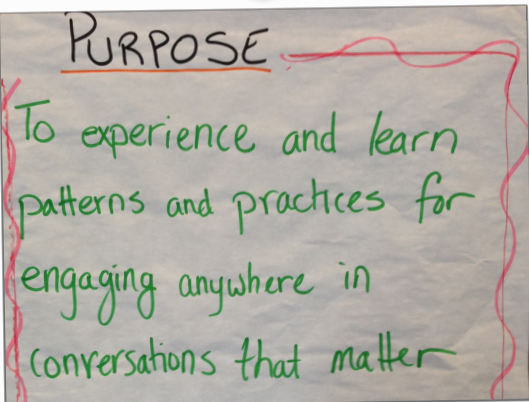
There Were Six Altogether



Art of Hosting #1 -
November 2013



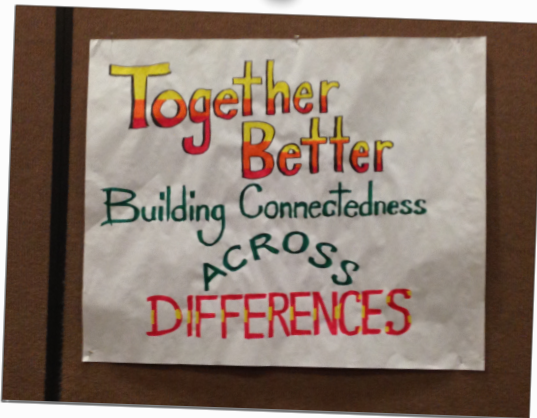
Art of Hosting #2 -
February 2014



Art of Hosting #3 -
July 2014



Art of Hosting #4 -
September 2014



Art of Hosting #5 -
January 2015



Art of Hosting Advanced
Training - February 2015

- World Cafe
- Open Space
- Theory U in a Day
- Worldview Intelligence

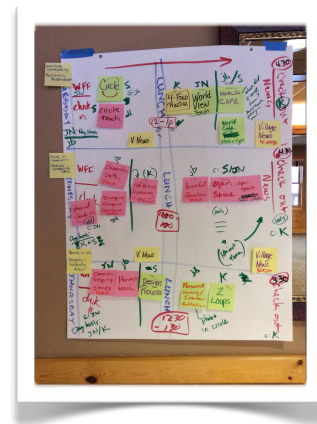
Prep Day

Prior to each training there was a prep day where the hosting team met with staff from the Blandin Foundation to review the list of participants, their responses to why they were attending the training and to sense into anything of relevance in the community or further afield that might fuel the thinking about the purpose for the training and the theme for each of the three days.

The purpose, *learning patterns and practices for engaging anywhere in conversations that matter to you*, derived for the first training stayed consistent over the first three although the themes for the days shifted or expanded to be more explicit. By the time of the fourth training, the planning team of co-hosts and Blandin staff was sensing a shift in the air. It was partly in response to larger, global issues that had the attention of the planning team and specifically in response to the change that was becoming evident in Grand Rapids. Hallmarks of this shift were the community cafés, an increase in participants at the Coffee and Conversations Monthly Gatherings – so much so that these gatherings moved from the coffee shop to the Blandin Foundation offices – and the growing incidence of participants bringing AoH patterns and practices into life and work in obvious and subtle ways.

By the fourth training, the convenor had been asked if it was okay to invite people who were homeless or recently homeless and in transition to be part of the experience. The purpose for the fourth training was: *Awakening the Possibilities in Us: Patterns and Practices to Host Self, Others, Community* and the day themes reflected the purpose.

Prep day is the time when the design and flow of the three days is sketched out and hosting team members sign up for the patterns and practices they want to teach, co-host and coach, looking for a balance of voice, experience and passion. It is not an immovable plan. It is a guide subject to emergence in the room as participants' questions, energy and interests guide the balance of learning, experience and conversation.



Setting the Stage

The conditions (container) were set for deep, authentic sharing of perspectives. Each training opened with a circle, articulation of the agreements of circle practice, how circle is archetypal and how it brings us into a shared space where we see each other across a center that the group creates together. Each participant contributed to the collective intention by bringing an object to place in the center of the circle that represented their reason for coming. People were invited to show up with the intention to understand others and to be understood; to speak what they know and to learn how to practice listening in a deeper way; to grow their comfort with their not knowing.

Patterns and Practices

Typical Patterns and Practices

There are a few patterns and practices that are fundamental to Art of Hosting Trainings anywhere. They were included in each of the trainings although the order in which they occurred and who shared them or co-hosted them varied. Practices and patterns all work on some basic assumptions. These include:

- There is an emphasis on self leadership or hosting self to be present and self aware
- The knowledge and wisdom we need is present and accessible in the room
- Collective insight evolves from honouring unique contributions; connecting ideas; listening into the middle; noticing deeper themes and questions
- The intelligence emerges as the system connects to itself in diverse and creative ways
- People respond to the invitation into self-organization by bringing their passion and interests into the conversations



The Four Fold Practice

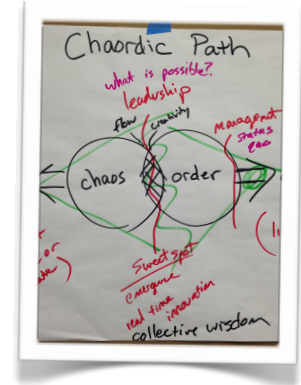
"The quality of the intervention is directly dependent on the interior quality of the intervener." Bill O'Brien

The Four Fold Practice is the basic underlying pattern of hosting. Beginning with hosting self; then hosting another and being hosted; (co-)hosting conversations and process design; co-creating with a community of practitioners. The quality and depth of hosting continually comes back to how individuals host

themselves, to be present. The learning in any of the practices informs each of the practices. It illuminates core practices to grow self awareness and self knowledge, the importance of hosting others and with others, including curiosity and compassion for self and others.

The Chaordic Path

The Chaordic Path is another fundamental pattern to the Art of Hosting. Working with the pattern of the chaordic path arises out of a living systems worldview. "At the edge of chaos" is where life innovates, where things are flexible enough for new connections and solutions to occur. New levels of order become possible out of chaos. Art of Hosting teaches how to navigate the chaordic path and illuminates the leadership necessary to be successful here.

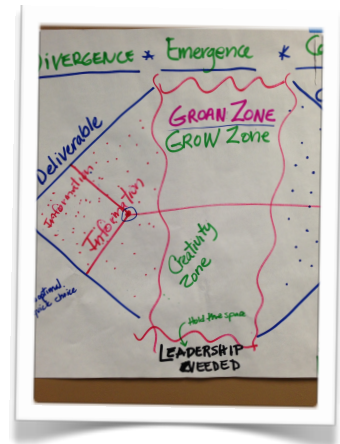


Chaordic Stepping Stones

There are clear strategic steps to take to walk the chaordic path. These steps are rooted in real need, a clear articulation of purpose and principles, identification of the people central to the work to be done before getting to structure and other resources. They comprise a useful and powerful planning process and they are embedded in the Design Process participants are offered as a convergence or planning mechanism in the training itself.

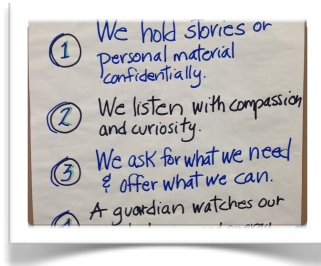
Divergence-Emergence-Convergence

This simple little framework offers a powerful pattern for understanding human dynamics, meeting patterns and flow, and collective decision making processes. It brings thoughtful consideration to meeting or planning design and intentionally working with it helps to normalize the individual and collective human dynamics experiences of idea generation (divergence), what happens when we hit the wall or the groan zone and the beauty of collective convergence on decisions that work.



Highlighting AoH in Practice

The art of hosting has transformed the way I interact with groups of people and have allowed me the advantage of engaging and mobilizing stakeholders in a different way towards a common goal. Jerry and Kathy, hope to see you both again someday. Thanks for your guidance. Keep me in mind for any hosting opportunities in the future. I would love the opportunity to practice teaching the processes. ~TH~



Circle Practice

Circle is an ancient form of meeting that has gathered human beings into respective conversation for thousands of years. It has served as the foundation for many cultures. A strong practice of circle invites people to shift from informal socializing or opinionated discussion into a receptive attitude of thoughtful speaking and deep listening.

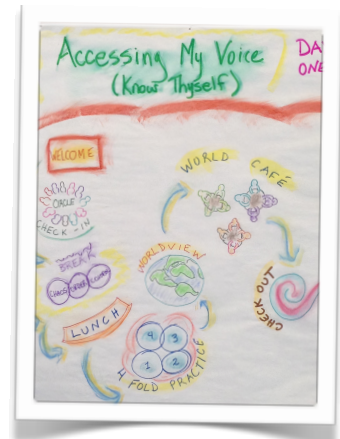
Some of the practices and agreements of circle become the practices and agreements of the full AoH training and include:

- Speak with intention
- Listen with attention
- Be mindful of the wellbeing of the group
- Offer what you can, ask for what you need
- Honour confidentiality
- Bring curiosity (instead of judgment)
- Silence is part of the conversation
- Shared leadership and shared responsibility

Check-in and Check-out Processes

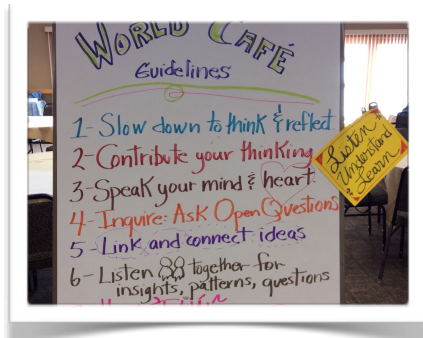
Check-in and check-out processes are not just frivolous time wasters in our meetings. They bring participants' attention into the meeting and they help seal the meeting and conversation at the conclusion. There is clear research that shows when people are able to bring their voice into a meeting early on they are more likely to continue to speak up on the things that matter to them. If they do not have an opportunity to speak early on, the meeting is less likely to hear from them at all, meaning that usually the loudest most animated voices dominate a meeting.

Good questions coming out of thoughtful, purposeful and intentional focus, help shape powerful check in and check out processes. The greater clarity there is about the purpose and intention of the overall work and the process chosen, the greater the likelihood of crafting a question that does exactly the work we intend it to do. Many people leave a training and immediately bring a check-in and check-out process to their team or meetings.



Highlighting AoH in Practice

I finally had a chance to do a check-in at the beginning of a day long meeting and doing so changed everything about the meeting. People were deeply touched and even become emotional. What was my check-in question? It was very simple, "How are we all doing?" ~VM~

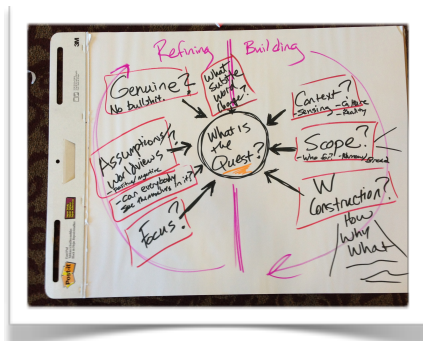
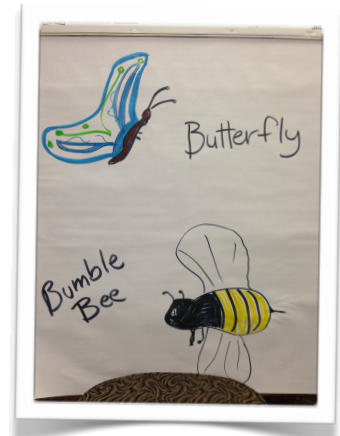


World Cafe

The World Café is a method for creating a living network of collaborative dialogue around questions that matter in real life situations. It is a great way of fostering interaction and dialogue with both large and small groups. It is particularly effective in surfacing the collective wisdom of larger groups of diverse people. The café format is flexible and adapts to many different purposes.

Open Space Technology

The goal of Open Space is to create time and space for people to engage deeply and creatively around issues of concern to them. The agenda is set by participants so each conversation taps into the interest, curiosity and passion of at least some people in the room. It is a simple and powerful way to catalyze effective working conversations. It operates with a few simple principles and relies on the commitment of people in the conversations to decide what was simply an exploration and what has legs to move forward. This process of participants setting the agenda means that topics show up that would not have space or opportunity in a more traditional kind of meeting agenda.



Powerful Questions

Asking the right question is the most effective way of opening up a conversation and keeping it engaging. A high quality question focuses on what is meaningful for the participants, triggers curiosity and invites a further exploration. There is a structure and form to creating good questions. Questions are part of each and every process and can deepen one on one conversations as well.

Highlighting AoH in Practice

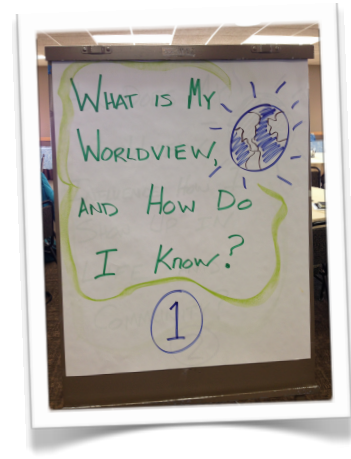
Attending AoH training and the deeper dive sessions has helped greatly in my personal & professional lives. I now implement the practices to strengthen my team at the DNR and also in my outreach with stakeholders. Another benefit has been the connection of groups of people who normally would not have connected otherwise. I sincerely hope that the Blandin Foundation will sponsor more AoH trainings in the future so that our region can continue to connect and engage in these critical leadership topics. The trainings have broadened leadership circles and opportunities. Thank you - ~LD~

Unique Elements

While AoH trainings the world over pretty much have the typical elements noted above, the AoH trainings in Grand Rapids also contained elements unique to the trainings offered by Jerry Nagel and Kathy Jourdain.

Worldview Intelligence

Each of us has a worldview. It impacts how we see and interact with the world, events, situations and other people. Our Worldviews influence our communication, decision-making and workplace cultures. Most of this happens unconsciously. Worldview Intelligence helps us explore individual and collective assumptions, beliefs and value systems with curiosity and non-judgment. This opens the potential for more comprehensive approaches and solutions to emerge on a range of issues and opportunities, including those that might be mildly oppositional to completely divisive to seemingly unsolvable.



Worldview Intelligence™ generates a deeper understanding of worldview, how worldviews are developed and why understanding them and growing the skill to work with them creates a fundamentally different environment for some of today's most challenging conversations. The Worldview work offers a structured approach to new levels of awareness, understanding, practices and connection to transform differences into progress.

This emphasis on Worldview has evolved out of the research and writing Jerry Nagel did for his PhD dissertation on worldview, social constructionist theory and AoH and our practical application and experience in AoH and other offerings as participants take a deep dive into self reflection and curiosity.



Reflective Listening and Levels of Listening and Speaking

Reflective listening is the practice of being fully present with another person. It invites us into softening our heart, listening without judgment and with curiosity, being available for what the other person wants or needs to share without seeking explanation or clarification for our own purposes. Participants often comment it is one of the most powerful experiences they have in an AoH

training and they later share that it is one of the things have been able to put into practice at home and work with good results.

Design Process/Responsive Planning

This is beautiful process is used to reflect on a meeting, project or initiative a participant wants to initiate in their own environment. It emphasizes the thoughtfulness and intention required to establish the conditions for conversations that matter and are different than the usual conversations that show up. A participant brings forth an idea and three to six people join this person in exploring the process and questions on need and purpose, harvest, invitation, meeting design and convergence to action. This is a process that is easily translatable back into work and community settings because it can be used by small planning teams.



Highlighting AoH in Practice

I think your tagline quote from Isaac Asimov about assumptions is the key. Participation in the Art of Hosting gave me the time to process my assumptions about how my world works and to challenge those assumptions. My frustration was then with knowing that we have better tools for working as a community – while people are hesitant to change the way things have always been done.

*For me though the highlight was having the administration that I work with attend AOH training – opening up a world of options for our agency. It was hard being the lone crazy person out there dancing **by** myself – now I have company. I think that the AOH training is helping our agency explore new and creative ways to do the work we are charged with. ~JL~*

Highlighting AoH in Practice

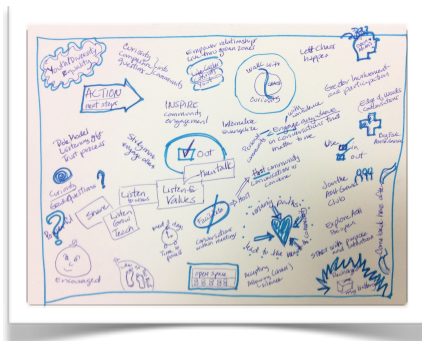
I am using the check-in process during my monthly administrative support team meetings (18-21 people). I have found giving the employees the opportunity to speak first on how they're doing today (giving them a voice) has dramatically increased participation and sharing of ideas and comments. We usually start with on a scale of 1-10 - how are you doing and then answering some type of simple question. Now team members are learning about each other on a more personal note and feel connected with each other. I should share that the meetings from more than a year ago tended to be quite negative. Now they are deemed very productive and helpful. When team mates share that they are a 9 or a 10 at the beginning of meeting, they are setting the bar high and are committing to acting respectfully. I need to get better at using the checkout process and asking participants where they will be focusing their energies and efforts over the next week or so. Thanks! ~JB~

Little Innovations

During AoH trainings there is an opportunity for new patterns, practices or formats to emerge and a couple of exciting little innovations emerged through the trainings in Grand Rapids that are now being shared in other AoH trainings in other places.

Mirrored Teaches

During a training, one of the co-hosts was growing her own skill in sharing the teaches and wanted to start by “mirroring” a teach – sitting on the floor opposite the host who was doing the teach and drawing it. With two people sitting opposite each other drawing the teach, it made it easier for participants to gather round to view what was being drawn without having to view it upside down if they didn’t want to move. The value of mirroring was recognized and has been brought into other trainings with 25 or more participants. A small shift in how things are done but a beautiful little innovation.



Harvest Teach

While this training is called the Art of Hosting and Harvesting Conversations that Matter, it is not always easy to explain harvesting or the myriad of ways harvesting can be done in a way that participants can easily see and understand it. In the July 2014 AoH training, Sheila Kiscaden volunteered to do a harvest teach and came up with a beautiful analogy about grapes, fruit salad, jelly and wine that enabled the concepts of harvest to stick. Three simple guides, with a few steps in

each, were offered: purpose, audience and methods. This was captured in a Shape Shift Strategies Inc. [blog post](#) and is now taught in other AoH trainings using this analogy.

Highlighting AoH in Practice

As a CPA with a lot of client contact, I found the hosting training extremely relevant and helpful. I learned how to look at multiple sides of issues in a non-confrontational atmosphere. I can then lead clients to look at multiple sides of financial issues in order to make more informed financial decisions. The hosting training taught me to consider all sides on a topic, stir them up and resolve issues with more well-rounded decisions. The training taught me that being all-inclusive was the right way to resolve issues. The training offers important techniques to any professional, no matter what their field of expertise. Also, I think it would be useful in classroom situations. Why not teach these tools to the future decision-makers? ~LG~

Community Cafes

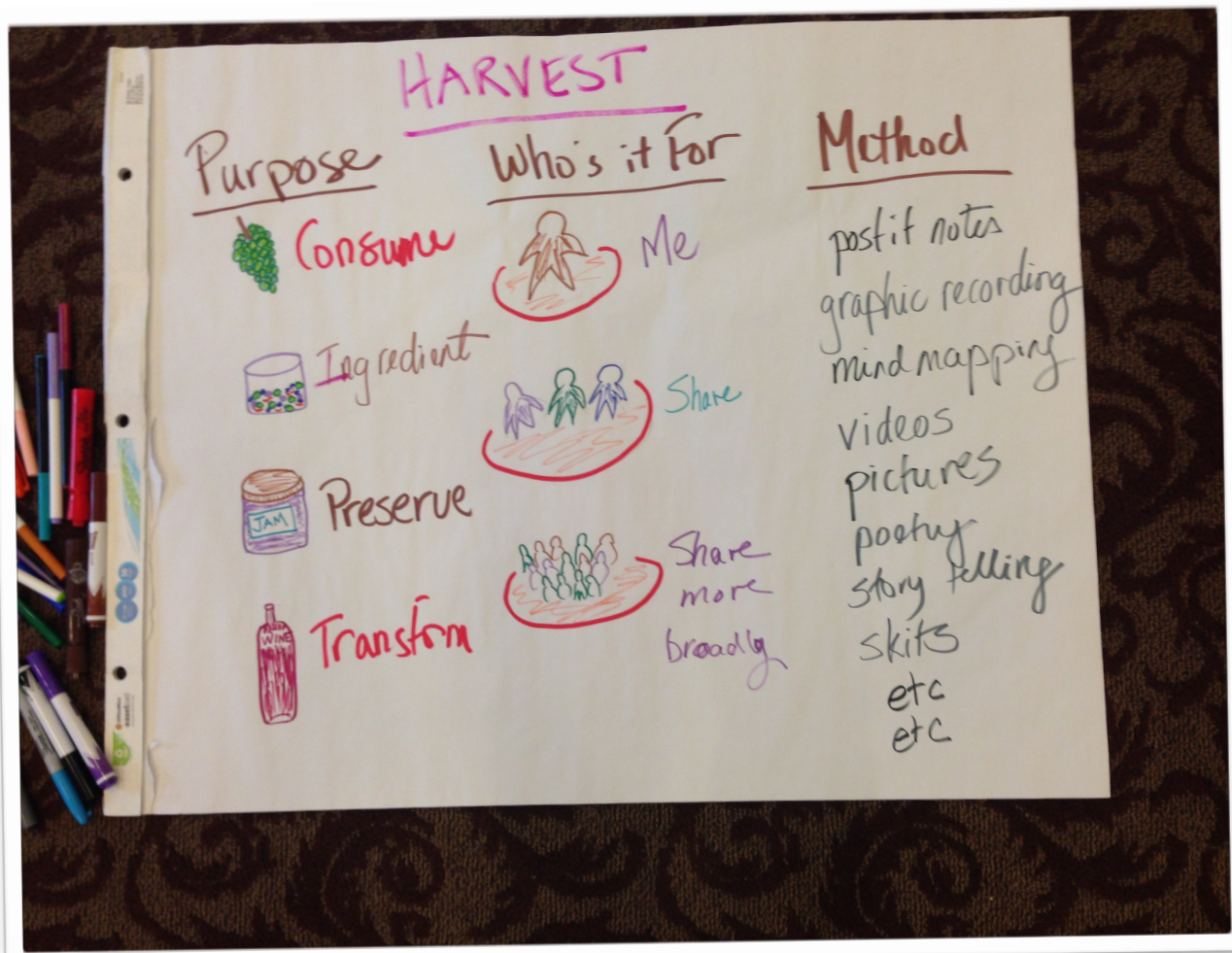


February and September 2014

Sandy Layman participated in the first AoH training in November 2013. She posed a question in Open Space about how Grand Rapids could become a community that hosts its own conversations. Understanding there was another AoH training coming up, she wondered about bringing participants from the November and upcoming February 2014 trainings together and the idea for the first Community Café was born. The idea had energy for others who also volunteered to bring this to life. The first Community Café, held in an evening, built interest and momentum for both a second Community Café and the Grand Gathering. The group that stepped into planning was ultimately composed of people from each of the trainings, some of whom had never worked together before, and was a fabulous illustration of shared leadership and shared responsibility. The second Community Café was incorporated into the middle of the fourth AoH training, held in an afternoon. Harvests of the cafés follows in the harvest section of this document.



Harvests



Circle Harvests

Sometimes during circle check-in, someone will capture the essence of each person's check-in with a few words. At the conclusion of the check-in this is shared back out to the group in the form of a poem. Two such circle harvests were captured and are shared here. It is always fascinating to watch and listen as people wait to hear their own contribution reflected back to them and as the harvest travels around the room until completion.

February 2014 Circle Harvest

*Inviting community. Building relationship.
Living system of humanity not machine.
Thank you – for what this person has to
teach me. And this person. And this person.
Peace circle training. Talented, gifted
friends. Bear clan energy.
Healing messages carried in stone.
Ojibway council.
Shy with ideas.
Pen – shifting from writing to engaging.
Afghanistan pin. Art of Hosting there?
Country beyond the news.
Yes, here too. Active retirement.
Corporate power. Environmentalism.
Contrasts or continuums?
How to listen better. Learn from them, learn
from me.
45,000 in Itasca Co.
Returning to roots to bring in a deeper way.
Economy. Environment. Contrast?
Continuum?
Christmas present – a box! What's inside?
Oh, but what's outside too?
Where does pre-conscious lie?
Live united. Here. Everywhere?
Keys, key ring. Usefulness.
Talk not just talk.
Life goal – make a difference.
Engage. Perspectives. Americorps.
Cat in the Hat. Living mission and all that.
Six generations on the homestead. Point of
pride. Rose, grandchildren, contrast, roots
and petals, sensory delight.
Hats. Physician. Mom of college kids.
Ambulance person.
Blandin nerd.
Conflict.
Optimistic even in the face of reality.
Creating better conversation in community.
Hospital. World Café.
Junk drawers for significant objects –
magnets, loose screws. Repel or attract?*

*Depends on orientation. Depends on
perspective.
Publishing. Turn around. Not-for-profits.
Introverted, analytical, work alone. Time to
work in a different – uncomfortable – way.
Relational!
You are ALL the annoying person in my life.
I need to pay attention.
Community focused medical student.
Practice medicine and life.
Medicine nerd's stuffed neuron. Community
neuron. Electric!
Farm kid. Woods vacation. Good for soul.
Three year old "you at work" perspective –
beautiful chaotic messiness.
Third time retired. Giving back. Itchy feet.
Boards – four.
Someone everywhere is obnoxious. Can I
look at them differently rather than stupid
stupid rules?
Black diamonds, set for continuity in family.
Go to, lead, complain about meetings.
Opportunities instead? Tackinite. Weapon
or respectful dialogue?
Visual, creative work, growing interest in
community.
Not a natural leader? Oh, but ideas to
convey! Good to be a leader.
Acorns. Potential for power from humble
beginning.
English teacher. Itasca orchestra. Done
working except for arts advocacy
voluntarism.
Connections, connections, connections.
Linger over language. Linger.
Inspiration book – the Untethered Soul.
Once. Twice. Three times. More.
Work and personal journey. Luxury to
choose.
Build community. Conversations. Shyness.
Openness.
Human rights. It's pretty simple really.
Cat in the Hat.
Yoga teacher training. Life changing.
Supreme strength. Fullness of wisdom.
Unquenchable joy!*

*Small objects, powerful ideas. Reflection on life.
 Called to best version of self and in community. Called over and over again. To show up. Get fit. Healthy life. New journey. New job. New baby. New life.
 Symbolic flowers of life. Openhearted journey.
 Law. Arts. Good experience in Grand Rapids. Profession, yes. Personal life too.
 Opening dialogue. Star. Listen. Centered. Open. Hats. Church. Community. Student. Band I hate. Step back from popular trends. Accepted what I rejected. Infused with personal meaning now.
 Public Service. Public Agencies. Passion full. Responsible. Accountable.
 Three years of challenges. Mother Theresa life saver.
 Families. Students. Social work.
 Northern lights and Roller Derby. Teams. Strong minded women and men.
 Coffee. Adaptability. Energy. Student. Objectless. Story of turtles including Turtle Island, Turtle Mountain woman.
 Boards. Meetings. Lead. Listen.
 Slushy road drive. Freedom of the woods. Grandchildren motivation.
 Gettysberg address. Miner's pensions. Thousands of miners. More with family members. SILENCE. Fighting. A long time.
 Sarge. Home of the twelfth man. Suit up. We all need to.
 Virginia roots. Arrowwood. Change. Change. Change. Not so good. Exciting too. Re-energize.
 Husband. Check book and Harley Davidson. Rebellious wild side reminder – lost with husband, need to regain for the game.
 Changes. Changes. Changes. Speak different. Listen different. Work and home.
 Keep the Center going, growing. Story that made me who I am – Latin America year changed my worldview, changed my life. Lot from little. Privilege we have here, connected around the world.*

*Corrections work. Grandson inspiration. Was going to bring the Globe but white out instead. Second chances. Community tolerance and forgiveness.
 News. Bad news. Alone in my worldview. Grow engagement. Smile more.
 Pastor. Congregation thinks I'm crazy. We already know hospitality.
 Beads on bracelet meanings change. Let's not automatically assume we know Everything there is to know.
 Stretch. Stretch. Stretch.
 Linear but daring – to bring more out in a group. Smack me upside the head.
 God given purpose – inspire and take action. Outside comfort zone. Open new doors. Key to unlock. For me. For others.
 Exist to help people give to the community. Donors. Data. Stories bring it alive.
 Thirty four years in uniform. Patch to save a life. Backwards? Maybe not. Going forward is the meaning. Importance of soul in your work.
 Each one teach one. Stories. Connections. Woodsy life. Our environment is changing. We need to prepare.
 Social mind. Advocates for family peace. Passion for mental illness and addiction – family connection.
 Support group or something more? Direction? Point us there. Point ourselves there, proactively.
 Shifting patterns to benefit people.
 Arctic wolf kin. Gray. There's always gray. Panic to go last but now humbled and honoured. Know you now. Found me too.
 Door know to open to curiosity, beauty and joy.*



September 2014 Circle Harvest

Circle gift. Listen intently. Moved by open hearted curiosity. Okay?
Awakening. Possibilities. In us.
Grew up here. Where to put my energy?
Intrigued. Grow comfort in groups.
Conversations with my family. Eiffel Tower goal. What's my goal now? What's my purpose now?
Tiger's Eye. Monopoly house, in Antarctica?
Home as basic need. Where will life lead next?
Sheltering. Collect glass. Things can be breakable. Me? Am I breakable?
Equity team, equity binder. Deer Lake school. Conversation that matters KEY to equity.
Community. Built to support health in the future. Future yet to be seen. But Isabella will.
KAXE community radio. On air.
Get real in community. Person to person.
Granddaughter proxy.
Forth generation North Dakotan – lives in a zoo. Geode promises gift of beauty inside.
Moved around. Got lost. Came home to put down roots.
LAC – giving voice for mental health.
New folder of possibilities.
Phone. Phone home. Midway Villa. New eyes on Grand Rapids. Traveled road to possibilities. Awakening.
Mac. Mac McKinney. Do not be afraid. Make voice heard about life. Guardian angels.
Shaving mirror home. Regular and amplified. Slowing down. What did I miss?
Twenty six years to life. AoH. Out of comfort zone. Ask right questions. Communicate.
Listen. Magnet to attract youth home.
Was concentrating on listening. Not prepared to speak. Two small children and divorced. I need support. It's why I'm here.
Art. Therapy. Youth. No easy, accessible path – but talent. Oh yes. Talent!

Awakening purpose. Awakening possibility.
What is my question, is my question now?
Migratory birds know their direction. Where is mine?
Home town of 480 people. Also forth generation but not a farmer of the land.
Nine year old walking through life with mental illness. We have learned to listen. To listen to each other. I do THIS for my daughters, for generations to come.
Home is many places where I'm welcomed.
Art springboard to possibilities. Art to support community.
Diving in. BCLP, now here. What is my place in the community?
Expired passport. All seven continents, three oceans, one to go.
Relating to each other different everywhere.
Pay attention through kinesthetics. Listen better.
Grand Rapids library. Library as place for conversations. Everyone welcome. Library diorama. Who knew? Library awakening possibilities beyond books.
Connections everywhere. Deer lake. Wife.
Grand Rapids. Conscious intentionality to stay, to arrive. Attraction.
Grant writing photographer. Whole from disparate pieces in rural place, place making. Capture what matters.
Dewey is how people know me. Weekly conversations with high school students and juvenile justice. Deep. Serious. Fun too.
Rolling over laughing. Impossible not to laugh.
Duluth is my roots. Higher ed career, finding new meaning, purpose, possibilities.
Powerful journey. Velveteen rabbit. Impact long lasting. Thin, worn. Real. Becoming real not about being carefully kept.
Interested, involved in political process. Now community involvement.
Earth circle. Circle. Earth. Discussion needed. Short fuse. Patience needed. Needed now!

Heart racing. Voice quivering. Warm heart rock.

Middle of the country. Really? Husband has roots here. Contra dancing to Threshold Choir. Come and sing. For life. For celebrating life. Earth. Justice.

Advocates for family peace. Listen.

Compassion. Shell of / for possibilities and patience. Listening to the sound, to self, to the future of possibilities awakened.

Infinity sign. Together. Connectedness.

Heart in many places. Geography. Home.

People.

Rocks. Be the change.



Harvest: Grand Rapids Community Cafe - February 2014



Results Summary

In November 2013 and February 2014, two groups of people from Itasca County had the opportunity to experience a three day [Art of Hosting](#) training. An idea emerged from the November gathering to bring people from the two groups together during the February training to participate in a [World Café](#) to explore the question of how a community learns to host itself.

The hosting team from the Art of Hosting training was asked to support the planning group in refining the questions and hosting the café so the planning team could fully participate. The Café drew about 40 participants altogether from both trainings plus a few additional people who had not been at either training.

The three questions were:

- 1) What is at the heart of community to you?
- 2) What, then, are the conversations we are longing to host in our community?
- 3) What do we need to do now to become a community that hosts its own conversations?

A harvest of each question was done between rounds of conversation, written on post-it notes and then clustered on the wall to begin to look for themes and patterns. These themes and patterns are contained in this document as a summary of participant results – exactly what was offered so the community members who continue the conversation can continue to make sense of what was shared in a way that is meaningful to the community.

Next Steps/Recommendations

There seemed to be energy to continue the conversations and explore possible next steps. It was up to the planning team to decide what next steps they wished to take as they continued to explore ways that a community can learn to host itself. There are many possible routes for this to happen.

The planning team was aware that there are other (maybe many) organizations and initiatives that are already active in attempting to address community issues.

It was suggested that these groups be brought together to see where they could collaborate and work together or find synergies. These kinds of suggestions often make sense but creating the space for the synergy to emerge is where the suggestions often run into problems. One area of exploration for the planning team was how to invite this conversation in a way that engaged people from the place of their passion and what they choose to offer rather than offering suggestions or recommendations from “outside” – whether that be outside the community or outside individual organizations.

The planning team was invited to look to other initiatives approaching similar questions in non-traditional ways. An example of this was The [Great Gathering](#) initiative in Fredericton, NB, Canada, a community of a similar size, where they had run three (over three years) two-day open space sessions to which the whole community was invited and an amazing diversity of community participated.

The planning team was invited to look further inspiration on the Art of Hosting Community Site [Project](#) page.

The invitation and challenge for the planning team was to continue to offer opportunities that draw people in by engaging their passion and interests and inspiring possibility that feels energized rather than like too much work or more of the same.

Cafe Questions and Harvest

Question 1: What is at the heart of community to you?

Cluster – Relationships, connections, belonging

- Include everyone – relationship
- Sense of place “Belonging”
- Community is a sense of belonging
- People, Relationship & Connections
- Choices (of being in or our)
- Small town relationships
- Enough space, yet friends...close friends
- Connections, with black holes
- Honest about our fears
- Small town – Big Heart

Cluster – Youth and families

- Youth/schools
- Concern for kids/families thriving

Cluster – How we work together

- Collaborative efforts towards shared vision
- Service above self
- Community feeds creativity feeds community
- Awareness of resources within community

Cluster – Expanding boundaries

- Place? People? Attitude?
- Itasca community of 1,000 lakes
- Community is more than just the local area
- View depends on where you are looking from

Question 2: What, then, are the conversations we are longing to host in our community?

Cluster – Strong, diverse economy

- Workforce needs – gem of ICC
- How do we share an economy that is diverse enough to create opportunity?
- Financial stability for all people
- Fun, create, space – how do we make the downtown a more “fun”,

stimulating place to live, visit, work, shop and socialize?

- Tension between environment and development

Cluster – Strong democracy

- How do we raise awareness of the significance of voting rights?
- How do we build trust in our local government?

Cluster – Future focus

- Are we willing to change?
- How can we shift focus from looking out individual windows to see the big picture of community so we can do more good?
- Community legacy & future/existing opportunity
- How will our community change in 2-3 decades?

Cluster – Inclusion & engagement of all walks of life

- Invite input from wise elders
- How to genuinely invite everyone to the table?
- How do we get to know our neighbors?
- Mental health issues & stigma
- Are we really a culturally inclusive community? (or what does cultural diversity mean in our community?)
- Engage outsiders. Conversations with those who feel on the outside of the community
- Breaking bullheaded stereotyping. Conversations on inclusion of diversity into our community to help break stereotypes.
- We are a welcoming community?
- Needs of Itasca County (conversations on hard subjects)

Cluster – Youth and families

- Fathers & families
- Prevention vs. reaction
- Youth program accessibility
- How can we engage our youth as a participant in community?

Question 3: What do we need to do now to become a community that hosts its own conversations?

Cluster – How do we remove the barriers?

- We need to intentionally invite a cross section
- Remove barriers (like child care, transportation, exclusivity)
- Need to use many venues to reach others
- We need food, daycare and transportation
- Intentional invitation conveying ownership

Cluster – Inclusive invitation

- Ground rules for civility who gets invited and how?
- Creative ideas that will draw/entice a diverse group to participate
- Making it inviting, comfortable and creating trust
- Welcoming physical space

Cluster – X

- Put team together
- Stay connected
- Keep talking
- Re-fining the questions
- People committed to continuing the process
- Support people who will continue training
- Self organized committee, topic areas

Cluster – Y

- Purpose, food & fun
- Listen & act

- Define a purpose
- Find out what people want to talk about
- Focus on assets

Outlier – civic, government

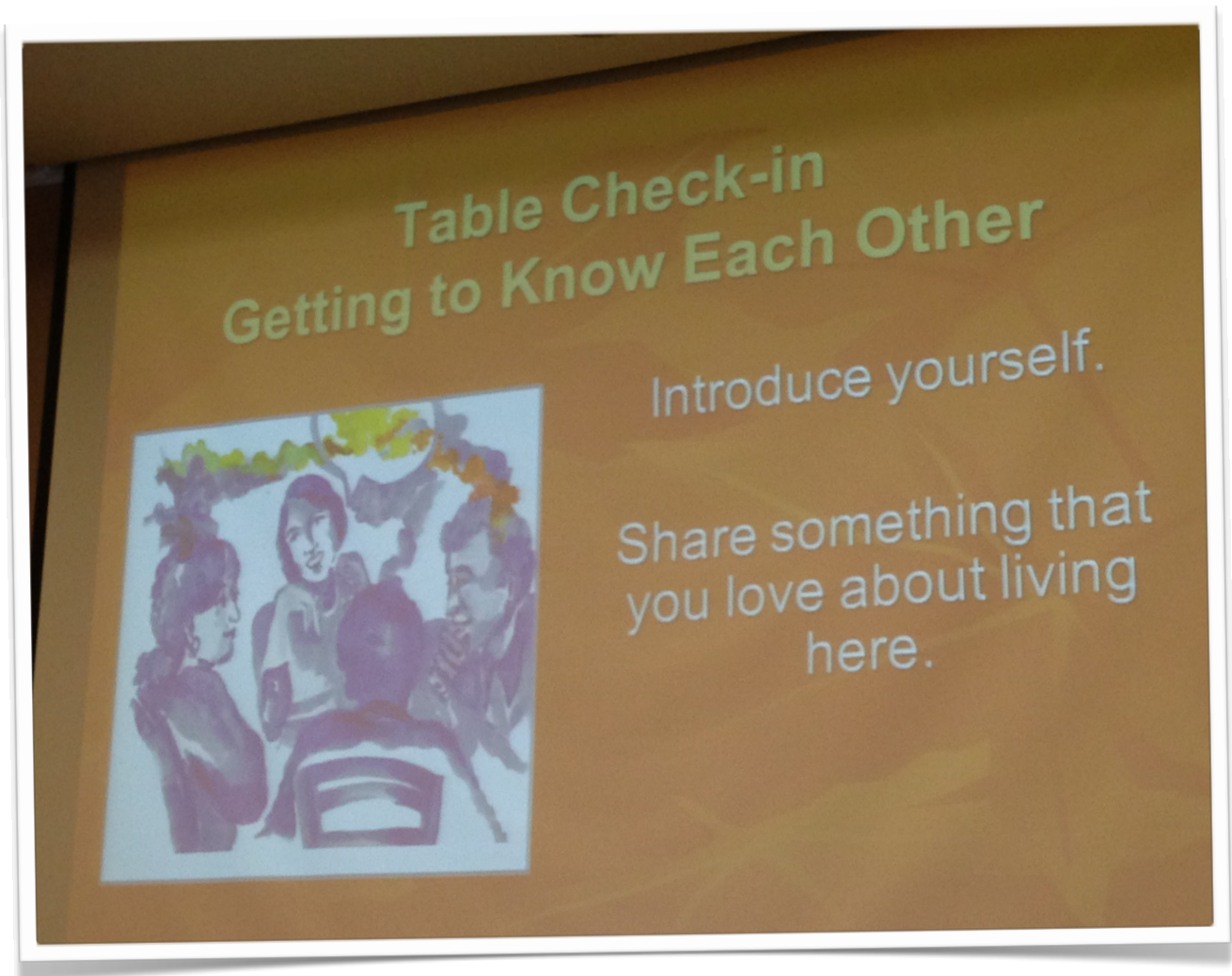


Highlighting AoH in Practice

As you are aware we live in an place with vast natural resources that, through the years, also provided the area with many cycles of boom and bust. In the good times large numbers of services and infrastructure get placed into the system that appear to be unsustainable in some economic downturns. Approaching such a conversation in an effort to reduce the economic and social pain is always met with anxiety and hostility by those who must accept change and perhaps accept loss. As we know the only thing that is assured is change itself. The AoH has proven to be a most valuable tool to allow the dialogue to take place, as no change can come to be if we are in the belief there is no change needed.

Jerry, Kathy, Thank you for allowing me to participate. It's always nice to be involved in your programs and learn new methodology to communicate. ~RW~

Harvest: Grand Rapids Community Cafe - September 2014



Community Cafe Results Summary

The second Community Café was held on the second afternoon of the September AoH training. It helped set the stage for the November 2014 Grand Gathering. There were two questions, the first one was asked in the first two rounds of the Café. The questions and the themes that emerged from the conversations in the room follow.

What is the future we want to live into?

As is often true, the themes in this conversation were interconnected.

Inquiry into Community Need and Building Bridges

- What is the root NEED of our community? How do we BUILD a BRIDGE to bring people together for understanding?
- We have two communities that touch but don't overlap
- Multiple communities need bridges
- Breaking down barriers/inclusive
- Two worlds next to one another, fear directed at one another, sight-lines to each other – bridge – what is the bridge to understanding?
- Collaboration between non-profits and service agencies
- More balanced opportunities in social services – bridge versus reliance

Authentic, inclusive connection

- Connections, authentic conversations
- Social gathering places to foster a sense of community for all
- Find ways for balanced dialogue between all groups!
- Trusting intergenerational conversations
- Inclusive community discussion
- Inclusiveness, connectedness, diversity

Youth Support

- Instilling a work ethic through a variety of educational opportunities for youth
- Brain gain, retain! No Drain!

A Call to Balance Economic Development and Environmental Stewardship

- Natural Resources Stewardship
- Balance of economic development and environmental stewardship
- Preserve water quality
- Clean water
- Encourage people to care about Environment
- Integrate environment education

Values and Principles of Being and Working Together

- Capitalize on Collective Strengths
- Spirit of Hope
- Value time to enjoy LIFE!
- Good play – slow pace
- Self-determination – success means a lot of different things
- Strong families
- Access to health care
- Students equitable access to services
- Liveable wages
- Market rate housing x 2

What can we begin now?

After hearing the harvest after the second round of conversation on the first question, participants were then asked what could they begin now to bring this future they want to live into to life.

Care Enough to Invite

- Care enough to ask for the story
- Bring everyone to the table to identify struggles – hear the unheard
- Who is not here that should be? Extend an invitation
- Keep talking – listen and hear
- Be a good neighbour – just do it!
- Be a neighbour, bring a neighbour

Self Education and Knowledge

- Educate self on complex issues
- Keep positive attitude

Identify What Matters; Expand AoH and Community Engagement

- Have a community conversation about values- identify what is really important to Itasca Co.
- Build on Coffee and Conversations to support ongoing community conversations that matter
- Continue to grow Art of Hosting in our community
- Expand art of hosting process in our community
- Engagement of community
- Increase public awareness - water and air quality
- Market study on housing – quantify the needs
 - Have conversations to address underlying issues
- Removing barriers for private builders
- Update socio-economic report (action item)

Invest in Youth

- Investing in youth
 - Lead by example
 - Environmental awareness
 - Community involvement
 - Work ethic / all jobs +

Connect Itasca County

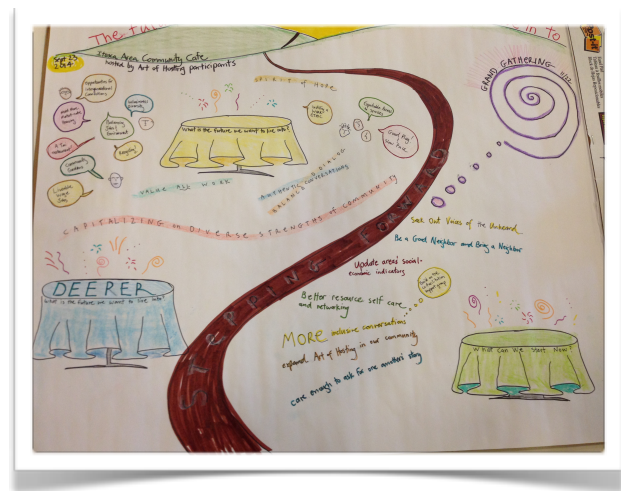
- Get a critical mass behind broadband (Connect Itasca)

Provide Restorative Space

- How to provide restorative space for everyone in our community
 - Mental and physical wellness – we know what facilitates these, how can we make

these accessible and likely for everyone here to take part in?

- Mental wellness – Northland Counselling
- Physical wellness – Get Fit Itasca
- Grants to provide income hours to allow self-care
- Networking within wellness opportunities to provide upward mobility
- Social networking as unknown advantage



Highlighting AoH in Practice

I know the Grand Gathering will get some significant press, but that event would not have happened except for the Art of Hosting training. The best part of all is that Blandin leadership participated – so they got some first-hand feedback from many Art of Hosting participants on what they've learned about having meaningful conversations. My sensing is that the experience was a positive one for them. On a more personal note, I have utilized World Cafes in my board retreats to discuss topics important to our strategic direction. ~CF~

Grand Gathering - Nov 2014



Grand Gathering Sparks Ideas

by Nathan Bergstedt Herald-Review

Thursday, November 27, 2014

The organizers knew they weren't doing anything entirely original; that wasn't the idea. But the only examples of community gatherings similar to the Grand Gathering that was held in Grand Rapids on Saturday were ones held in Canada, which suggested that this might have been the very first one ever organized in the United States.

Aside from being cutting edge, the Grand Gathering of the Itasca Area was meant to find out directly from the people in the greater community what is needed in Itasca County. The premise was relatively simple: get as many people as possible in one space and let them talk about what they think is a pressing need for the community's future. But how do you get these people together? And more importantly, how do you organize an event around a series of topics when you don't even know what any of the topics are? That's where Open Space Technology comes in to play, one of the tools in the Art of Hosting arsenal.

There have been a number of The Art of Hosting trainings held in Grand Rapids over the past few years. People from all sects of the community have taken the training, including members of influential non-profits in the area. The Grand Gathering of the Itasca Area was initially conceived via a grassroots effort of some of these individuals, and was ultimately organized and financed by the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation, the Blandin Foundation, the United Way of 1,000 Lakes, and the Meadowlark Institute.



A First Ever Community Wide Gathering

When the Grand Gathering Marketplace opened, over 40 people immediately stepped forward to build the day's agenda with topics and issues they wanted to talk about.

The "harvest" of the Grand Gathering can be found on the Grand Rapids Community Foundation [website](#). It is organized into four broad categories – Community, People, Environment, and Economy. Listed below are some of the conversation topics that participants called during the day and to really see the richness of the conversations take a look at the [harvest report](#).

Community

- Arts for everyone in our community
- Engagement of 20, 30, 40 year olds in work of community
- Broadband
- Diversity in Grand Rapids: "How can we become more welcoming?"
- Four-Lane Hwy. 169 from the Cities
- Accessibility/Mobility Concerns
- Bike and pedestrian-friendly community
- Motorized Trails ATV / Snowmobile
- Future of Showboat
- Why is it so important to be from Grand Rapids?
- Celebrating Itasca Co. and Grand Rapids – 125th Birthday
- How do you keep an established event vital with community trust?
- Harris Township Talk

People

- Healing the relationship amongst Red, Yellow, Black and White people
- Resiliency of the Youth Culture

- How do we find a way to have a mentor for every student in grades 9-12?
- The role of traditions in our lives
- End/Reduce Violence, Suicide, Alcoholism
- Mental Health
- Veterans Rural Care
- Senior/Veteran Isolation
- Isolation and increasing connectedness
- "Grand Challenge" Action plan for isolation

Environment

- What is involved for us to have healthy water in our future?
- Reduce Plastic Bags/Containers
- The Future of Natural Resources
- Land Ethic in the Community
- Chemical Exposure Awareness Program

Economy

- Apprenticeships in Grand Rapids
- How can our area attract new industries and neighbors, and grow what we have?
- Entrepreneurship
- Encouraging Entrepreneurship
- How to reduce unemployment
- Tourism in our area
- Living Debt-free
- Leveraging Blandin as engine for economic development
- Influence of Higher Education

Community Impact: Stories Bring It Alive!



Lasting Impact

Stories of impact are still being collected. It is the stories that bring alive what is possible. The stories convey both subtle and large examples of bringing the practices to life. Some of this is being recorded at the Shape Shift Strategies Inc. Blog site including one called [Real People. Real Lives. Real Community. Real Impact.](#) The writing at this site is shared widely with the global AoH community as well as with other readers – some of whom are subscribers and some of whom find the articles through social media. The story of what is happening in this community is offering inspiration to others in many places.

AoH - A Journey and More

shared by Audrey Moen - Participant AoH#4

When I first signed up for the AOH some people stated, "Oh, why would you want to do that? It is just facilitating. You already know how to facilitate, why go for three days?" I knew that just in the title before I even read the details of what AOH is that it was indeed going to be much more.

I was able to bring with me a diverse group of people who normally never attend a training like this. They are considered on the outside as poor, disabled, or have histories that do not allow them to secure basic housing. In other words, they may have had a criminal background; they may no longer have the right to vote. It did not matter, they were welcomed as if they were Kings or Queens. What they took away from it has increased their lives. One is on his way to attend the Day on the Hill at the Capital. One is leading a group now locally. One stated that she feels a sense of confidence and acceptance she never had before.

The learning that took place is something that will be, for me, life-long. I use it every day in the little things. I think about table conversations in a different light. I encounter situations that in the past may have been met with road blocks; with the AOH skills this does not happen. If anything I find that the skills learned in AOH open doors to communication - barriers or walls fall down, and people open up – trust is alive in the room.

The three days went by in a blink. I met people I never knew, developed stronger community links, shared values, insight, ideas that were priceless.

I also was able to participate in the Grand Gathering in Grand Rapids, MN. What a day of positive energy and inspiration! I also participated in the Theory U day which has already helped me in my career, my volunteer work, and in my home life. The facilitators for AOH are well trained in their field, they are engaging, accepting, and are an inspiration.

My thanks to the Blandin Foundation for providing this training. I would like to see it continue. Starting something and then ending it, is not what our community needs, it needs to keep the momentum growing so the seeds can continue to take root and grow. The Foundation is very good at keeping things rooted as long as needed. I met other AOH members who attended the training in our area and in other areas. They consistently state the same thing; AOH is a process, it is not a day, an hour, a moment, it is about taking the time, always learning, developing, reaching out, community building, and engagement.

Thanks again for offering the AOH to our area. I can honestly state I hope it can continue. There is so much to learn and put into practice!

Self Expression and Identity with At-Risk Youth

shared by Lea Friesen - participant AoH#4

"The art work I do with at-risk youth revolves around ideas of self-expression and identity. We are in the process of painting murals around the facility.

We also talk a lot of street art, graffiti and tagging. It is an art medium that is intellectually accessible to them, also it is a way that underprivileged populations are able to express themselves. The quality of the street art we look at is emphasized, the ingenuity of approach to concepts and the high quality of technique that is visible even on the trains that go through our town everyday.

A recent stint of vandalism around town is really frustrating to me. I decided to bring it up with the kids because I wanted to address what I see as different between what we talk about and obscene vandalism. I decided to try the AoH format to work with the kids on the issue.

We began creating material that addressed the questions:

- *What is Vandalism vs. Street Art?*
- *What is the difference in personal value to the students of advertising, graffiti, and vandalism?*
- *Who is negatively impacted by these various images?*

I was very surprised by the enthusiasm for the conversation and the information that has been harvested from the interaction. I am going to finish the project up shortly and am very excited about it."

Grand Rapids Voice

[Grand Rapids Voice](#) is a non-partisan community group open to friends and neighbors who are concerned about the future of the Grand Rapids area. The group meets twice a month to ask questions, offer opinions or concerns that individuals would like the public to address.

Begun by Rob Ward and friends a few years ago, this voluntary group is intended to help people related to different perspectives or points of view but it was slow going, not managing to get the levels of engagement hoped for.

Rob attended the first AoH training in November 2013. He picked up some ideas and strategies for engagement that shifted the quality of those meetings and generated the type of engagement that had always been imagined as possible. It was partly a question of leadership influence based on the patterns and practices of self-organization and the wisdom is in the room – things experienced in an AoH training that can be adapted in ways that work for groups, organizations and communities already in existence with often small and subtle changes.

When asked what shifted for this group after the AoH experience, Rob offered a few reflections. “First, was the ability to approach people outside of my own thought process, through an invitation where they felt welcomed and where they could find a way to plug in their own interests. Then, instead of trying to tell people what to think, it was inviting in the different ways of thinking, inviting dialogue with good listening practices. And then, it was getting out of the way to let people run with it.”

Within a few months, more people and a greater variety of people were coming to the Grand Rapids Voice meetings. And they keep coming now that they feel they have a place to bring their voice and have it heard.



Inclusivity, Worldview and Synchronicity

Here are just two of several significant experiences:

1) In a large organization I've been involved in for several years, there is a stated policy to be inclusive. One area of inclusiveness specifically stated in the policy pertains to not being affiliated with any one religious denomination. In practice, however, many of the organization's gatherings end with the King James version of the Lord's Prayer, an obviously Christian prayer. This organization has been trying to be more welcoming to a wide range of diverse populations in Minnesota.

At a recent policy review meeting of this organization, I was able to use the Worldview Intelligence concepts. I used them to have a form with which to address the disconnect between the stated policy and the continued practice of using the prayer at many of the meetings. The six elements of Worldview Intelligence gave me a form to be able to address the following: especially in northern Minnesota where there's a high concentration of Native American reservations, it can be very alienating to traditional Native American people to participate in an organization that's purportedly not affiliated with any denomination, yet ends its meetings in this manner.

2) One of the conversations I participated in at the Grand Gathering resulted in part of the group agreeing to approach the new Grand Rapids police chief as a group. We had some concerns about some police practices under the former police chief's direction. The group decided to arrange a meeting with the new chief for a conversation. A process of synchronization of schedules is underway, and an email is currently being crafted to invite the new police chief to a group conversation. This opportunity would not have come about had members of the group not been trained in the Art of Hosting, and the action would not have been planned by the group had the Grand Gathering not occurred in our area!

Thank you for the life-changing opportunity to participate in the trainings!

~NH~

Evaluation Feedback



The purpose of the evaluation of several of the AoH trainings was to ascertain the relevance of the training experience and material during the training and afterwards, to understand what continued to resonate with participants and what patterns and practices they were incorporating into life, work and community.

General Information

85 participants from three of the trainings (February, July and September 2014) received a request to complete an evaluation and 35 did so – a response rate of 41%. Of those who responded, 94% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: I was very satisfied with the workshop. 94% agreed or strongly agreed that learning theory useful, 97% agreed or strongly agreed that experiencing the tools and methodologies was useful and 66% found

opportunities to co-host to be useful. This lower percent on opportunities to co-host is likely because not everyone steps into co-hosting during the training.

The vast majority of participants – 82% – felt there as an appropriate balance between theoretical learning and experiential learning and 78% felt the duration of the training (3 days) was appropriate. 69% felt the language of the brochure accurately portrayed the experience of the training (20% were unable to comment).

54% of respondents were between the ages of 45 and 64 while 37% were under the age of 45. The rest of respondents were over the age of 65. 89% of respondents were female and 11% male.

Most worked for not-for-profits (59%) with the next largest group (20%) coming from government agencies. 21% combined came from for profit organizations or self employed. 46% of respondents were in leadership or management positions.

Information about Patterns/Practices Learning and Usefulness - Some of the Numbers

Responses to the question about the usefulness of learning theory about the patterns and usefulness of the patterns post the training:

(Not all numbers add up to 100. Disagree and Strongly Disagree numbers were so low, for simplicity they are not recorded in these charts)

Pattern/Practice	Usefulness of Learning Theory		Have Found Useful Since the Training	
	Strongly Agree/Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Strongly Agree/Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree
Chaordic Path	94%	6%	60%	40%
Chaordic Stepping Stones	91%	9%	56%	41%
Powerful Questions	91%	9%	70%	30%
4 Fold Practice	77%	23%	45%	55%
Worldview	94%	6%	64%	36%
Divergence-Convergence	97%	3%	53%	47%
Levels of Listening	91%	9%	82%	18%

Participants indicated the following levels of agreement on the experience of methodologies and practices during the training:

Pattern	Strongly Agree/Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree
Check in and Check out	89%	11%
Circle	91%	9%
World Café	97%	3%
Open Space	94%	6%
Reflective Listening	94%	6%
Design Process	86%	11%
Harvesting	100%	

Since the workshop, participants have used or found useful (includes experiencing someone else using the methodologies) the following methodologies in their organization or elsewhere:

Methodology	Have Used		Have Found Useful	
	Strongly Agree/Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Strongly Agree/Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree
Check-in/Check-out	66%	24%	70%	30%
Circle	70%	18%	70%	30%
World Café	21%	79%	42%	58%
Open Space	30%	70%	56%	44%
Reflective Listening	83%	11%	80%	20%
Design Process	49%	40%	52%	48%
Harvesting	46%	41%	68%	32%

When asked if the tools and methodologies learned have had a positive impact at work, in their organization, in the community and in life, participants responded:

Pattern	Strongly Agree/Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree
Work	86%	14%
Organization	77%	20%
Community	79%	17%
Life	80%	17%

Voices of Participants

There was ample opportunity for survey respondents to offer examples and provide additional information. What follows are their responses to several questions.

What was the most valuable part of the experience for you?

- Reframing my practices
- The art of listening
- The Reflective Listening. I find it useful in all that I do
- I have used reflective listening when dealing with a coworker whose work style has really bothered me in the past.
- Reminder and validation of worth
- Opportunity to be hosted by folks other than colleagues. This was a powerful change for me, and much appreciated. Also very powerful to be part of a group in which people were experiencing AoH practices for the first time. And last a terrific opportunity to meet others in my community.
- I loved being hosted
- Thinking about how it could be applied elsewhere. Meeting the many intelligent, committed young people from the community.
- Open Space guidelines
- 4 immutable Laws Of The Spirit Design Of Process hand out
- Being present; hosting a conversation in Open Space on an issue that is important to me, and receiving valuable insight from others.
- The group size and makeup was terrific...a great blend of ages and community sector involvement. I especially liked the LARGE CHARTS (as I use this style in my classroom), and the varied leadership along with the opportunity to practice the strategies. The entire 3-day workshop was well designed with a non-threatening, encouraging atmosphere that helped participants achieve a comfortable level of involvement.
- Learning ways to address the complicated and/or difficult subjects that need to be shared to grow in a healthy way!!!!
- Worldview
- I received many values attending the workshop: Our facilitators were great, the wisdom in the room was a humbling acknowledgement and a truthful idea. Creating 'listening' skills - grateful for it all.
- I love the idea of harvesting, and the different methods taught to get a harvest--I could see it translating well into my organization. The methods we learned were able to keep people focused, which can be hard to do.
- Meeting more community people and sharing our thoughts and ideas
- Understanding this concept and being able to "speak the language" and understand what these patterns and practices are



- Despite being relatively short, the connections forged with others at the workshop feel very powerful and long-lasting



Where are you using what you learned?

- Patterns of communication were enhanced as both speaker and listener take time and don't jump to old responses
- I try and make a conscious effort to sit back & LISTEN more deeply, think about and process the information and be more purposeful about a response (or if I need to engage)
- Made me think and listen before jumping right in.
- More powerful and intentional listening of family life/

home discussions

- Reflective listening and powerful questions worked well last evening as the ICS Board struggled to reach consensus on its 2014-15 budget. Among other activities we voted to financially support a small contingent of the chorus and their trip to Carnegie in the spring
- Intentionally crafting powerful questions has led to deeper and more effective conversations at home
- Powerful questions has really stuck with me and having everyone's voices heard.
- Circle, world café and open space are used regularly in my work, especially at an organization wide level
- I am better able to identify situations that that could benefit from these practices, and am watching for the right opportunity to suggest their use
- I brought back the tools I learned to work and immediately implemented them in my meeting...which I now host vs facilitate. I knew the principles already of circle and checking in and out, but was re-reminded and have been more disciplined about including them in meetings. I am sharing the info with my leadership team and am teaching something new each month.
- In a weekly spirituality group, we are discussing using the AoH tools to prepare our community for the needed conversation about the use/conservation of water for future generations.
- Utilizing the Art of Hosting steps has strengthened conversations in all areas with family, friends and coworkers.
- I have found it useful in facilitating meetings at my work, in becoming a better parent to my children, and applying ideas for the Diversity Counsel at my college
- Felt the impact right away with friends and family. Looking forward to future utilization.
- Working with School Board in technology decisions. Working with teachers in same area. Working with students using reflective listening and holding an object to take turns talking.
- World Cafe has been a tool that resonated with our community. I know of several World Café convenings that are being discussed. A group of visual artists is planning to meet at the end of April to talk about how we can create a stronger community of artists.

- Shared some of the information with my students who are utilizing the information in their organizations
- I haven't had the opportunity to use a lot of the methods---but when I will be training new AmeriCorps members this year--they will definitely be put to use.
- I see a change in the Coffee and Conversation meetings I attend each month...everyone is more engaged.
- I can't think of a specific experience, but it was great to meet the other participants and see what great things are going on in Grand Rapids.

What improvements would you suggest?

- My organization doesn't meet in the summer, so it is hard to practice - are there any "scripts" - exercises cheat sheet to be reminders...besides my own notes
- Just a bit less discussion of the hosts experiences, and more opportunities for conversation on how the practices could work in participants' activities.
- I'm torn about this answer because I think I have a different learning style from most of the others in the group. I would suggest ensuring a better balance of males and females and age groups in the future.
- Love how it was done!
- More conversations on how to develop powerful questions.
- More time
- Nothing
- Can't imagine..unless it was a short class in how to visually represent what you are hearing. I would love to be able to draw and visually harvest a conversation. Also, the topic of mind mapping was brought up. I would like to learn how to mind map.
- I have nothing to suggest at the time. I feel going through it again maybe I would have a feeling for better feed back
- Nothing.
- At times, it seemed too rushed. We have a huge workbook and only got through a bit. Unfortunately once you return to work, it's hard to get back to devote time to review and read the pages missed.
- I think more hands on experience in the styles: more world cafe discussions, etc. Doing the practices really helped me more than the time spent in the circle explaining everything
- Shorten it - to one day or one and a half days. The opening circle seemed long, the practice of sitting on the floor and mirroring each others' drawings was distracting for me.



Gratitudes! The last word... (for now)

- Thank you all again for a rich experience! It has changed my understanding of these practices in a really good way. I feel more connected to them, and better able to



participate in them and, if needed, lead them.

- Thank you to our leaders and the Blandin Foundation for making this opportunity available! What a wonderful idea to bring the Art of Hosting, listening, harvesting to an area - plant the seed(s) and provide the atmosphere for continued sharing and learning.

- Thank you and please continue and deepen this art!!!!

- Thank you for opening a new worldview and methods in which to communicate.

- The best Blandin sponsored training event that I

attended. Nice work everyone!

- Thank you and the team for a great learning experience.
- Thank you so much for the opportunity and for sharing yourselves and energy to help make our community and world a better place to live.
- Thank you for one of the best and most useful trainings I have been blessed to attend, which continues making a constant change in my responses, listening and conversations.
- What a meaningful and useful workshop - thank you!
- Haven't had a chance to use things very much, but I'm glad I learned it and will incorporate things into my work and life when the opportunity arises.
- Thank you so much for the opportunity!
- Thanks to the Blandin Foundation for continually upgrading the skills of us who work in the field. I truly appreciate their investment in our community-work skill development.
- Thanks so much! Great experience!