



# Telescope

October 2010



*Tim Dutton  
Executive Director*

## Sarasota County at the Cutting Edge: Institute for the Ages

I had the privilege of witnessing the budget hearings of three government commissions last month. It is clear that the challenges and pain of reduced revenues has taken its toll on each jurisdiction and that creation of employment is at the top of everyone's agenda. This is verified in the 2010 Sarasota County Citizen Opinion Survey compiled and presented in August that shows the "Economy and Jobs" as the most important issue, five times greater than the second most important. This is not a surprise to anyone and the solutions to this issue are not simple.

Let's take an unvarnished look at what we can build upon to change this current reality. What are the business propositions that show that Sarasota County has a comparative advantage?

### **How are we unique but in such a way that the rest of the country, though trailing, is changing as well?**

Our county is demographically the oldest large county in America. That is not only "interesting."

The fact that the rest of the country and the entire world is aging at an unprecedented rate makes it IMPORTANT. The number of people over age 65 will double in the next 30 years in the U.S. to a total of 80 million.

### **Who has the power to purchase products, services and solutions? Who has discretionary income?**

Older adults in the U.S. have the most wealth and the most discretionary income of any other age category. Furthermore the age cohort from 55 to 64 is the most entrepreneurial over the past ten years. That makes them both most likely to consume and most likely to generate jobs and business activity.

### **What kinds of business and jobs might one expect to respond to the demands of this market?**

Intel's [Eric Dishman](#) talks convincingly about the case for technology as a response to the demographic shift and why Intel is pouring big dollars into it. It is technology and recreation and style and design that will be the foundation for the new products, services and policies that emerge from the new demographics.

### **What current capacities do we have that are the basis for this national Institute?**

It is true that the demographics are an asset upon which we can build. There are others. These include the Ringling College of Art and Design and its growing capacity for creativity in business, area companies that specialize in the medical devices and related industries, and the area health care institutions. The Institute for the Ages will generate innovative solutions and products, services and policies related to the marketplace of older adults.

As the community considers the long-term and transformational solutions to our economic challenges, the Economic Development Corporation got it right: emphasize our assets. We can be at the cutting edge of thinking, products, services and policies around a topic that the rest of the world is starting to awaken to.

# Spotlight on Tracy Seider

In this issue we feature Tracy Seider, 2010-2011 Chair, SCOPE Board of Directors. Originally from Kansas City, Tracy has been a resident of the Sarasota area since 1976 and has three grown children. She is a broker with Re/Max Alliance Group and has maintained an active role in the community throughout her 30-year career in real estate.



## How did you become connected to SCOPE?

I was a member of the Affordable Housing study in 2002. That was one of SCOPE's first community studies. From there I was on the Steering Committee for the creation of the Community Housing Trust – this was one of the outcomes of the Affordable Housing study. I served as vice-chair of the CHT in 2005.

## What excites you about your involvement with SCOPE?

I love the concept of citizens creating a better community. SCOPE provides the opportunities to learn about and discuss the issues that impact quality of life in Sarasota. This forum is the piece that no other group provides. Residents can feel empowered to contribute to solutions instead of simply focusing on the problems. There are so many examples of this – the groups from the Summit for Environmental Action, the neighborhood work, the newly formed relationship with USF Sarasota-Manatee on the Aging with Dignity and Independence Initiative and more to come in the future. SCOPE is a facilitator and convener on a variety of issues important to life here in Sarasota County.

## What inspires you about our community?

Externally, the natural beauty and variety of options for living and loving the lifestyle be it sports, the arts or community service to others. Internally, I love the passion that I see in the people who live here and truly care about the place they call home.

This community is forward thinking in many ways. The creation of the Institute for the Ages is a good example. The Institute is an enormous opportunity for Sarasota County – both economically and creatively. We will become a hub of development of new products, policies and services designed to serve individuals and communities as the population gets older. Think of the creative workforce that will be here to do this. It's all about innovation and creative thinking.

## What other organizations are you currently involved in?

I currently serve on the board of the Selby Garden Associates. I am active in the Junior League and Kiwanis as well as the American Business Women's Association, League of Women Voters and Leadership Sarasota County. I am on the board of Sarasota Council of Concern, a small group that runs a thrift shop called The Mustard Seed in downtown Sarasota, raising funds to provide swim lessons to school age children.

## Do you have any words you live by?

So many! Do what you'll say you'll do. Refuse to see failure as an option. The only constant is change – adapt and find opportunities and possibilities. My favorite - The secret? Show up!

# Neighborhoods: Finding “The Full Half” Part 2 of 2

*by April Doner continued from the May Newsletter*

How can we act upon today's issues so that what we build will last beyond tomorrow? SCOPE's experience working to foster long-term community change from the neighborhood level suggests that to have a lasting effect, one important and often forgotten step is finding out how our community is already “full.”

## **Seeing Need**

Every person, group and organization approaches an issue with a framework. In the area of community development and revitalization, the framework most commonly used by organizations, agencies, and sometimes citizen groups focuses on needs—the problems of individuals or of place.

When applied in the sphere of community change, this framework has limitations and consequences. It limits us from knowing what resources exist that can help us achieve our goals and can also result in an identity defined by our deficiencies. Second, when needs are the first focus, people who have been marginalized remain on the margins of the community. This includes people with disabilities, people living on welfare, youth labeled “at-risk,” and people who are elderly. When we start with needs, we see such groups as “needy” first and foremost and it becomes difficult to engage their talents, skills, and knowledge. Finally, a needs-focus can be disempowering to citizens and the civic sector in general by downplaying the expertise of citizens to solve community issues and assigning greater value to the expertise of professionals and institutions skilled at identifying and meeting needs. As a result, the majority of resources for addressing community issues are directed to professionals and programs which often exist outside of the community.



## **The Full Half**

What is the alternative? SCOPE has come to appreciate the power and value of an asset-based approach to community change.

An asset-based approach recognizes that all communities and individuals are like a half-full glass of water. Each person and community has deficiencies and problems (emptiness). At the same time, we have valuable resources, skills, talents, knowledge, and positive qualities (fullness). A young woman with mental disabilities is a talented singer. A block struggling with violence and drug dealing is full of resourceful and caring neighbors willing to make it better. When taken together, the full half of a community—its citizens, citizen groups, institutions and geographic place—are its assets.

# Summer Intern Research Team

*by John Falter*

This summer, SCOPE staff shared the office with a team of young Sarasotans: Eman Abid, a junior at Pine View School; Melissa Caicedo, a sophomore at the University of Pennsylvania studying economics and urban affairs; Zach Glasser, a sophomore at Northwestern University studying social policy; Elizabeth Hannah, a freshman at Duke University, and me, a recent graduate of New College who majored in the humanities. I had the pleasure of leading the team in researching two issues: green job creation and alternate financial services. These studies will be posted on the SCOPE website as soon as they are ready, but I'll give you sneak peak right now.

Ever since the Summit for Environmental Action in February 2008, SCOPE has been trying to find opportunities for green job creation in Sarasota County. This summer, our team investigated two potential avenues: composting and urban agriculture. We drew inspiration from businesses throughout the country that have developed innovative models to turn waste into food and money.

One such business is a New Hampshire-based company that collects food waste from restaurants, to be processed into and sold as high-end compost. Excited by this business model, the team explored the possibility of creating a similar enterprise here in Sarasota. Somewhere along the line, the team stumbled across a company in Oregon which converts food waste from restaurants into compost that they use on their farm. This got us thinking: wouldn't it be cool if food waste collected from Sarasota County restaurants could be processed into Sarasota County compost to grow Sarasota County produce to feed Sarasota County residents? Such a localized economic continuum is very possible for our community. Excited by these possibilities, we researched various methods of urban farming used around the country in hopes of discovering ideas that could increase capacity here in Sarasota County.

The other topic our team investigated was "alternate financial services." These businesses serve as the primary means of financial services for millions of Americans, most of whom are low-income. Unfortunately, they can be far more costly than traditional financial service providers like banks.

We set out to learn about this business at the national scale, which revealed that the industry has a significantly destructive effect on the local economy. These findings increased our concerns about the impacts of the industry on our own community, so we got busy reviewing Florida policy, speaking with people who have used payday lending services, and experiencing payday lending process first-hand in our own neighborhood. We found that while Florida law places several protective restrictions on payday lending, it still can become an expensive and dependency-forming practice. Now the challenge is figuring out how to communicate these findings in ways that will be of tangible benefit to everyone here in Sarasota County.

The summer experience was incredible. Our team worked hard, generated creative energy, and produced some great reports. Despite all our fun and productivity, we were disappointed to leave before we could see the full impact of our work. We learned that community work can be a slow-moving process that rewards vision, perseverance and planning. We realize that we have only chipped the tip of the iceberg, but we have chipped it no less, hopefully increasing the potential for community change that knowledge provides.



# The Mitchell House

by Mary Butler

*Mary Butler works with SCOPE. She lives and works in the neighborhoods of Newtown.*



*This landmark home embodies Newtown's history and is an important place-based asset. Citizens from Newtown and the greater Sarasota area are taking steps to restore the home and increase its energy efficiency. SCOPE is participating.*

Known today by the Newtown community as The Moreland House, Mrs. Margaret Mitchell's family home is located at 1723 Dr. Martin Luther King Way. The house was built in 1920 by Wright Bush. His second wife, Sara Bush, is the great aunt of Mrs. Margaret Cherry-Mitchell. According to Annie McElroy's book, "But Your World and My World", Wright Bush was one of the first settlers of the Newtown community, as early as 1911. When Wright Bush decided to build his home, there was no electricity in Newtown. Mr. Bush was undeterred and chose to purchase the electrical poles needed to bring electricity to his home and to be an early adopter of indoor plumbing.

During World War II before the official USO (Rec ) Newtown Community center was built, Sara Bush entertained black soldiers at the Mitchell house. It was a place to come and meet local people, listen to music, play cards and eat good southern home-cooked meals. Music legends like Lionel Hampton, Ella Fitzgerald, and the Buddy Johnson band came by the house regularly.

Alma Johnson, a pioneer of Newtown and a community leader also remembers the house well. At age 96 she still remembers Sara Bush who was known as a strict disciplinarian. "Mrs. Bush would stop us kids as we passed by the house; she would sit on the front porch with a watchful eye over the community". "Where y'all thang y'all going?" she would say. "We kids would start shaking, because if we did not have a good answer, she would embarrass us right where we stood, then tell our parents on us." Today Alma Johnson appreciates what Sara Bush did for them and would like to see more Sara Bushes in the Newtown Community. She recalls the house was like a social club for grown-ups. Nice men and would go there to socialize, and of course Sara Bush expected everyone to be on their best behavior.

Today Margaret Cherry-Mitchell shares childhood memories with her brother Julian Moreland. Mrs. Mitchell and Mr. Moreland proudly show off the entertainment room, where the "Black USO" bar once stood. The Moreland-Mitchell house has rich community ties to Newtown that makes it an asset worth preserving.



*Mitchell House circa 1930's*



## **NEW INITIATIVE ON AGING WITH DIGNITY AND INDEPENDENCE**

Participate through the SCOPE website, [www.scopexcel.org](http://www.scopexcel.org)

SCOPE has been chosen to partner with The Patterson Foundation (TPF) on a new initiative targeting the dignity and independence of older adults. The Aging with Dignity and Independence Initiative is a multi-year project with an end goal of creating innovative and technological approaches to help people 65 years and older age with dignity and independence.

“We are grateful to The Patterson Foundation for their desire to explore new thinking through this initiative and their willingness to first begin by listening to the community – capturing the wisdom and experiences of older adults and those closest to them,” said Tim Dutton. SCOPE received a \$195,000 gift from TPF to fund the research-discovery phase of the initiative.

Over the next year, SCOPE will work with the University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee to engage the community through forums, focus groups and surveys. The project is three phases: discovery, design and application. This initial exploration of community experiences will provide the foundation for subsequent phases.

There is an opportunity to tell your story or complete a survey online. Visit [www.scopexcel.org](http://www.scopexcel.org) to learn more.



## **A HEARTFELT THANK YOU! WE MADE IT!**

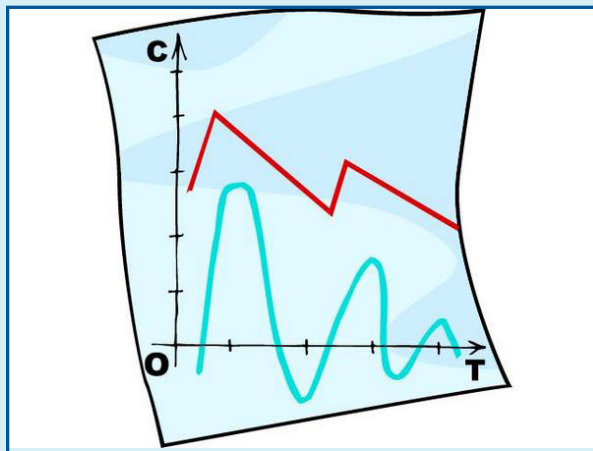
SCOPE Board of Directors and staff thank all of our generous donors who contributed to the Selby Challenge over the past three years. Your generosity, over \$250,000 from new donors, met the matching requirements from the William G. and Marie Selby Foundation.

Your faith and support of SCOPE translates into more opportunities for residents to work together to make Sarasota County an even better place to live, work and play. Connecting people, passion and ideas. Together, we build the civic infrastructure that supports a thriving community.

View our Selby Challenge [Donor Honor Roll](#).

# Public Data Revolution

by Kate Irwin



SCOPE has been involved in gathering and sharing community data since our beginning in 2001. Early on, we generated Community Report Cards for the citizens of Sarasota County, and more recently we have been working with neighborhood level data.

Since 2001 there has been an “open data revolution,” and now user-friendly and powerful Web 2.0 tools make it possible for the public to view, edit, combine (“mash-up”) and analyze community-specific information in a variety of creative ways, according to citizens’ interests. As opportunities for “processing” community data become more universally accessible, there is increasing potential to promote knowledge, connection and action at the citizen level.

As one way of capitalizing upon the open data revolution, SCOPE is trying something new – convening people in order to create data about aspects of our community that local residents wish to see. We are trying this for the first time with the Sarasota: Through Your Eyes project. In partnership with New College of Florida’s Public Archaeology Lab, using easily accessible mapping tools, we seek to create a map of Sarasota County’s history and heritage. This map will acknowledge the official history of our area as well as people’s personal histories, or “snapshots” of their past in Sarasota County. The hope is that people will be moved to share their remembrance of a specific moment in time, and place it geographically on a map of Sarasota County. In this way, the map will become a patchwork of lived experience in Sarasota County.

As a first step, we convened local history and heritage organizations from throughout the county. Because they are the groups “on the front lines” of history and heritage, we wanted to vet the idea with them. Our next step is to continue to share the idea of this map with citizens. We invite you to give us input on the kind of information you would like to see included in the map and if you would be interested in sharing your own information. Please send your comments and ideas to Kate ([kirwin@scopexcel.org](mailto:kirwin@scopexcel.org))

We are excited about creating a space for people to share data of their lived experience in our county. We hope that with citizens in the forefront creating a method to visually knit our remembrances together, we will begin to see the unique history of Sarasota County, rich with a multiplicity of experiences and perspectives. By acknowledging these histories, both where they overlap and where they diverge, we can have a better understanding of ourselves, our neighbors, and our community as a whole.



# Through Don's Eyes

by Don Vande Krol

*Don Vande Krol works with SCOPE. He lives and works in the neighborhoods of North Port.*



Every Tuesday evening neighbors gather and sit in a circle in our family room. I never know exactly who or how many will show up, but many tell me that it is the highlight of their week and most of them rarely miss it.

When my wife and I began hosting these gatherings a little over a year ago, they began as an experiment in neighborliness: What would happen if we just began?

Last Tuesday evening as I sat in the circle, I began having pains in my chest that were becoming unbearable. My neighbors insisted that I allow my wife to take me to the hospital. Tests showed that my heart was fine but the sac around my heart was inflamed - a condition called "pericarditis". Deciding that I wasn't going to die immediately, the medical team released me the next afternoon. Thursday morning I took my wife to the airport, in keeping with our plans that she should visit her family. Since then, neighbors have called, visited to see how I was doing, brought food, taken me out to breakfast... I've been receiving much more attention and care than I did while I was in the hospital!

Even though I was the major recipient of neighborliness this time, neighbors helping and caring for neighbors and enjoying life together have become commonplace here. Some neighbors have experienced dramatic life changes that they credit to their participation in the [Neighbors Gathering](#) – things like quitting drinking, getting a job, and surviving health crises. Neighbors who in the past didn't know who lived next door much less down the street, now regularly share meals, work together in gardens, go fishing, play games, kibbutz in the yard ... a book could be filled with stories like these that have been happening since we began having Neighbors Gatherings.

Recently I attended the Asset Based Community Development Conference sponsored by The ABCD Institute at Northwestern University and had an opportunity to talk about our Neighbors Gatherings. At the end, John McKnight asked me, "If I were to ask your neighbors why they continue to come to the Gatherings, what do you think they would say?" I told John that although we do have neighborhood events and projects, I expect that almost every neighbor would answer his question by explaining that we meet in order to care for one another, and the primary way that this care is shown each Tuesday is simply through listening. As we sit in a circle, each neighbor is passed the "Talking Stick" and answers the unspoken question, "How ya doin'?" As we learn to listen, we grow to care. As we grow to care, lives are changed and our neighborhood is changed.

If in these simple gatherings of neighbors, a relational power becomes manifest which is able to affect the quality of our lives in such tremendous ways, we wonder what might happen if others were to make a decision to just begin?



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