



**Southside Community Partners Launch Event, A Community Forum
for Collaboration for Long-term Sustainability: Building a Strong
Southside Community, October 19, 2009
Summary Report**

The Southside Community Partners' launch event, *A Community Forum for Collaboration for Long-term Sustainability: Building a Strong Southside Community* convened on October 19, 2009, 2pm – 4pm, at the Beacon Theatre in Hopewell, Virginia. Attending were some 100 participants from a spectrum of local and regional nonprofit and governmental organizations representing health care, human services, education, arts, business and local news media.

Eva Reaves, Board Member, The Beacon Theatre, welcomed attendees and presented a brief summary of the Beacon Theatre history and current progress on the way to full restoration.

Scott Firestine, Director, Appomattox Regional Library System, opened the event by welcoming attendees and presenting a summary of the years of work and collaboration that have resulted in the merger of the three nonprofit programs into Southside Community Partners under the direction of the Appomattox Regional Library. Scott also pointed out the perfect fit between the library and the merged group's mission stating "...like public libraries, successful nonprofits infuse vibrancy into our community" and reinforced the library's commitment to collaboration with Southside Community Partners to help maximize the nonprofit community's work to build a strong and thriving region.

Wendy Austin, Director, Southside Community Partners, thanked the Appomattox Regional Library System trustees, the Southside Community Partners advisory council members, and steering committee for their ongoing service. She introduced staff members as follows, stating that the resources available are made even more accessible with the help of the highly skilled staff: Reference Librarian-Nonprofit Collection Specialist, Shari Henry, is available to provide individual assistance in successful use of Resource Center tools and materials. Chuck Koutnik, Resource Center Consulting Specialist, provides expert individual and group instruction on successful processes for researching funders as well as coaching on implementation of nonprofit management and governance resources. Rebecca Eisenman, Coordinator for ConnectSouthside and Learning & Leadership and Vera Pakizer, Research Assistant, both offering extensive communication and program advice and assistance. Ms. Austin provided a summary of Southside Community Partners programs including Learning & Leadership, Nonprofit

Resource Center and ConnectSouthside.org, highlighting the focus on supporting the local community.

Peggy Eagan, Executive Director, Children & Family Services Center, presented the keynote *Collaboration & Shared Services Can Help Your Bottom Line*. Peggy presented on Children & Family Services Center a 100,000 square foot office and meeting space that facilitates nine collaborating agencies to share space, technology, administrative services and program services in an effort to maximize service, reduce costs, and redirect savings to support and expand programs. She discussed the long and arduous process it took to bring this organization to fruition and shared successes and setbacks that she and her partners experienced along the way.

Deborah Barfield Williamson, Executive Director, Virginia Network of Nonprofit Organizations, acted as moderator for the panel, introduced each local stakeholder and briefly discussed VANNO.

Handy Lindsey, President, The Cameron Foundation, discussed his perspective on effective collaboration by cautioning nonprofits to pursue only partnerships that would result in effective and mutually beneficial results for all. He expressed the desire for nonprofits to avoid committing to collaboration for collaboration's sake and requested thoughtful consideration and prudent planning on the part of nonprofits seeking funding for collaborative projects in the future.

Lisa Sharpe, Executive Director, John Randolph Foundation, discussed her perspective on effective collaboration by emphasizing the need for nonprofits to evaluate their services and current needs to see if a partnership would be beneficial for the community. She felt that collaboration was an ideal means for improving nonprofit efficiency and effectiveness from a funders' perspective.

Rosalyn Andrews, Executive Director, American Red Cross, discussed her perspective on effective collaboration by discussing the recent reorganizing of the Red Cross Chapters in this region. She presented details about the positive results of combining several small chapters into one unified chapter including more efficient service production as well as more effective information and resource sharing. Ms. Andrews expressed the importance of staying focused on the organization's mission and what delivers the best service to constituents when re-organizing and/or merging.

Joan Drewry, President, Wakefield Foundation, presented her perspective on effective collaboration by discussing the successful partnerships that the Wakefield Foundation has experienced in Sussex County with both John Tyler Community College & Blackwater Regional Library that has resulted in expanded and improved service delivery. She discussed the successful renovation of the historic school building site which has also been a key aspect of the Foundation as a catalyst and focal point for community collaboration.

Dennis Morris, Executive Director, Crater Planning District, discussed his perspective on effective collaboration by framing collaboration as an essential component of the planning district mission and highlighted the positive outcomes his organization has experienced as a result of working together with others. He also highlighted the establishment of the Virginia Logistics Research Center, their most recent collaborative initiative.

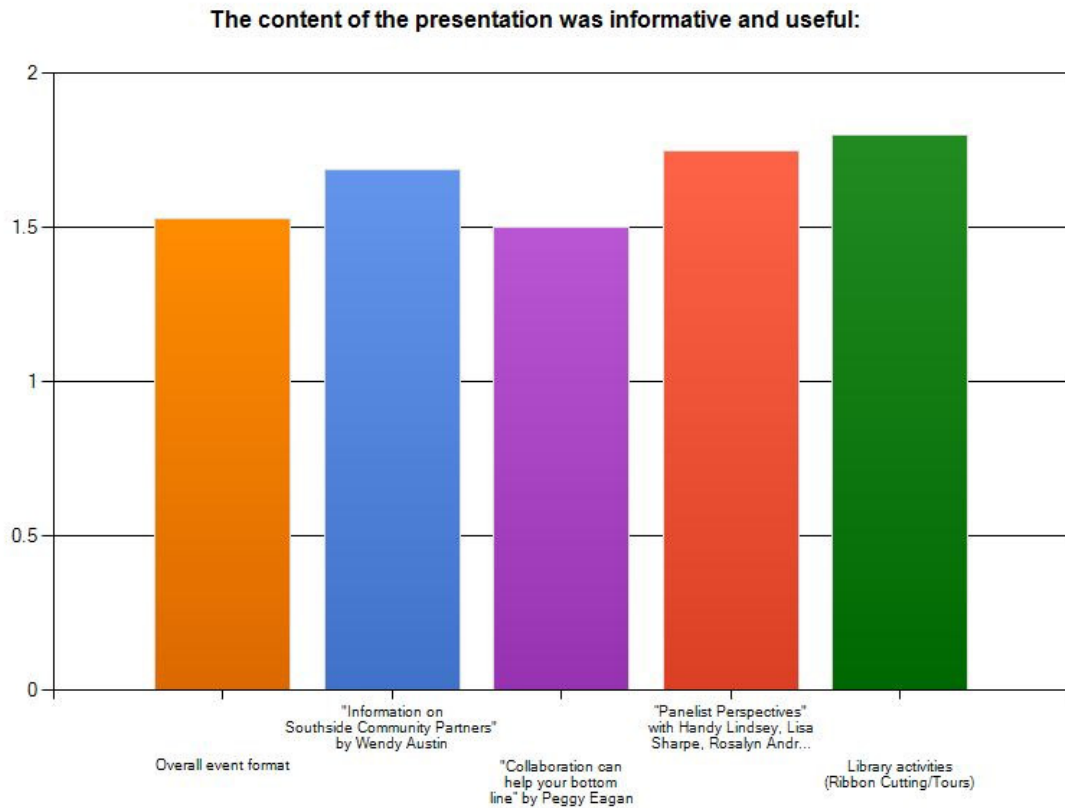
Cliff Bickford, Assistance Vice President, BB&T and Sustain our Communities Committee, discussed his perspective on effective collaboration by relating it to the very careful manner in which BB&T evaluates any potential partner to ensure a “win-win” situation in which all parties benefit. He felt collaboration is not worth pursuing if this is not the case.

In closing, Wendy Austin thanked all participants and encouraged all to utilize the resources available from Southside Community Partners. She pointed out continuing opportunities for learning and sharing and suggested that the discussion continue on the ConnectSouthside Community Email Group and the Online Forum. Ms. Austin invited all to the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony.

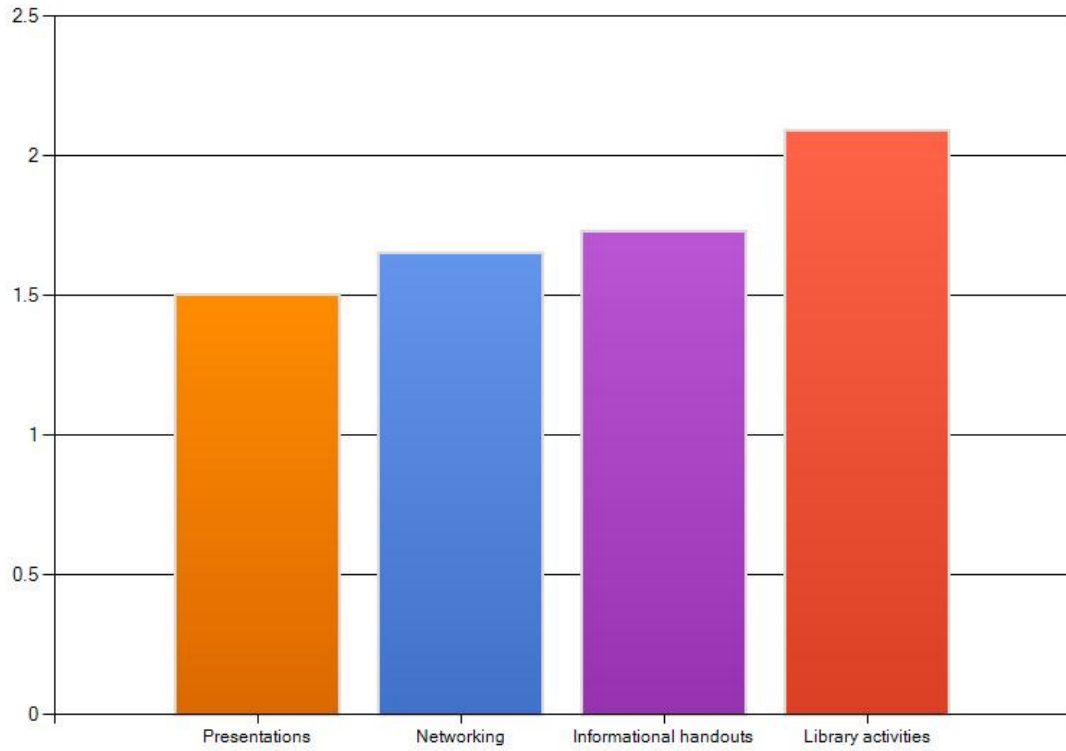
Immediately following the forum, participants walked to the Hopewell Library for a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony to celebrate the newly merged, Southside Community Partners, presented by the **Hopewell-Prince George Chamber of Commerce**. **Mayor Pelham** officiated the ceremony with staff, advisory council and chamber members present. Tours of the Nonprofit Resource Center and library were conducted, computer stations were set up for website demonstrations and informational packets were available.

Event Survey Results

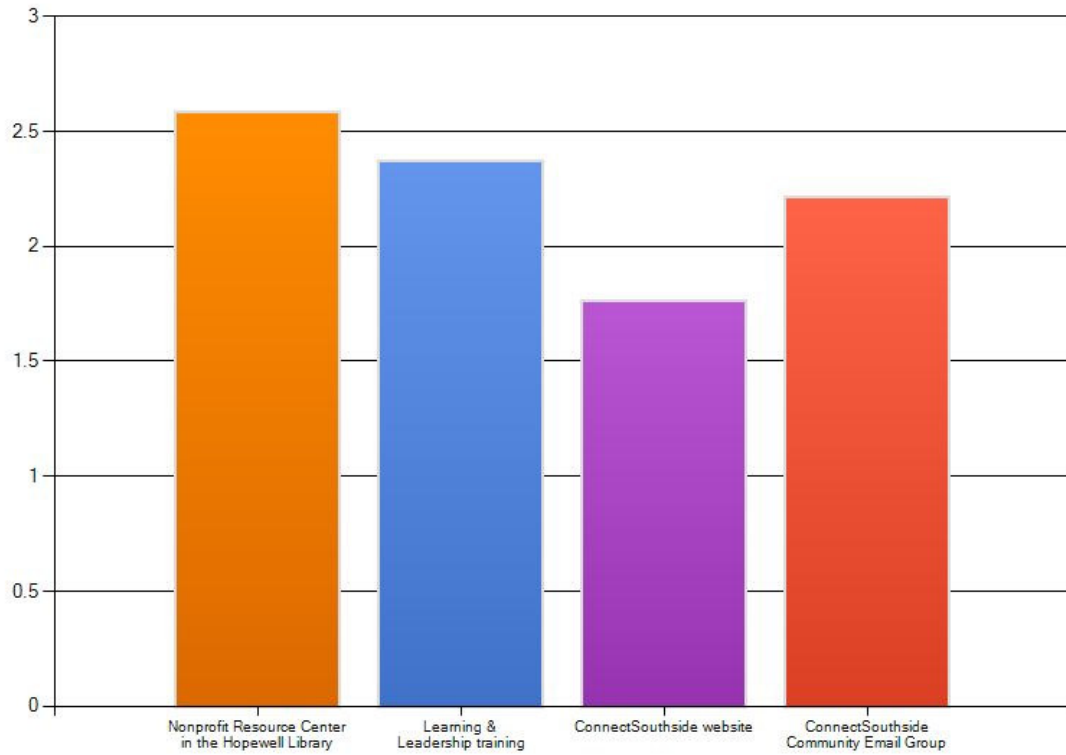
An evaluation form was sent via email to all participants of the forum following the event and responses were collected over a three week period. Survey results revealed that all respondents felt the content of the presentation was informative and useful. The following are graphic representations of survey response as well as verbatim responses to open-ended questions.



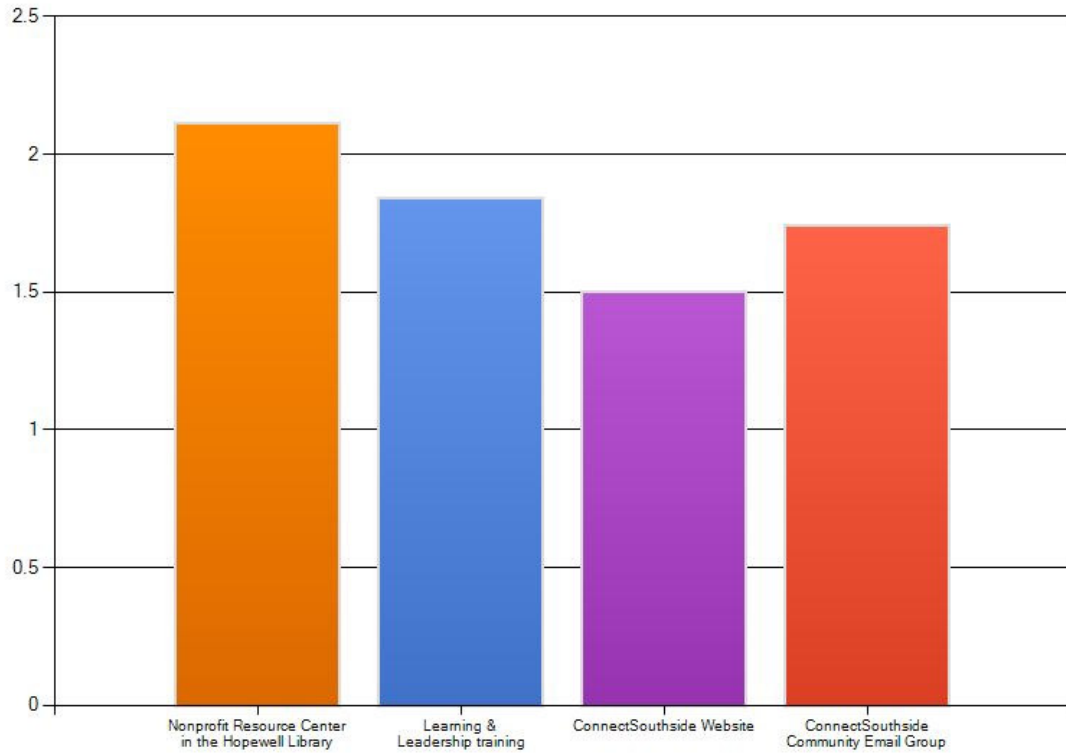
I benefited most from the



I HAVE used the following Southside Community Partners resources



I PLAN TO use the following Southside Community Partners resources



Verbatim responses to open-ended questions:

I plan to use the information I received in the following way...

1. Share with the community
2. Information resource
3. Share with those I work with and network
4. Inform others
5. To think differently about collaboration. Handy Lindsey's presentation really got me thinking about how collaborations should really work and that agencies shouldn't collaborate if there isn't a real fit.
6. As I plan programming activities and training for community
7. Share with colleagues
8. More networking and grant funding opportunities grant funding
9. I was motivated by the speakers to increase collaboration and consider it outside of gainful outside of a financial relationship.
10. Very informative...I plan to use this information and have used it in the past to help plan partnerships in the prevention of family violence programs.
11. As a funder, I can apply this information as I review proposals and interact with grantees. I can continue to encourage grantees to access the resources available and facilitate conversations between agencies, if it makes sense.

How would you recommend that Southside Community Partners follow up on this forum on collaboration?

1. Send a personal invite to attendees for an upcoming SCP class or resource.
2. Non profits with same client base can meet in smaller forums
3. Offer additional forums that will allow more panelist time and questions.
4. Would be interesting to see how many contacts were made with new people
5. Possibly continue to bring folks together to hear success stories such as Ms. Eagan's. It would help to hear about trials and setbacks along the way also.
6. Not sure. Already doing some with the resources available and keeping us informed.
7. Keep others abreast of what's going
8. I think maybe a program or exercise to help us evaluate our individual cultures and then categorize them in a way that we can identify organizations with specific characteristics (for the purpose of partnerships or seeking help to development aspects of

cultures that would be helpful to us (in partnering or otherwise.) This may be a little far out but I think it would be helpful.

9. It would be interesting to see how different disciplines used this information.

10. Possibly forums like this one can be held once a quarter to periodically to bring the nonprofit community together in a setting such as this.

Southside Community Partners would appreciate any community responses or feedback concerning this report. Please email southsideinfo@connectnetwork.org or call (804) 458-6329 ext 2013.