New Mexico Site Reveals Its Spirit:
CLE melds with a special place. Page 3
“We thought of our site as being one of the few rural sites, I was struck by how rural Laguna and so much of New Mexico is. We [in Wisconsin] have more in common with their experience than I had originally thought, which I learned from being able to put a picture with a place.”

—Sherry Timmermann Goodpaster, New Paradigm Partners, KLCC Session One fellow

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Last month’s Community Learning Exchange (CLE) was billed as an opportunity to learn about the many uses of storytelling in community change. The 45 folks (young and old, locals and visitors) who attended the Albuquerque, N.M., gathering came from states as far away as Hawaii and West Virginia, and as nearby as Colorado. Over the course of three days, participants learned the history of the Acoma and Laguna Pueblos, exchanged personal and community stories, and enjoyed a rich sampling of Albuquerque’s spoken word performance art scene. Together, they also wrote the latest chapter in the ever-unfolding CLE story.

“In our group we talked about the finite and infinite nature of storytelling,” said Lee Francis, IV, summarizing one small group’s discussion during a debriefing with the larger group. He went on to explain that while stories can freeze time — capturing specific episodes — they can also be perennial in the lessons they offer and the opportunities they present for fresh analysis and new conversations. Francis is the executive director of the Laguna Education Foundation, which hosted the New Mexico CLE. The second-generation poet/storyteller/educator and his colleagues welcomed the opportunity to share their local culture and history with visiting CLE participants. They also enjoyed hearing other people’s stories of community and change.

The opening CLE festivities were launched by a spectacular hoop dance performed by Kyle Swimmer, the teenage son of KLCC fellow/local evaluator Shelly Valdez. A tribal elder then offered a prayer before a savory southwestern supper was served and formal greetings were extended by Francis and Dr. Anthony Fairbanks, superintendent of the Laguna Department of Education. After dinner, KLCC Session I participants offered reflections of their fellowship.

By Cheryl D. Fields

KLCC fellows and guest attendees at the third Community Learning Exchange hosted by New Mexico’s Laguna Education Foundation in Eastern Cibola County.
Kellogg Leadership for Community Change online newsletter

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experience. Fellows Ron Solimon, Lisa Dyea-Purley, Laura Garcia, Bob Tenenquer and Shelly Valdez explained how the principles of collective leadership, gracious space and crossing traditional boundaries helped Eastern Cibola County’s four distinct communities to come together, for the first time, to address a shared concern: improving public education. Admitting that there is still much to be done, the five panelists said that their greatest success was the passage of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that allows local school districts to coordinate their academic calendars and move toward a more coordinated curriculum.

During the next day’s visit to the sacred city of Haa’ku (or Sky City as it is called in English), CLE participants learned that the site was settled more than 2,000 years ago by Acoma ancestors who had wandered the plains for years in search of this prophesized “prepared place.” Sitting 367 feet above the plain (7,000 feet above sea level), the mesa-top community is renowned as the longest continuously inhabited village in North America. Today, only about 15 families reside year-round in the village, which has neither electricity nor running water. Only those who are direct matrilineal descendants of the original Acoma settlers are eligible to own homes at Haa’ku. Several of the current residents are either tribal leaders or artists, the latter of whom earn their living selling artwork to collectors and the thousands of tourists who visit the mesa each year.

The village also is home to the San Esteban del Rey Mission, a 21,000-square-feet Acoma-built adobe structure that is part of the National Register of Historic Monuments, which has a history dating back to 1629. The mission gravesite contains five layers of the interred that have been “planted” over the centuries. During their guided tour of the site, CLE participants learned of the relationship between the Acoma and Spanish missionaries. The two cultures shared a high regard for education and knowledge, as well as an appreciation for the arts. When it came to religion, however, the Acoma endured harsh treatment from the Christian missionaries, who compelled them to convert. The locals eventually accepted Catholicism in order to survive, but secretly merged it with traditional spirituality. The resulting hybrid form of religion is still practiced by many Acoma today.

After hiking back down the Mesa to the Sky City Cultural Center, CLE participants spent the afternoon pursuing exercises that allowed for the sharing of personal stories. These led to discussions about how narratives (personal and/or community) can be used to establish bonds between people. Participants also explored how stories can be used to divide people and communities. The latter is especially true of stories in which one person or segment of the community has oppressed, exploited or wronged another. Still, the process of uniting communities rarely begins until both sides have had their say.

“We create so many obstacles between ourselves, especially when we are all trying to do good work for our communities and our people, but it’s our stories that have the ability to close those gaps and bring us back together,” Francis says.

Upon returning from the Acoma Pueblo, the CLE group split up to dine at two downtown Albuquerque restaurants. Later, those with enough energy reconvened for an evening of open mic sharing. Performances included an assortment of spoken word presentations, solo violin, free-style percussion and Hawaiian and Brazilian folk dances.

The group spent the next morning at the Pueblo of Laguna Middle School, where they continued the conversation about storytelling, then spent the afternoon attending Laguna Feast Day activities. A few local families generously opened their homes so that CLE participants could experience a home-cooked Laguna Feast Day meal, after which everyone had an opportunity to stroll through the Feast Day marketplace where vendors were selling a variety of arts and crafts. Throughout the afternoon, the Pueblo’s central plaza featured a steady schedule of performances by local dance groups.

“I couldn’t believe that we were sitting there having lunch with the [pueblo] governor at his house,” says Daniel Strouth. continued on page 5

The importance of storytelling is explored in a CLE large-group session.

The West Virginia team gathers on the Cultural Center plaza.
“Everybody was so nice ... and I really enjoyed the Eagle Dance. It was great!”

The end of Feast Day was spent exchanging thoughts about how to carry the CLE experience back to participants’ home communities. The group spent the evening enjoying more performances by local poets and musicians.

“As a performer myself, I always try and get local artists involved in our events. I had hoped the final evening would showcase another style of telling stories through art, photography, music, and poetry. I think folks had a good time and we were able to highlight some great musicians and performers and artists, so it was a great evening for me,” Francis says.

The final morning of the CLE was spent exchanging expressions of gratitude to the host site and to all who participated. One member of the local New Mexico group said the CLE experience gave her an opportunity to view her community with fresh eyes.

“I’ve lived here my whole life, but there are things I learned this week that I never knew before,” says Darlene Waseta, a member of the Session I KLCC fellowship and a member of the New Mexico CLE planning team. “I really appreciate this opportunity.”

Looking forward, CLE national program directors say the CLE continues to prove its value with each new session.

“Each CLE has had its own personality,” says Dr. Francisco Guajardo, one of the visionaries behind the CLE and a member of the national CLE program coordinating team. “These gatherings affirm our belief that local community leaders have a lot to offer one another. Forums such as these give them that rare chance to step back together and think about the ways they can make their communities better just by drawing upon local wisdom and ingenuity. It sounds so simple, but in practice this is really difficult, especially for communities that are marginalized or outside of society’s mainstream.”

The next CLE convening is scheduled for this summer in New York. Details will be featured in future editions of the KLCC Bridge.
Sherry Timmermann Goodpaster, Graham Hartley and Mary Traaseth (left to right) are working on an October learning exchange to be co-hosted by New Paradigm Partners of Wisconsin and Migizi Communications of Minneapolis.

Sherry Timmermann Goodpaster is a long-time KLCC fellow who works to improve the lives of youth in communities in rural Wisconsin. Through her role with KLCC Session One host organization New Paradigm Partners of Birchwood, Wisc., Goodpaster has worked toward the elimination of drug abuse and hunger as well as addressing other pressing concerns in her home community and in networked communities.

Convinced of the relevance of the KLCC model in combating drug use among youth and others, she welcomes any opportunity to introduce KLCC to a wide range of community activists. To this end, she invited two partners, Mary Traaseth and Missy Bablick, to accompany her to the March KLCC cross-session gathering in South Carolina. She shares the current story of her work and of the significance of the gathering to her colleagues from other networked organizations.

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Well before the agenda was set for the KLCC cross-session gathering in Isle of Palms, S.C., Sherry Timmermann Goodpaster had struck upon the idea of expanding the reach of the collective leadership model to local leaders in communities near her own who were working for community change, and who she thought would benefit from learning more about the KLCC experience firsthand. Missy Bablick from Goodpaster’s own community of Birchwood and Mary Traaseth from the neighboring community of New Auburn were involved in such efforts as drug and alcohol prevention, as well as attacking underage drinking. Goodpaster envisioned the possibility of their being inspired in the areas of capacity building and of fine tuning a cohesive, effective approach to community organizing. “The exposure to what people are doing from other communities helps [all of] us to expand what we’re already doing, it broadens our base and the exchange of ideas is a springboard for new things we could [all] be doing locally,” Goodpaster says. And while she sees the potential to introduce new ways of doing things, Goodpaster stresses that the local work has not been lacking in evolution and development along the way. “It has taken a while for some of the work to get to the point where it’s going gangbusters,” she says, but she chalks that up to the natural way any project unfolds. “Like a tree, it sleeps, creeps, and leaps in terms of growth. We are getting to that exponential state where things are starting to explode.” The explosion is indisputable. New Paradigm Partners has received two federal grants and has several others pending. These are being used to promote learning through networking across communities; to carry out peer leadership training in the schools; and to focus on positive activities for youth within their own communities.

The youth-oriented events differ from community to community, but they all serve the mission of enriching the lives of local youth through introducing to them activities that broaden their vision of their own lives. One of these exciting programs is the Experimental Aircraft Association’s Young Eagles, whereby youth from eight to 17 receive a free, local 15-to-20-minute plane ride from a volunteer pilot to introduce them to the world of aviation. Other programs are youth planned and organized, which gives young people the experience and satisfaction of designing and owning their activities. One of these youth-orchestrated activities demonstrates the depth and importance of the youths’ perspective and influence on desirable outcomes in community improvement efforts. Goodpaster’s community has alcohol compliance checks which rely upon the recruitment of buyers between the ages of 18 and 21. “Youth who were on the committee said that two kids [selected by law enforcement] were known to be partiers,” says Goodpaster. “And because we feel that our buyers should model the desired behavior, and we have a reputation to uphold, [we did not use them].” Law enforcement personnel had no idea, while the youth brought unique information that permitted sound decision making on the part of the committee, youth and adults working in close partnership. ▲

In next month’s issue the Bridge will highlight the value of service learning programs. We will catch up with former fellows who have carried their KLCC experiences with them.
With the recently concluded Community Learning Exchange (CLE) in New Mexico, it is clear that the cross learning that has been occurring is gaining in reputation throughout the KLCC Fellowship. As plans continue to be made for upcoming CLE sessions, what is emerging is an irrefutable building of institutional knowledge based on the success of previous sessions. “One of our purposes in going [to the New Mexico CLE] was to see how they put it together and to take back good ideas for [our] planning meeting,” says Sherry Timmermann-Goodpaster, a KLCC fellow from northwestern Wisconsin who is in the midst of co-coordinating an October CLE with Migizi Communications, the Minneapolis-based KLCC host site. Scheduled to take place from the 21st to the 23rd of the month, the joint CLE session will build upon the theme of place, as was an integral part of the New Mexico program, but with an added dimension. Wisconsin and Minneapolis will intertwine the theme of educational equity with the concept of its applicability in either a rural or an urban setting.

“We are talking about [issues of education equity] in an urban community. The issues are different in a rural setting, but there is a similar structure associated with [matters related to] the school administration and legislative entities,” says Graham Hartley, director of programs for Migizi. “These are the things we need to communicate,” he says. It wasn’t clear from the outset of the joint CLE effort that this commonality would prove to be a rallying point. Initially, the decision to work together arose from practical considerations about the expenditure of resources and the geographic proximity of the two sites to one another. There were clear advantages from each of those perspectives. Through dialogue that took place in the planning meetings, the fellows discovered that each had a respective strength and perspective around the issue of education equity that could potentially benefit the other community. This additional benefit had been unforeseen, but it is becoming central to the development of the CLE agenda. “One of the strengths of Wisconsin has been getting a sincere commitment from the school boards and superintendents to pursue the legislature with a singular agenda and voice. ... And we’ve had some decent although small successes from the standpoint of working with the state legislature,” Hartley says.

Migizi’s president, Elaine Salinas, envisions a powerful gathering of people with similar yet significantly different issues to address the common concern of education equity. “The goals of the CLE will be to share learning, tools, and strategies for realizing educational equity in urban and rural communities, particularly within our region. We want to immerse participants in the local place, and provide opportunities for them to experience gracious space and collaborative leadership while sharing their unique perspectives and experiences,” she says.
News & Notes

— News & Notes is compiled by the KLCC Bridge editorial staff. Comments and future news brief items should be forwarded to info@klccleadership.org.

Service Learning Conference at NW Indian College

Next month, from May 6-8, a group of affiliated organizations will sponsor the Third Summit on Indigenous Service Learning at the Lummi site of the Northwest Indian College. Northwest Indian College, Northwest Indian College’s Center for Service Learning, and the Corporate for National and Community Service are formulating a program entitled “Identify, Service, Place: Exploring Our Innate Ties.” According to the conference website:

This conference is designed to bring together students, educators, and community members for a series of educational workshops and cultural activities that focus on building a bridge between Indigenous Service Learning, community engagement, and place-based experience. “We are hoping to bring together educators around the issue of indigenous service learning to dialogue and to further the concept. [As this grows], it will benefit indigenous peoples, helping them to address some of the systemic social issues impacting the communities. Indigenous service learning is a way of giving hope and healing to the community and to really foster a sense of interaction and the re-instilling of traditional values,” says key conference organizer Michelle Vendiola, former on-site evaluator of KLCC Session Two host site the Lummi CEDAR Project.

Registration information is available at www.regonline.com/indigenoussummit and broader conference information is available at the conference website, www.nwic.edu/summit.

Arts and Literacy Fair Combats Drug Abuse

In communities across the nation—urban, suburban and rural—the plague of drug abuse is rampant, and community activists are employing creative ways to combat the problem while continuing to support affected community members. Big Creek People in Action, the KLCC host site in Caretta, W.V., has been concerned about this problem for many years, but wasn’t sure about where or how to start. Finally, they decided to go ahead and begin somewhere.

The fellowship tossed around several ideas and came up with the idea of an Arts and Literacy Fair with the theme of “Drug Abuse in Our Community.” Recognizing that truly addressing the problem of drug abuse requires enlisting young people from as early an age as possible, fellows approached students at Southside K-8 and Big Creek High School.

Throughout March, the project was approached from several different angles, all focused on the efforts of young people. A group of students from Loyola University Chicago talked to the younger students about doing an arts-oriented project to open up about their feelings on the issue of drug abuse and their ideas about improving the lives of people adversely affected by it. The college students offered suggestions for ways the young people could use artistic expression to tackle this very sensitive topic. For example, anyone who would be conducting an interview to help someone share a story was advised to make sure that names were kept confidential.

The fair itself takes place on April 25 at the Caretta Community Center gymnasium where the art projects will be shared with the entire community. Some students agreed to create Origami-style folded birds that will be hung from the branches of a tree that will be erected inside the gymnasium.

The other projects, from posters the Power Point presentations, will be displayed and played throughout the event.

The Arts and Literacy Fair is intended to attract parents, students, teachers as well as others in the extended community in hopes that the effort will extend across boundaries as well as across time. It is a kickoff event for future community forums and workshops on drug abuse education and prevention that are currently being formulated.—Reported by Marsha Timpson.

KLCC Leadership Brochure in Hard Copy

“Leadership for 21st Century Change,” the new KLCC brochure that recaps the story and history of KLCC; provides a detailed overview of collective leadership; describes the host agencies that have put collective leadership into practice; and quantifies the results and impact that have ensued from the implementation of KLCC’s efforts is now available in hard copy. It can be downloaded at www.klccleadership.org.

Millennials Organize for Jobs

Concerned about their future and their ability to earn a decent living, young people are convening a summit in Washington, D.C., on May 7 to discuss the problem of joblessness, no job prospects, and what to do about it. A coalition of grassroots organizations run by and for members of the Millennial generation, born between 1982 and 2001, call themselves 80 Million Strong and will develop proposed federal legislation to address the issue of unemployment among youth according to the summit’s recommendations.

Information is available at www.80millionstrong.org.
Reflections of Haa’ku

High upon a mesa
The world in view
Closer to heaven
Feel the hawk in you
They call it Haa’ku
“A place prepared”

Following the Creator’s promise, the people settled there
Streets of clay and stone
Homes of mud and straw
Stories of the people, filling me with awe

They survived the weather, the Navajo, the Spanish and cowboys, too.
Throwing clay into seed pots and seeds into soil
The corn from the Maiden grew hearty and tall

More than two thousand years in this one sacred place
Where the land and the sky nestle face to face
And Sun shoots down arrows
In halo-colored grace
A quiet, stunning landscape
This gracious human space.

—By Cheryl D. Fields