



## Community Mobilization Leadership Training WinShape Retreat, Rome, Georgia

*Revitalizing healthy relationships in Inner City Atlanta  
via a Community Marriage & Family Initiative.*

The Center for Community Initiatives (CCI) at Georgia Family Council is helping to prevent the costly effects of family breakdown by building strong communities across Georgia. CCI is promoting healthy marriages and families at the local level by connecting leaders from various sectors of a community and helping them craft long-range plans that best fit their community's needs. This is accomplished through raising awareness of the problems that exist in the community related to family fragmentation, educating key leaders and the general public about how to reverse the trends, and providing resources to those that need help in their relationships.

The local community marriage and family initiative formed to operate in Inner City Atlanta is known as the Healthy Relationship Network (HRN). HRN began to work together with local organizations who were like-minded, shared similar goals and were recognized in the community. Once HRN combined its resources with these groups and their programs, the result was a successful partnership that has resulted in positive outcomes for the community.

*Who are you partnering with and how are you collaborating with them?*

- **The Sullivan Center** – Their mission is to prevent, educate and inspire. We now have four “Survival Skills for a Healthy Family” classes at this Center each month – three during the day and one in the evening.
- **The Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center at the Salvation Army** – Their mission is to cultivate education, arts and culture. Starting in April, this Center will offer two classes each month –one to their literacy group and another that is open to the public. The classes they will offer are “Survival Skills for a Healthy Family” and “How to Avoid marrying a Jerk or Jerkette.”
- **Villages of Carver @ YMCA Atlanta** – This YMCA's mission is to provide programs and services that develop the spirit, body and mind. Beginning in June 2010, they will utilize "10 Rites of Passage" for their teen's program.

*Why did you choose these partners?*

- These organizations' mission to restore the family aligned with our mission.
- They were respected in the community.
- They were open to our work and willing to partner with us.

*What does crafting that partnership look like and what were some of the steps you took to make them aware of what you wanted to do?*

1. We did interviews with community residents and leaders. They began mentioning certain organizations redundantly, we spoke to those organizations.

2. We listened to the stories of the organizations that started off like we did (outside of the community) and the lessons they had learned.
3. We found out what their processes were and abided by their rules.
4. We took part in their successes and celebrations. Find out their needs for those celebrations and supply one or two of those needs.
5. We checked their list of services against our needs and saw where they could assist us.

What were some of the lessons you learned?

- Statistics only tell one part of the story, the people in the community tell the other part.
- When you ask for their help and suggestions, don't just listen – take them to heart!
- Just because you are the expert at what you are providing, it does not mean that you won't have a lot to learn from them as well.
- Find creative ways to help fulfill the mission of the partners with whom you are collaborating.
- Find the common ground. If you are all starting at different places, you will not arrive together.
- House Rules!
- Find a way to include your collaborator's resources in what you are doing.
- Look at your needs and see if your collaborators can fulfill them.
- Know your audience! Not just by numbers, but by the people and faces.
- Never "write a person off" because they are not aligned with you now, a big part of community building is timing.

What are your successes to date?

- We have two organizations currently offering classes on a regular basis, and three to begin in the May/June time frame.
- CCI staff member Joyce Whitted has an office in the community one day a week at one of the local Centers.
- We have an annual community event that we all sponsor together. There were 500 + people in attendance last year.
- We share each other's services and are now sharing our other contacts as well.

**FACTS:**

- We will have been in this community for three years on December 8.
- It took 12-18 months of foundation building before I actually began to have meetings in the community.
- Prayer played a huge part in the building of this community initiative. I do not believe that we would be where we are now without prayer.
- You need help. You will need 5 to 6 committed people, 12 to 15 would be ideal.
- Everything, whether it was good or bad, created what we have now.
- Our first Community Impact Day was August 15, 2009.
- Our focus meetings went for four months. One meeting a month and then a celebratory meeting.