



ON THE LEVEL

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Volume 8 / Issue 2 / July 2007



The Power of **WWE**

Citywide Networking for More Effective Ministry

By Chris Brooks



We all want to be more effective. Whether effectiveness means adding more balance to our personal lives, focusing on goals that need more attention, taking better care

of our bodies, or improving our performance in ministry, we all want to improve in some area. The desire to make progress is universal, and it is one of the core drivers of innovation and creativity. For “we” urban leaders, I believe the key to increasing our individual and collective effectiveness is in strategically networking at the local level.

Who hasn’t heard about networking? This practice is becoming increasingly valued, particularly in the secular marketplace as businesses search for opportunities to expand their influence, increase their profit margins, and grab market share. The May 7, 2007 issue of *Forbes Magazine* focused on several aspects of networking. This worldwide business publication had articles by the founder of Google and the co-founder of MySpace. To entities such as these networking has become a big deal, a very big deal.

In the context of urban ministry, I find it helpful to describe the real value I see in building Healthy Local Networks. There is great power in establishing a citywide cohort of sorts; the DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative has seen this work through its programs. Healthy Local Networks are one form of what social learning theorist Etienne Wenger has called “Communities of Practice (COP).” A COP is defined as “a group of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis [and is seen as] the ideal place for stewarding knowledge” (Wenger 4, 12). Some of you may recognize COPs by other names that we use in the ministry arena such as: learning communities, cohorts, think-tanks, or study groups. The basic function of a COP is to help individuals with common practices and common passion to pursue ever-deepening knowledge. This is usually done for a mutual purpose, and not just for learning’s sake. A Healthy Local Network is like a COP infused with deep relationships and ongoing personal encouragement and prayer. Once trust is firmly established shared goals emerge. Sound like something you want to be a part of?

► continued page 6

HERE'S MY TAKE

N is for Networking

By Gerald Bell

Much has been heard about this word that starts with the letter "N." The emphasis being placed on networking has a noticeable number of urban community leaders wrestling with whether or not the concept is a necessary good.

Angst about networking tends to raise concerns like: can other leaders be trusted to remain committed? Will what I have built be overlooked? Can I afford to add one thing more to my plate? How will it affect my team or funding streams? These are valid questions that can also be barriers for some who are doubtful about networking.

Conversely, there is a growing appreciation for being connected to a local network that has many urban leaders swearing by its benefits, calling it a "wellspring of resources." In the DVULI family we believe there are rich attributes to this seed that starts with the letter "N." We didn't have to dig very deep to find a few alumni who've tasted its fruits...Here's their take.

Job Lara (Los Angeles, 2003)

Pastor at First Baptist Church of Lyndsay in Los Angeles, CA

When I lived in Los Angeles I was connected to a learning group through Urban Youth Workers Institute. This provided a system for me to be held accountable to a group of urban leaders that were diligent to not let me compromise. A big part of it was the mutual encouragement. We met once a month for 4-hours to pray, share a meal, worship, and discuss books we had read together. I found that this way of networking offered leverage which you

could not find laboring all by yourself. People likely have some resources that you don't have and that can make a pretty huge difference. Think about those who fund your ministry; they want to know you are not some lone ranger. When you are a part of what others are doing there is built-in accountability. There is more creativity at the table and the resources increase. When you are connected to someone your sphere of influence increases, too. After I moved to Northern California a year ago, I started a learning group and I am finding it to offer similar support like the group in LA. I really believe networking is an attitude. It takes the mentality of *what will multiply when I work with others*, versus *what will I lose*. It's all about true collaboration and not compromise.

Van T. Lee (Pittsburgh, 2004)

Youth Pastor at Bethany Baptist Church in Pittsburgh, PA

I had been trying to network with other people in the past in my area but was not successful. Now it seems that everyone's on the same page and can see the importance of networking. As leader of one of five local "network quads" in Pittsburgh, I have been able to get to know the people who are working with youth and have helped plan for our ministries to connect and do things as the body of Christ. We've had to get out of the bubble and broaden our view so we could see the big picture. I believe networking is a skill to be developed. I believe that some people have the ability to do it better, but the mindset has to change so they realize the deeper value and importance of being connected to others with similar passions and callings. It has been great being a graduate of the first group to complete the DeVos Initiative training in Pittsburgh. I have made connections with the second group to graduate from here and have been joining

in on many different efforts to help impact the youth in our city.

Kim Kossie (Houston, 2005)

Community Relations Director at KSBJ Radio and Youth Pastor at Living Well Youth Center in Houston, TX

As youth pastor and radio personality, being part of a local network really helps me to maximize every opportunity available in the community. It takes [urban youth work] from being good to great. It also enables me to multiply my efforts, to work smarter, not harder, and not to attempt to reinvent the wheel. I am a member of several networks and all have contributed to a shift in how I think. I now view networking as a necessity. I do it because I want what I do to be successful and I want others to share in the experience. I use technology to network and it is a win-win situation. For instance, I can organize an event by making just one telephone call or sending one email. While it may be easier to make contact to others, I can honestly tell you networking takes effort. You can't assume the work you're doing isn't being done by someone else in your city. You can't think single-mindedly, you have to lend yourself to help build someone else's program and trust that they will reciprocate. When working together you have something twice as big...I believe team work makes the dream work.

Oops!!!

Our apologies go out to Dionne Peoples and Faithful Friends. In our last edition we recognized Dionne's new position as Executive Director of Faithful Friends and incorrectly linked this organization with Friends of the Children. Our congratulations goes out again to Dionne Peoples and her new position.

BRIEF NEWS AND BREAKTHROUGHS



Leroy Hampton (Boston, 1998) is now Music Director and Worship Consultant for New Life Worship Center in Smithfield, RI. Leroy says, "Now I'm getting that flow...I am seeing my Breakthrough Plan come into fruition. The leadership,

relationships and resources are there and it's what I have hoped for, for the last ten years."

Leslie Goforth and Brian Brock (Memphis, 2004) tied the knot on April 21, 2007 at First Evangelical Church, Memphis, TN. Says Leslie of her wedding day, "God orchestrated it completely...The day was very special because my family members were in the wedding. The pastor was my great uncle who had married my parents and my sister and her husband."



Wendy Toups (Houston, 2003) moved to Okinawa, Japan last September where she was hired as the Student Minister at a church working with American military teens. According to Wendy there is a huge outreach to the Okinawan and the Japanese community and, "We know this is where God has us." Also, on January 19, 2007 Wendy

gave birth to a 7 lbs 7 oz baby girl named Meagan Grace. "She is so much fun," says Wendy.

Kristen (Styf) Rollerson (Denver, 2003) exchanged "I dos" with Charles Rollerson on February 24, 2007 at Anchor of Hope Church in Denver. According to Kristen, a bus load of youth from Sun Valley Youth Center, where she serves as director, were in attendance and served in various roles while sharing in the occasion that united her with the man she met at a Subway restaurant.



Michael & Erika Phillips (Miami, 2007) were blessed with the adoption of twins Aaliyah Eyerusalem & Alethia Tizita - 10 months old at press time. They were born in Ethiopia. "We are extremely excited to finally have our girls with us," Michael says. "We have been planning and praying to adopt from Africa for over ten years and it has finally come full circle. We are excited that they are united with us and that it is

all final. [God] has indeed fulfilled His promise to "place the fatherless into a family."

George Williams (Kansas City, 2001) was recently accepted into the Family Life Education and Consultation Doctoral Program at Kansas State University. George will study human development, family studies, family life education, research methods, evaluation, and an applied practice in family and community service organizations. Classes begin August 2007 for George. Wish him well!

Michele N. Scott (Boston, 2000) received the Youth Worker of the Year Award from the Office of Workforce Development, a department of the City of Cambridge, MA. She was nominated by a co-worker and some youth she serves. "I was surprised and honored to be [awarded]," says Michele. "For me this is an acknowledgement of the work I have done but I cannot stop here...I need to bring my A game with all that I do." Michele received a plaque and gift certificate for a massage.

Bernetta McKindra (Kansas City, 2003) was appointed Director of Corporate Work Study at Cristo Rey. Bernetta oversees job procurement, transportation and a 3-week training institute that teaches students how to work in the corporate world. "I am looking forward to being a part of a team that has the skills, resources, and faith," says Bernetta. "This work is more than a blessing. It is providing [capable] students with opportunities."

James (Jay) Hill (Detroit, 2004) just accepted the position of Youth Pastor at Abundant Life Christian Center in Detroit. Jay is responsible for teaching, preparing curriculum, formatting the monthly worship services



and the discipleship of the youth. According to Jay, after he spoke at Abundant Life CC's youth event a year ago, the pastor of the church said they had been praying for Jay to make a return visit. When doing so Jay was offered the job.

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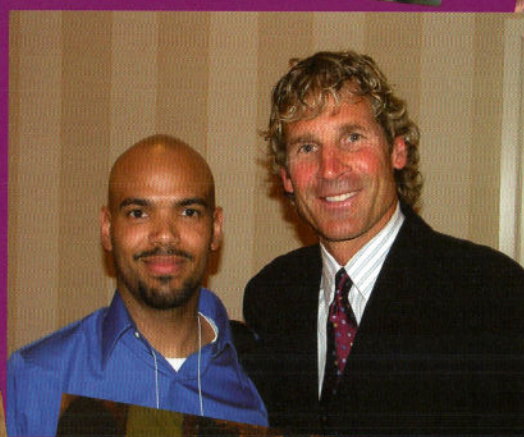
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CAUGHT ON CAMERA

By Liz Koster

Richard and Helen DeVos opened the week by addressing the group over dinner on Monday evening preparing them for a week of personal evaluation and future preparation. The five core values (Accountability, Balance, Empowerment, Interdependence and Leverage) challenged this class of youth workers to widen, deepen and expand current patterns throughout their personal and ministry life. A new addition to this year's line up of alumni presenters was Phil Abeyta on Accountability. His personal and ministry examples inspired the group tremendously. Sandra Valentine presented the Interdependence core value for the first time. Other alumni presenters and speakers were Cynthia Burton, Ron Carter, Marvin Daniels, Henry Greenidge, Isaias Mercado, Hank Hankerson and Gerald Bell.

While the learning was intense, so was the leisure. The class of 2007 enjoyed an Orlando Magic season finale win over the Miami Heat on Wednesday evening. Bob Vander Weide (President and CEO of the Magic) addressed the group at lunch before the game. Thursday evening the participants spotted more alligators than any previous class, while zipping through swamps on airboat rides. Friday night the week closed with an (almost tent revival) praise and worship concert featuring Ron Kenoly.



2007 1ST NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Class of '06



Minneapolis



Dessert!!!!



Boston



Pittsburgh



Atlanta



Grand Rapids

Congratulations to the graduates of the 2006 DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative training year! Fifteen months of intense learning, fun and friendship-making have come and gone. Now it's time to take what you have learned and pour it into your community.

Your personal lives and ministries have been impacted for a greater purpose and we pray the Heavenly Father has manifested a desire in you to share the wealth of what you have received.

Think back and reflect on each tear that fell and every laugh that bubbled up. The tears and laughter represent many learned lessons, new found relationships and the anticipation for the many blessings that will come.

From the DeVos Family and DVULI Staff we extend our CONGRATULATIONS on a job well done.

COVER STORY- CONT.

The Power of WE

Networking is a major key to unlocking the collective assets of the body of Christ in a city. Patterns in youth ministry research have been identified that would lead me to believe that networking is also a core component to a city cultivating a “culture of youth ministry,” one where the whole city sees ministering to children, youth, and families as non-negotiable. Networking becomes the “connective tissue” in the citywide body of Christ, and everyone experiences the positive difference. It is in this environment that youth ministry becomes more sustainable, as the pressure often carried by individual youth ministers becomes a shared responsibility of the broader body of Christ in that city, and not just the heavy burden of an individual ministry or organization. Some of the cities where this type of connectivity is effective and measurable in my eyes are: Cleveland (Greater Cleveland Youth Leaders Network), Memphis (Urban Youth Initiative Network), Chicago (Chicago Urban Youth Network), and Boston (Metro Boston Youth Network), just to name a few.

As a networker, I am often asked a question that goes something like this: “Isn’t the whole networking thing really just for the business and/or computer world?” This question is usually followed up with a statement about the frantic pace of urban ministry and how adding one more thing doesn’t sound productive at all. To bring out the practical value of networking in your city, I will address three fundamental questions that I frequently hear.

What are some of the benefits to each individual member?

When done right, networking provides an opportunity for people to pray together, break bread together, and build authentic relationships. It is these “life

on life” encounters that become the foundation for individuals, ministries, and organizations to link arms for the sake of their city. Depending on the type of network that develops, there may be opportunities for training, sharing resources, developing collaborative projects, and so much more. There is a significant benefit to each individual who fully engages.



What is the benefit to the group?

A citywide Healthy Local Network can become a major force for the sake of urban youth and their families. As barriers are broken down and unity begins to bubble up, this causes the group to lean toward the pursuit of common goals through collaboration. The group will see, over time, that their collective voice really generates change. If the youth ministry community of a

city takes ownership of this practice, the potential for ongoing unity and collaboration is vast. Try it and see for yourself!

How would we establish an Healthy Local Networks in our city?

Starting a Healthy Local Network in a city can be daunting, but it is well worth the effort. There are often issues of trust, competition, and even past wounds that have been left unspoken. These issues are very real and can be divisive. However, they allow each city to have its own unique history, assets, challenges, and already established micro-networks. The key to establishing a Healthy Local Network is respecting all of these individual realities while simultaneously seeking to bring leaders from every part of the body to the table for the sake of unity. There are a number of ways to establish a Healthy Local Network. Many are constructed organically, usually out of a felt need to share stories, pray and learn together, and build strong (perhaps even lasting) relationships. Other Healthy Local Networks have been built on an issue such as youth advocacy or a public school initiative. The point is not necessarily to pick an issue; it is to get people to build relationships, and allow the relational foundation to grow into whatever God determines a city needs. So to get started, invite two or three like-minded folks to have coffee or a meal together. Then, continually stretch the circle wider, always keeping relationships as the basis for a solid methodology.

Start there and watch the power that emerges from “we!”

Chris Brooks is Executive Director of Urbnet, an Affinity Network of the National Network of Youth Ministries. Contact: chrisbbrooks@msn.com

Primary Source
Wenger, Etienne, Richard McDermott and William M Snyder.
Cultivating Communities of Practice: A Guide to Managing Knowledge. Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing, 2002.

BEFORE YOU GO

WHY PRESS PAUSE?

By Eileen Kooreman and Gerald Bell

Until our daily grind is either voluntarily or involuntarily brought to a complete halt, the impacts our fast-paced lives are having on our physical, spiritual, and mental conditions can go unnoticed. As leaders in ministry, this pull for our most prized resources (time and energy) seems never ending. The courage to unplug from the myriad of tasks that consume so much of our focus can seem hard to muster up. Yet, if you find a way to just “press pause” a world of resources is waiting to be discovered.

You heard it was coming! You’ve received the brochure! Here’s why you should come to the alumni reunion in August and Press Pause!

- Press pause so you can reinvest in you
- Press pause so you can network and connect with new resources
- Press pause so your work in ministry can prove it’ll survive in your absence
- Press pause so you and your fellow alumni can catch up
- Press pause so when you release pause, stress will be much less
- Press pause so you can be seen, hugged, and loved by our staff



Once you get to Grand Rapids put your wallet away: your hotel, food, and activities are on us. Spend time with your spouse, reconnect with old friends, meet new friends, or make the time to just be alone with the Lord. This time is for YOU. Consider these tips:

Wednesday – August 22

Arrive in time for the “Welcome to Grand Rapids Reception” from 5:00 pm to 10:00 pm. Registration, an array of foods, and a special concert with Ron Kenoly will make you feel warmly appreciated and welcome. Or, come earlier and enjoy the beautiful hotel, downtown Grand Rapids, and Michigan’s summer.

Thursday, Friday, and Saturday – August 23, 24, & 25

Begin each day with music and awe inspiring devotions. Be renewed at general sessions led by Ron Kenoly, Marvin Winans, Richard DeVos, and John Perkins. Turn off your cell phones and laptops and be sure to attend workshops and activities that center on Leisure: a way to honor God with mind, body, and soul.

Friday – August 24

Experience West Michigan. Chartered buses will caravan everyone to the beach of ‘The Big Lake’ where we will play, eat, and bask in fun.

Saturday – August 25

The reunion ends all too soon at 1:00 pm. We recommend booking return flights that depart after 3:00 pm. Or stay a little longer at your own expense. The hotel is extending the special rate of \$119.00 per night to our reunion guests up to 3 nights before or 3 nights after the event. Call the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel at 800-253-3590 to book your additional nights...See you at Reunion 2007!

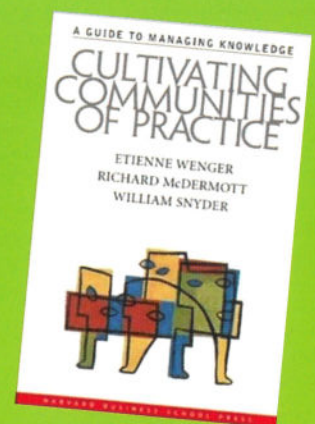


Check This Out

“Cultivating Communities of Practice”

Authors: Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott, William M. Snyder

Cultivating Communities of Practice is highly recommended reading to “help businesses and organizations more thoughtfully and intentionally steward knowledge.” This book provides practical models and methods for stewarding these communities to reach their full potential--without squelching the inner drive that makes them so valuable. [It’s] essential reading for any leader in today’s knowledge economy; the definitive guide to developing communities of practice! Peter Senge, author of *The Fifth Discipline* says this valuable tool “stands as a milestone – for helping managers to see knowledge as a social phenomenon – not as a ‘thing’ and, most important, for prescribing sound ways to translate this way of seeing into practice.” –Rick Diaz



Message Board

These People have updated their Phone Number:

Dwight Peace (Los Angeles, 2003)
Jomo Greenidge (Portland, 2005)

These people have updated their Email:

Paul Espinoza (Denver, 2003)
Kris (Styf) Rollerson (Denver, 2003)
Sandy Elliott (Birmingham, 2001)
James Moore (Birmingham, 2001)
Connie Coleman (Paterson, 1999)
Chuck Taylor (Pittsburgh, 2004)
Tanja Crochen (Birmingham, 2001)
Nathaniel Moody (Grand Rapids, 2000)
Patrick Simmons (Memphis, 2004)
Dion Jordan (Portland, 2003)
Scott Sangster (Denver, 2003)
Eddie Armijo (Denver, 2003)
David Matthews (Philadelphia, 2002)
Rudy Phillips (San Antonio, 2001)
Chuck Harper (Albuquerque, 2004)
Benjamin Salas (Chicago, 2000)
Barbara Stanley (Phoenix, 2000)
Dennis Talbert (Detroit, 2002)
Alfonso Galeano (Orlando, 2000)
Katani Sumner (Boston, 1998)
Hal Best (Philadelphia, 2002)
Patricia Burns (Memphis, 2004)
Priscilla Valdez (San Diego, 1999)
Keith Bell (Denver, 2003)
Steven Peters (San Diego, 2001)
Harroll Chisom (Los Angeles, 2003)
Micah Espinoza (Denver, 2005)
Shawn Hames (Portland, 2005)
Ken Montague (Portland, 2005)

These people have updated their Address:

Tina Hidy-Marlin (San Antonio, 1999)
Marcella Gladney Lee (Kansas City, 2003)
Stephen Jordan (Detroit, 2004)
D'Andre Ash (Atlanta, 2006)
Sherri Rowan (Los Angeles, 2003)
Karol McIlvaine (Boston, 2000)
Dionne Peebles (Portland, 2003)
Bobby LaCourt (Philadelphia, 2002)
Jim Bartels (Grand Rapids, 2006)
Shanta Johnson (Denver, 2003)

If you are intersted in contacting any of these people, please visit the DeVos Urban Leadership website for updated contact information www.devosurbanleadership.org.

DVULI City Group Blogs

Keep an eye out for our renovations on the DVULI website. Networking has never been easier.

2008 Cities

2nd Round:
Minnapolis, MN
Atlanta, GA

3rd Round:
Kansas City, MO
Phoenix, AZ
San Diego, CA

3rd Local Workshop

Scenario Planning

Aug. 2-4 -

Chicago, Indianapolis

August 9-11 - Cleveland

August 16-18 -

Chicago South, Miami

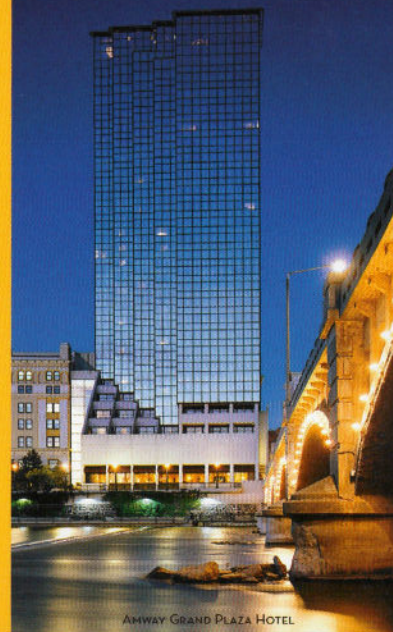
WE FOUND THEM!!!



Chicago Class of 2007's picture was missing in our previous Newsletter, As we promised we cornered them in Orlando, and they accomodated us with big smiles.

DEVOS
URBAN
LEADERSHIP

AUG.
22-25



AMWAY GRAND PLAZA HOTEL

DEVOS URBAN LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE REUNION 2007

Grand Rapids