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About Yellow Wood Associates & Yellow Wood Notes

Yellow Wood Notes is a twice yearly publication of Yellow Wood Associates, Inc. We publish this newsletter to maintain contact and share ideas with friends, colleagues, and clients. We appreciate your feedback and suggestions.

Yellow Wood Associates, Inc. is a private, for-profit firm specializing in rural economic research and training for community capacity building since 1985. We provide clients with research services including feasibility studies and Green Community Technologies®; and training and facilitation services including WealthWorks Training for Coaches and Coordinators, See the Forest® and You Get What You Measure®. Our clients include small towns, nonprofit organizations, federal, state, and county governments, foundations, and the private sector. Staff: Shanna Ratner, Principal; Melissa Levy, Senior Associate; Ginger Weil, Office Manager.
Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I began Yellow Wood Associates in December 1985; 2015 marks our 30th year. I count myself very lucky to have been sustained in this enterprise for such a long time. It would not have been possible without the support of you — our clients, colleagues, advisors, friends and staff. I thank you all from the bottom of my heart for the opportunity to think, work, create and discover new development possibilities together over the past three decades.

Our most recent constellation of staff, Senior Associate Melissa Levy, Associate Samantha Dunn, and Office Manager Ginger Weil, has been the best we’ve ever had. I am pleased to report that both Melissa and Samantha plan to start their own small firms, which will be informed by the work they have learned to do at Yellow Wood. Melissa’s new company is Community Roots, LLC and Samantha’s is Samantha Dunn, LLC. We hope to work together in the future. Ginger will continue to provide me with some support long distance as she takes up a new phase of her own life in Minneapolis/St.Paul. I hope you will seek them out and support them on their journeys.

As for me, I am taking time to re-fire. No, that’s not a typo; I am going to take the time and space I need to become re-inspired, re-connected and re-invigorated — in short re-fired by life. I expect to take the last three weeks of August and the first week of September off entirely (really) and return to the office part-time after Labor Day for a six month sabbatical (my first!) during which I plan to write about wealth creation and measurement, among other things.

After my sabbatical, I will happily consider opportunities to teach, coach, train, develop training, conduct research or consult in other ways on projects that contribute to changing the way development is practiced in the United States and beyond. I will also be pleased to consider opportunities to write, speak and facilitate. I am particularly interested in sharing my expertise with a new generation of economic and community developers and social change agents. If you have a project, opportunity, or challenge that you would like to explore with me, please don’t hesitate to be in touch.

I am very excited about this next chapter of my personal and professional life and I would welcome hearing from you. I will be available for phone conversations and email correspondence after Labor Day. The office phone and my email address are unchanged.

Yours in friendship and with gratitude,

Shanna Ratner
ActionAid — Market Access Handbook

Yellow Wood and Dynamica Consulting completed the first draft of a Market Access Handbook for ActionAid, an international development organization operating in 40+ countries. The handbook, built around the WealthWorks principles and approach, incorporates lessons learned from our earlier workshop in Nepal. ActionAid will refine the text to better reflect their work on gender equity. They intend to use it in training their staff and partners around the world. They will also produce a simplified version to use with farmers and other types of producers.

Strategic and Financial Sustainability Planning in the Verde Valley

In 2014 and 2015, Melissa Levy and Samantha Dunn worked with the Verde River Valley Nature Organization (VRVNO) on a strategic plan, outcome measures, and a financial sustainability plan. The Walton Family Foundation had the foresight to support this planning in an effort to wean VRVNO off of foundation funding and become a sustainable organization. VRVNO is a 501c3 nonprofit organization raising awareness of the area’s natural resources by providing recreation, education and nature tourism opportunities supporting the stewardship of the Verde Valley in Northern Arizona. Financial sustainability strategies discussed for VRVNO included instituting a membership program and also developing and marketing a concierge training curriculum and program for front line recreation and tourism people in the Verde Valley. Executive Director Wendy Harford said this about the process: “Because of this process and final product we have received additional 2 year funding that will help us to implement all areas of our projected outcomes and have the tools for further outreach, growth and development. Without Melissa and Samantha’s patience and attention to detail we would likely still be struggling in the throes of a dysfunctional, fledgling organization.”

Cornell Rural/Urban Linkages

Shanna will facilitate the second Research Advisory Committee Meeting for Strengthening Rural/Urban Linkages to Support Rural Economic Development: the Case of Re-Localized Food Systems. Cornell researchers Todd Schmidt, Becca Jablonski, David Kay and Jennifer Minner are looking at the impacts of farmer engagement with New York City’s Greenmarkets on rural producers and their communities across eight forms of wealth. Meeting participants will review indicators of wealth, measures, and measurement plans. In November, Shanna will facilitate a meeting in Saratoga, NY, of the Extension/Outreach Advisory Committee, comprised of non-academic food system experts that will bring different perspectives to identifying significant impacts.
Forest Sector Systems Analysis — Statewide Summit

Yellow Wood has been working on a year-long Vermont Forest Sector Systems Analysis project with the State of Vermont. As part of this project, Yellow Wood collaborated with the forestry subcommittee of the Vermont Working Lands Enterprise Board (WLEB) and Sugarbush Resort to plan and hold a Statewide Summit June 16 at Sugarbush Resort. Over 100 people from throughout the forest sector participated to discuss value chains in three subsectors — furniture and solid wood products, construction and wood energy — as well as public awareness about the sector and its contributions to the state’s economy. The objectives of the summit included:

- Create and build strong relationships throughout Vermont’s forest sector
- Refine and deepen our understanding of demand-driven opportunities in three subsectors of the forest sector and explore solutions to gaps and barriers
- Engage a wide range of industry participants in understanding demand-driven opportunities
- Build a shared vision for public awareness and identify components of a strategy
- Build commitment across the forest sector to implementing strategic change.


Participants worked through six different market opportunities in the furniture and solid wood products, construction and wood energy subsectors, identifying what needed to change to propel the subsector forward, and what potential next steps might be. Participants also identified what needed to change to accomplish greater public awareness about the sector. Input from the summit has been incorporated into an Executive Summary for the entire project which was delivered to the WLEB Board in July. WLEB will be exploring with key stakeholders who best to move this work forward, and will use the results of the year-long study to inform its policy and investment priorities.
WealthWorks Training for Coaches and Coordinators — Fourth Class

The fourth class of the WealthWorks Training for Coaches and Coordinators began April 26th–29th with an on-site session at Pendle Hill Retreat Center. Participants came from Minnesota, Colorado, Southern Arizona and Missouri to learn how to explore and help others explore the feasibility of WealthWorks value chains in their region. We will continue to support this class for nine months with check-in calls and webinars based on six assignments that step them through the exploration process.

Read more about the fourth WealthWorks Training: http://www.yellowwood.org/wealthworks-training-4.html

WealthWorks Training Moving Forward

Yellow Wood, in collaboration with Melissa Levy of Community Roots, LLC and Barbara Wyckoff of Dynamica Consulting, offers two types of training in the WealthWorks framework and approach. The first is WealthWorks Training for Coaches and Coordinators, for people interested in getting started using WealthWorks in their community and economic development work. The second is Advanced Training for WealthWorks Coaches, for those who wish to deepen their practice. We are also available to develop and pilot Training for Trainers in facilitating WealthWorks Training for Coaches and Coordinators, designed to equip coaches to deliver basic training within their regions.

We believe the most powerful way to spread the practice of WealthWorks is to offer training in regions. This reduces travel costs for participants, increases accessibility, builds social capital, and helps create a critical mass of people within a given geographic area that are familiar with the same language and concepts.

If you are interested in organizing a training in your region, or would like us to add you to our list of interested participants, let us know. We will do our best to notify interested participants of any upcoming trainings with available spots.

For more information or to schedule training, please contact:

- Shanna Ratner, shanna@yellowwood.org, 802-524-6141
- Melissa Levy, melissa@community-roots.com, 802-318-1720
- Barbara Wyckoff, barbarawyckoff1@gmail.com, 301-367-2406
Rooting Opportunity
The Aspen Institute Community Strategies Group hosted the Rooting Opportunity: Doing Economic Development Differently Conference in Washington, D.C. on June 1st & 2nd. The conference explored economic development practice in a range of sectors including housing, tourism, manufacturing, healthcare, food, energy, and agriculture, among others. The most heavily attended breakout at the conference was Yellow Wood’s session on Exploring Wealth Creating Value Chains. Over 50 people learned about WealthWorks principles, value chains and the wealth matrix and we learned about one educator who is planning to use the WealthWorks WealthBuilders Game with elementary and middle school students!

WealthWorks — Preparing for Next Steps
As many of you know, we have been working with the support of the Ford Foundation for the past eight years on developing and helping to implement a way of doing economic development differently, now called WealthWorks. Thank you to all our wonderful colleagues that have helped move this work along. Your work shows that doing economic development differently pays off! It is something that more and more people are interested in and having a framework helps. Although our Ford support is coming to an end, we continue to be committed to the goals of sustainable and equitable economic development and to the WealthWorks framework and approach. Shanna will consider opportunities to provide coaching and consulting related to wealth-based development on a case-by-case basis, beginning in March 2016.
Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development’s 10th Rural Development Conference, Memphis, TN

Shanna attended “National Prosperity through Modern Rural Policy,” the 10th Rural Development Conference of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in Memphis, TN on May 19th–21st. The conference was a great opportunity to learn about the work OECD is doing on connecting rural and urban and promoting evidence-based rural policies. OECD’s ten year old “new rural paradigm” has four pillars. It emphasizes investment instead of subsidy; collaboration instead of silos; diversification instead of mono-economies; and measurement of results. Sounds a lot like WealthWorks to us!

Doug O’Brien, Senior Policy Advisor for Rural Affairs in the U.S., suggested four new elements to add to OECD’s ten year old “new rural paradigm” including the importance of making sure all the nation’s assets are contributing to the economy, keeping inequality and poverty in focus, recognizing the value of resilience for rural communities particularly in the face of climate change, and using data and metrics in policy-making. Many people articulated the view that rural and urban need each other and that bottom-up approaches that leverage available resources, incorporate volunteers, and connect communities within regions are key. One of the highlights of the trip was a visit to the National Civil Rights Museum at the Lorraine Motel, the motel where Dr. Martin Luther King was killed. It’s an enlightening and moving experience.


NACo County Prosperity Summit

NACo is working with counties across the country to host County Prosperity Summits to generate creative solutions around local economic opportunities. During these one-day summits, national experts convene with local leaders in rural and mid-size counties to provide an introduction to the WealthWorks framework, build strategies to strengthen relationships among local and regional players in community and economic development, identify ways to deepen and sustain local asset-based economic development and investigate ways to infuse equitable development principles into local economic strategies. Senior Associate Melissa Levy joined Barbara Wyckoff in May in Scott County, Kentucky as a storyteller, telling stories of how the WealthWorks framework is being used in the tourism sector.

Read more about the NACo County Prosperity Summits: [http://www.naco.org/resources/programs-and-initiatives/county-prosperity-summit](http://www.naco.org/resources/programs-and-initiatives/county-prosperity-summit)
Association for Community Health Improvement

Melissa Levy was invited in March to present at the Association for Community Health Improvement conference in Dallas, Texas at a session entitled, “Effective Collaboration to Increase Community Health Impact.”

Read more about the ACHI Conference: http://www.healthycommunities.org/Conference/

Designing a Strong and Healthy New York

Melissa Levy was invited to facilitate a workshop, “Increasing Your Organization’s Impact Through Collaboration,” for the Designing a Strong and Healthy New York conference (Keep the Good Work Going: Creating Sustainable Interventions and Campaigns to Reduce Obesity Disparities) in March in Albany, NY.

Read more about the DASH-NY Conference:  http://www.nyam.org/dash-ny-program/conference/conference2015.html

You Get What You Measure®

Over the years, Yellow Wood has trained a number of Measurement Guides, including Melissa Levy and Ginger Weil, to use You Get What You Measure® in their own work.

If you would like to be trained as a Guide to use You Get What You Measure® in your own work, we invite you to find a host in your region, recruit a class of no fewer than four individuals, and let us know when you are ready to move ahead.

To discuss using You Get What You Measure® in your own strategic planning, or if you would like to be trained to use You Get What You Measure® in your work with others, feel free to contact Shanna Ratner at Yellow Wood (shanna@yellowwood.org) or Melissa Levy at Community Roots, LLC (melissa@community-roots.com) for more information.

Becoming a Measurement Guide

In April, Shanna led a Becoming a Measurement Guide class of participants from the 1772 Foundation, the National Trust for Historic Preservation and our own staff. They enjoyed the intimate and informal learning environment that encouraged candor and the interactive process of measurement. One participant wrote, “It redefines measures and the act of measurement. It transforms measurement into a productive part of changing/improving our lives/interaction.”
Goodbye and Good Luck to Our Talented Senior Associate, Melissa Levy!

It’s been more than 12 years, but we are saying goodbye this summer to our Senior Associate, Melissa Levy.

Melissa joined Yellow Wood in May of 2003. Since that time, Melissa has contributed to a wide variety of work at Yellow Wood. She is Yellow Wood’s longest running employee.

In her first years at Yellow Wood, Melissa helped with the National Community Forestry Center for the Northern Forest Region, working with communities around the Northern Forest. Over the years, Melissa has worked with many different clients in areas ranging from agriculture and forestry to measurement and nature-based tourism. More recently, Melissa has been very involved with Yellow Wood’s work with the Ford Foundation around wealth creation, coaching and training people and organizations in this approach. She has also been very involved with using You Get What You Measure® to assist organizations with strategic planning.

Come August 1st, Melissa will be doing work with her own firm, Community Roots, LLC. We look forward to working with Melissa on many projects in the future. Thanks for a dozen wonderful years, Melissa!

Reading & Watching

The Bone Clocks, by David Mitchell, is an intriguing read, spanning decades, characters, and genres. The structure is most similar to his book, Cloud Atlas, which I also loved. Each chapter is narrated from the perspective of a different character. Each chapter could stand alone, but together they make a very entertaining novel, including an interesting take on mortality and immortality. ~ Melissa
Staffing News, Reading & Watching

Goodbye and Good Luck to Office Manager Extraordinaire, Ginger Weil!

Ginger’s work with Yellow Wood over the past six years has made us a substantially stronger organization. It’s thanks to her that we’ve learned how to improve our web communications, count backward from the due date and allow enough time for all the unseen but critical administrative functions to occur, write instructions that are clear and easy to follow, and become, in general, more consistent in our presentations and communications.

Ginger and her husband are moving back to Minneapolis/St. Paul to reconnect with friends and family and take advantage of true urban amenities like ice cream within walking distance! She will also be continuing to pursue her budding career as a fiction writer. Ginger has graciously offered to continue to provide limited support to Yellow Wood during our transition. We will miss seeing Ginger face to face but look forward to continuing our relationship long distance. Thanks for all your hard work and dedication, Ginger!

Reading & Watching

Can't We Talk about Something More Pleasant?: A Memoir, by Roz Chast. The author records the last years of her parents’ lives, including medical emergencies, financial concerns, and emotional struggles. The memoir deals with complicated family issues in a compelling, accessible way. ~ Ginger

Sometimes a Great Notion, by Ken Kesey. My son Sam handed me this book when I was heading out to Oregon. It's a great read! Here’s a small sample: “You can make a mark across the night with the tip of an embered stick, and you can actually see it fixed in its finity. You can be absolutely sure of its treacherous impermanence. And that is all.” ~ Shanna

Wishing you a wonderful Summer from all of us at Yellow Wood!

Ginger Weil