

**RICH IN COMMUNITY**  
**“Connecting the Gifts of Individuals to the**  
**Assets of the Community to Build an Inclusive Community”**

**Who was part of the Team?**

Rich in Community is made up of a very diverse group of organizations and individuals in the Richland Center are it included the following groups, Passages, People First, NAMI of Richland County, UWEX, Health and Social Services, Independent Living Resources, local businesspeople, the Chamber of Commerce, City Hall, County Board, local ministers, UW Richland Students, employment specialists and core group of connectors.

**What did you want to accomplish?**

Nearly four years ago in a Community Wide World Café setting the following surfaced as opportunities to build a more inclusive community for all:

- Improve transportation services with a focus on meeting basic needs and strengthening the disabled community’s participation in public activities.
- Improve mental health access and services in our underserved rural community.
- Create a new type of inclusive community center.
- Build public awareness around including all people in our community.
- Build employment opportunities for people with disabilities in our community

**What did you do to get there?**

- Empowered people to have a voice and share their needs and stories.
- Used people connected in the community to connect with powerful assets in the community to make a difference.
- Researched, identified specific and measurable issues, acted and evaluated – Learning about ourselves as leaders in the process
- Met often to discuss progress and celebrate success (even very little successes)
- We liked to share FOOD, with our group and others.
- We were open to others in a variety of ways.

**What did we achieve?**

- **Guided the development of a Transportation Plan for the Community** (which included a new provider, with a handicap transport van, as well as two other taxis, at a cost less than the previous provider).
- **Sponsored Neighbor to Neighbor Block Parties and Community Gathering** to encourage mingling with other people you don’t know to build

local inclusiveness. *This transformed into the Richland Neighbor to Neighbor Community Timebank!*

- **Guided the development of a New Community Center in our Community, that includes the voice of seniors, people with disabilities and others.**
- **Fostered a local Crisis Emergency Response Program for People with mental Disabilities.**
- **Developed dialogue in the community concerning Tele-pyschiatry services.**
- **Developed a Website with access to assets in our community.**
- **Participated in many local activities in our community as volunteers or organizers to build awareness.**
- **Empowered a voice and leadership from people who were not included in our community.**
- **Built NEW CONNECTIONS IN OUR COMMUNITY...we learned a lot about ourselves as leaders, about the power of money, and how agitation can be a useful tactic in making things happen. We made new friends but even as new friendships are built, inclusiveness continues to have challenges.**

**What will we do next to keep it going??**

- Support People First and others to be advocates for people who want to be included in the community.
- Continue to build connections in the community
- Be an organization of less structure that maintains connections to make changes.
- Try to sustain what we have started.

**What did you learn??**

- Connectors are very important in the success of inclusiveness.
- Including a wide range of people is truly important, because it provides a endless source of gifts and talents.
- Empowering people to share their gifts to really does build better assets or different assets in the community.
- Capture all the stories along the way and celebrating the stories and eating and drinking (soft drinks) when possible!!
- Our community leaders now value the gifts of all people.

*This summary was prepared in cooperation by the following member of Rich in Community:*

*Bob and Heidi Sheire, Pastor Larry Engel, Ricki Bishop and Steve Kohlstedt*

