



JOURNAL

Expanding the Civic Imagination

Citizens League

Common ground. Common good.

Volume 26 • Issue 6
November/
December 2009
www.citizensleague.org



Getting to the source

We need to move Minnesota's water governance upstream

By Annie Levenson-Falk

Minnesota's 12,000 lakes and 92,000 miles of streams and rivers are central to the identity and the economy of the state and a source of pride for Minnesota's citizens. However, our waters face serious threats—like widespread pollution—that we are not effectively confronting today.

Since last summer, a committee of Citizens League members has looked at how Minnesota governs water, using nonpoint source pollution as a case study. What follows is a summary of the committee's conclusions and recommendations. The full report is available online at www.citizensleague.org.

MINNESOTA'S POLLUTED WATERS

Forty percent of the lakes and rivers in Minnesota that have been evaluated have been found to be "impaired," polluted to the extent that they do not meet the state's water quality standards.

In the past, the greatest pollution problems came from concentrated point sources, such as industrial discharges and wastewater treatment plants. In recent decades, Minnesota and the country have been quite successful in reducing point source pollution by regulating a small number of large-scale polluters.

Now, however, we are struggling to address widespread nonpoint source pollution, the greatest threat to water quality today. In 86 percent of waters found to be impaired, the principal cause is nonpoint source pollution, runoff from roads, roofs, parking lots, and farms. But our system for governing water, in so far as it deals with pollution, has been set up primarily to address only point source pollution. To clean up and protect Minnesota's waters now and for the future, we must change the way we govern to more successfully address the more diffuse problems that are the primary cause of pollution today.

FEW OPTIONS FOR REGULATION

From a regulatory perspective, the options for addressing non-point source pollution are quite limited. Activities that generate point source pollution generally require a permit. The activities responsible for nonpoint sources generally do not.

A senior staff member at the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency offered an example of the regulatory dilemma: In a water body that has been designated impaired because of a combination of nonpoint source runoff and discharge from a wastewater treatment plant, the state's only recourse may be to continue to crack down on the wastewater treatment plant until the problem is resolved.

This lack of regulation of many nonpoint sources, especially agricultural runoff, makes it difficult or impossible to mandate nonpoint source pollution reductions in many cases. In the example above, the situation is not only unfair; it may be impossible to meet water quality standards solely by addressing the wastewater treatment plant.

SHORTCOMINGS IN GOVERNANCE

The lines of responsibility and accountability in Minnesota's water governance system are very difficult to understand, not only for the public but also for the elected officials and the professionals responsible for its execution. The study committee heard from



INSIDE

As requested, we've added a new section called Engagement on page 3 to keep you informed about Citizens League policy and civic work and all the ways that you can get and stay involved.

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CONNECTIONS

Building a League of Citizens

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

KATIE EUKEL

Katie is vice president of Fourth Sector Consulting. She has been involved with the Citizens League for three years and has volunteered with the Emerging Leaders, Membership/Engagement, and Strategic Planning committees.



Why she joined: "The Citizens League provides opportunities to explore solutions with both policy experts and the people whom those policies directly impact, which is incredibly valuable."

How she practices civic engagement: "My life is built around civic engagement! I collaboratively run a socially responsible business, where we help some of the nation's most socially minded organizations integrate successful communications and engagement strategies into their programming. When I'm not involved in that work, I'm attending events that allow me to connect with people who may or may not share my perspective on the world, helping me learn more about the community where I live, work, and play."

Why she would recommend membership to others: "Through the Citizens League, I have met incredibly passionate people who are committed to making Minnesota an even better place to live. That, in and of itself, is worth supporting!"

2009 CITIZENS LEAGUE ANNUAL MEETING

This year's Citizens League Annual Meeting was a huge success! Some 550 people attended the event at the Pantages Theatre and Seven restaurant in downtown Minneapolis, a 100 percent increase over last year despite rain and heavy traffic.

If you attended the event, don't forget to fill out your annual meeting evaluation [online](#). We value your opinion and appreciate your response.

If you missed the event, you can watch Nate Garvis' presentation, "Naked Civics: Uncovering the Path to the Common Good," and listen to Sean Kershaw's opening remarks by clicking on links on the [homepage](#). See photos of the evening on [Flickr](#) and [Facebook](#).

Learn more about our current policy and active citizenship work online by following the Annual Meeting link on the homepage.

Sign up to become a member today or renew your membership online. Or give the gift of a Citizens League membership this holiday season and receive benefits

all year, including a complimentary subscription to the *Minnesota Journal*, opportunities to participate in Citizens League policy committees and events, and free bound copies of our thought-provoking study committee reports.

Board member Nate Garvis with Sheila Kiscaden and Richard Hutton at the Nov. 3 kick-off for the Citizens League's new Rochester affiliate. More than 120 Rochester-area citizens turned out for the event. Read more about the new affiliate and upcoming events in Rochester online at www.citizensleague.org.



New and rejoining members, recruiters, and volunteers

Individual members

Cassandra Adler
Virginia Amundson
Flora Angui
Naomi Atrubin
Alison Bach Good
Justin Bacon
Kimberlee Bare
Dave Beal
Ian Brekke
Amy Bryant
Dawn Carlson
Jill Chamberlain
Leia Christoffer
Robert Cline
Emmett Coleman
Judy Cook
Stephanie Devitt
Adele Dimian
Norma Jean Falink

Megan Forney
Brian Fredrickson
Catherine P. French
Todd French
Andrew Good
Lynn Guenette
Patti Hague
Kathleen Harrington
Jessica B. Hennesy
Ellen Hoerle
Thomas O. Holker Jr.
Janna Holm
Melissa Hortman
Joyce Hovanej
Lincoln Hughes
John Hutcheson
Ann Hutton
Michael Iacono
Christina Jansa
Kelli Johnson
Philip Karsell
Eldon Kaul

Margaret Kavaney
Will Knaeble
Mark Kowaliw
Catherine Krarsell
Janet Krueger
Jacob Kulzer
Chouate Lee
Matthew Leighton
Michelle Lichtig
George Linkert
Idelle Longman
Ann Manning
Tom Margot
Jeffrey Martinka
Stacey D. Millett
Alberto Monserrate
Dave Motzenbecker
Sandy'Ci Moua
Aaron Oppelt
Mike Palmer
Khurshed Parakh
Timothy J. Penny

Joseph Pruden
Sarah J. Rand
Winston Ray
Burton Sandok
Florence Sandok
Raymond Schmitz
Corinne Shepherd
Tammy Lee Stanoch
Sharon Tennis
Nancy Tracy
Kathleen Wakaruk
Charlie Weber
Brooke Worden
Charlie Zelle
Julie Zelle
Bethany Zucco
Michelle Zwicky

Firms and organizations
Neerland and Oyaas, Inc.

Standard Heating & Air Conditioning
General Mills
Thomson Reuters
RiverPoint Investment
Best Buy
SRF Consulting
Dorsey Foundation
The Eugene McCarthy Center
CMGPR, Inc.
Thrivent Financial
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of MN
Tunheim Partners
Minnesota Secretary of State
Cincinnati, Inc.
Minnesota Association of Realtors
Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi

Minnesota Department of Human Rights
Marnita's Table, Inc.
Goodwill/Easter Seals of Minnesota
Corporate Incentives Inc.
Family Housing Fund
MEDICA
City of Mahtomedi
M&I Bank
Office of Public Engagement, University of Minnesota
Comcast
Jefferson Lines

Recruiters
Becky Girvan
Kevin Goodno
Duane Benson

Nate Garvis
Charles Neerland
Larry Jacobs
Kathy Mock
Lisa Piskor
Lee Anderson
Gretchen Sabel
Sen. Sheila Kiscaden

Volunteers

Cal Clark
Sheila Graham
Adam Axvig
Nick Banovitz
Suzanne Peterson
Erin Strong
Josh Becerra
Kelly Groehler
Stefanie Konobeck
Christopher Orr
Sherri Knuth

The Comcast Foundation has provided a generous three-year grant to help increase the involvement of young adults in the Citizens League. Our new Action Groups, [StudentsSpeakOut.org](#), and our civic leadership programs have been made possible, in part, with Comcast's support since 2006.



ENGAGEMENT

What We're Doing and How You Can Get Involved

The Citizens League's mission is to build the civic imagination and capacity necessary to address long-term challenges and opportunities in Minnesota. Our purpose is to organize the means, the "civic infrastructure," to achieve this mission. Our method of civic engagement and policymaking maintains a trusted, non-partisan approach and is proven to develop innovative and effective governance and policy proposals.

PUBLIC POLICY

We work to develop and advance a "civic policy agenda" where all individuals and all institutions have a role in helping to define problems and recommend and advance solutions. The civic policy agenda uses a variety of processes and opportunities to get more people engaged in policymaking. Our current policy development work includes:

"To the Source: Moving Minnesota's Water Governance Upstream," published in November, concludes that we need a collaborative governance model in which the people and organizations that contribute to water pollution play a central role in addressing these problems. We are now looking for opportunities to build a stronger role for individual citizens, farmers, businesses, and other organizations in collaboration with local and state government.

Get involved: Help the Citizens League connect with partners to advance recommendations.

Pathways to Prosperity: A study committee looking at reducing poverty will issue recommendations in early 2010.

Get involved: Sign up for emails to track the committee's progress and learn about future policy design opportunities.

Aging: Creating a new long-term care financing model that restores individual responsibility and collective financial stability.

Get involved: Watch Citizens League emails for more information and for opportunities to advance this work after the recommendations are issued.

The Citizens League is also working to advance recommendations in the following areas:

- Immigrant students and access to higher education (2008 report).
- Transportation finance: Driving Blind (2005 report).
- Health and medical care: Developing Informed Decisions (2006 report).
- Judicial selection: Changes in judicial elections (2008 statement).

If you're interested in our policy process, join the Policy Advisory Committee, which examines proposals for study, forms small groups to take on specific tasks, develops methods to evaluate processes, and advises committees, staff, and the Board of Directors.



Many pollutants that come from activities on the land—such as lawn fertilizers and motor oils—are washed away by rain and snowmelt and eventually find their way into waters bodies.

OUR CURRENT EFFORTS IN ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AND CIVIC LEADERSHIP

Civic leadership development. Implementing a new Quantum Civics program.

Action Groups. Proving opportunities for emerging leaders to create and manage their own policy project.

Students Speak Out. Involving high school students in high school policy reform. www.studentsspeakout.org

Membership and Engagement Committee. Membership growth and involvement work.

SOME OF OUR RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- We organized leadership and support to pursue the Urban Partnership Agreement, resulting in \$133 million in federal funding to reduce congestion through transit improvements and "free-flow pricing" in the I-35W South Corridor.
- The Minnesota Mental Health Action Group's work culminated in 2007 with the most comprehensive mental health legislation and funding reform in two decades.
- We created an online library of 500 Citizens League policy reports and recommendations as a resource for researching, evaluating, and advancing public policy issues.

Find more information about all of our work at www.citizensleague.org/what/policy.

To get involved, contact Catherine Betlmann at info@citizensleague.org or 651-293-0575 ext. 10 or visit www.citizensleague.org

TAKE NOTE

Innovation Spotlight

MAKE IT FUN

Can we change public behavior by making the mundane more fun? That is the idea put forth in a new promotional campaign by Volkswagen, **The Fun Theory** (www.thefuntheory.com). The Fun Theory suggests that the easiest way to get people to do something like recycle or get more exercise is to make it more fun. Video clips on the site demonstrate the idea's potential with a glass bottle recycling bin that mimics an arcade game, the "world's deepest trash can" that delivers sound effects when used, and a piano key staircase that offers a musical alternative to the adjoining escalator. According to the website, use of the stairs increased 66 percent after it became more fun.



Volkswagen is sponsoring a contest to gather additional fun ideas. Submit ideas online by December 15. A jury will select the top 10. The winner receives a cash prize. Check out some of the entrees on the website.

UPCYCLING, THE NEWEST WAY TO RECYCLE

Upcycling turns plastic bags, food wrappers, and other waste destined for the landfill into useful new products. One of the innovators of upcycling, New Jersey-based TerraCycle, is the brainchild of then-college freshman Tom Szaky. TerraCycle collects drink pouches and cookie wrappers from schools and community groups, remakes them into backpacks and pencil cases, and donates a small amount per item recycled to charity. With support from General Mills and Kraft Foods, TerraCycle has recently developed a line of clocks, coasters, and picture frames from recycled vinyl records and circuit boards. To find out more, visit **TerraCycle** at www.terracycle.net.



CLEAN AIR AT THE EXPENSE OF CLEAN WATER

Environmentalists rejoiced three years ago when Allegheny Energy installed smoke-stack scrubbers to clean airborne toxins emitted by the company's Pennsylvania coal-fired power plant. High tech sprayers spray water and chemicals through the plant's chimneys, trapping more than 150,000 tons of pollutants each year.

But since the equipment became operational in June, the *New York Times* reports, the company has dumped tens of thousands of gallons of wastewater containing chemicals from the scrubbing process in the Monongahela River 40 miles upstream from Pittsburgh. The river provides drinking water to 350,000 people.



The problem isn't limited to one plant, however. As air pollution laws have grown tougher, more plants have installed scrubbers that transfer toxins from airborne emissions into wastewater that is discharged into lakes, rivers, or landfills that discharge into groundwater. Although the Clean Water Act provides some protection, no federal law specifically regulates power plant discharges into waterways or landfills. Even when the Clean Water Act is violated, the *Times* reports, plants rarely face fines or other penalties.

GEO TINKERING UNDER SCRUTINY

Scientists and policy experts will meet for five days next March to discuss potential rules governing field experiments in the controversial area of geoengineering, the website **Science Insider** reports. The conference will be modeled after the landmark 1975 Asilomar conference on recombinant DNA. Geoengineering is the science of deliberately tinkering with the environment to reverse global warming.



There are legitimate concerns about the risks of such research, says Margaret Leinen, president of the nonprofit **Climate Response Fund**, which is organizing the conference. Attendees will examine the risks associated with geoengineering ideas, also called climate intervention, such as growing algae blooms at sea to suck carbon dioxide out of the air or dimming the sun by spraying particles into the upper atmosphere.

ACLU SUES OVER SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

The American Civil Liberties Union in November joined with parents and students in Palm Beach County, Florida in a **civil suit** alleging the country's schools fail to provide a high quality education as mandated by the state's constitution. The lawsuit charges that state officials violated the state's constitutional requirement that all students receive a "uniform, efficient, safe, secure, and high quality" free public education.

Some 170,215 students are enrolled in Palm Beach County's 186 schools, and graduation rates in those schools ranged between 56 percent and 71 percent in 2006, although the suit contends those numbers are inflated by the Florida Department of Education's system of self reporting.

The ACLU lawsuit also takes issue with the gap between the graduation rates for African-American and Hispanic students and White students, which, over the past five years, has remained at approximately 30 percent and 20 percent respectively. The ACLU states, however, that the intention of the lawsuit is to improve education for all students. While the lawsuit doesn't suggest specific remedies, it does demand that the district improve graduation rates without pushing any students out, and that the district adopt "a uniform and reliable graduation rate calculation."



H2O – 2.0: Finding a better model for water governance

We need to return water pollution solutions to their true source

by Sean Kershaw

The word Itasca, best known in Minnesota as the source of the Mississippi River, combines the Latin words for “true head” (or true source), verITAS CAput. I think “Itasca” is a fitting word to describe the challenges and opportunities ahead of us with regard to cleaning up our lakes and rivers.

In the Land of 10,000 Lakes and “sky blue waters,” Minnesotans’ connection to water is emotional, cultural, spiritual, and economic. It transcends barriers created by geography and ideology. Last fall, we voted to raise taxes, despite the down economy, approving the Clean Water, Land, and Legacy amendment to address our water quality problems.

But the object of our devotion is in jeopardy. Past regulatory efforts effectively reduced point source pollution from large polluters, but they are inadequate to address the widespread problem of nonpoint source pollution that we face today. We need a new approach. We need to develop new leadership capacity and public policies that bubble up from the ground rather than flow down from the top. We need to return the stewardship and governance of this valuable resource to its true source—the roles and responsibilities we all have as individual and institutional citizens of Minnesota.

FROM PAST SUCCESS TO CURRENT CHALLENGES

In the past, our water policies were focused on stopping a relatively small number of entities from producing the majority of the toxins that pollute our waters (mercury from smokestacks, sewage in storm water runoff, and taconite tailings and other pollution from mines). We set up a system of governance that relied heavily on government regulation and intervention and it worked. We dramatically reduced pollution from these sources.

But today, the great majority of water pollution is produced by nonpoint sources: contaminants that seep into our waters

And just as each of us plays a part in creating that pollution, we each must play a role in reducing it.

from our yards, our streets, and our farms. And just as each of us plays a part in creating that pollution, we each must play a role in reducing it. The question is *how*.

We need to change the behavior of millions of individuals and thousands of institutions and a hierarchical, regulation-driven approach is an expensive and inefficient way to achieve that goal. We need new policies and new policy mechanisms that can influence behavior and shape the decisions that individuals and institutions make daily. We need to move from a government-centered model to a governance-centered model.

To accomplish this, we need to return policymaking to its true source, its Itasca. We need to develop the civic capacity and leadership of all our citizens and to work together across traditional boundaries (e.g. urban and rural) to organize new relationships and develop new policies and incentives. It is imperative that citizens, whether they are farmers or urban or suburban dwellers, not just see their role in creating this pollution problem, but understand that they play an integral part in developing the policies and strategies we need to address pollution now and in the future.

MODELS AND EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS

If we move from a system that relies primarily on government regulation to a system that relies on governance everywhere, can we actually reduce nonpoint source pollution? Several examples indicate we can.

We’ve seen how incentives and persuasion, coupled with public education and public pressure, have brought about large-scale social change in our behavior around recycling. For example, Minneapolis and other cities reduce solid waste fees for residents who recycle.

Timber management in Minnesota offers another successful example, one more closely aligned with water pollution. In the mid-1990s, the forest industry was feeling pressure from the public and from those who purchase forest industry products to develop more environmentally friendly land management practices. States across the country were beginning to impose new regulations to force them to do so.

In Minnesota, the state and forest companies devised a more voluntary approach, one that included a third-party system of best practices certification that established guidelines for land management. Paper purchasers, including big magazine companies like Time, Inc., prefer these certified products, which has created a significant incentive for companies to participate in the program. [Read more about forest certification in Minnesota on page 8.]

A NEW “ITASCA PROJECT”

Resolving many of the challenges around water policy governance ultimately requires that we win the public’s trust. Voters want to know how their resources will be spent—and that they will be well spent. Voter approval of the Legacy Amendment demonstrated Minnesotans willingness to pay more to achieve the common good, clean water. We need to build on this commitment by returning the responsibility and the opportunity to govern this critical Minnesota resource to its true source, Minnesota’s citizens and its institutions. ●

Sean Kershaw is the Citizens League’s Executive Director. He can be reached at skershaw@citizensleague.org, @seankershaw (Twitter), Facebook, or his blog at citizensleague.org/blogs/sean/.

many individuals who had attempted to visually map the system, all of whom had eventually given up—including legislators and government staff charged with prioritizing water policy funding needs. As a consequence, it is difficult to see how water policy responsibilities are assigned, where responsibilities overlap, and which important responsibilities are not assigned to anyone at all. It is also very difficult for those outside of government to see their role in this system.

Today, government entities bear the lion's share of the responsibility for keeping Minnesota's waters healthy and cleaning up

Sources of nonpoint source pollution in Minnesota

Agricultural runoff: Runoff from farms is a leading source of pollution in lakes, streams, and rivers in the United States and in Minnesota. Poor management of feeding operations and improper timing or over-application of fertilizer and pesticides can increase runoff. When uncovered soils are exposed to wind and rain, erosion carries soil, nutrients, and chemicals into water bodies. Planting crops too close to waters can increase these effects by reducing natural buffers.

Urban runoff: Stormwater and snowmelt running off roofs, yards, roads, parking lots, and construction sites carries debris, road salt, and chemicals into waters. The increase of impervious areas due to urban and suburban development contributes to nonpoint source pollution.

Septic systems: Nutrients, bacteria, and viruses from failing septic systems can contaminate water. Approximately 530,000 Minnesota buildings are served by septic systems and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency estimates that 37 percent fail to protect groundwater.

Forestry: Poor land management and logging practices can cause sediment, dissolved nutrients, pesticides, petroleum products, and organic debris to be carried into water bodies and can interrupt or change the flow of water on or below the land. (See page 8 for more information about steps Minnesota has taken to reduce forestry's contribution to pollution in recent years.)

Atmospheric deposition: Pollutants released into the atmosphere by activities like burning coal, waste, and fossil fuels are returned to the ground through precipitation. This can have a major effect on watersheds that have a high ratio of surface water to land area (like Lake Mille Lacs) and even on watersheds with no significant human activity (like the Boundary Waters). Mercury pollution in water bodies comes primarily from atmospheric deposition.

Sedimentation: Erosion of stream banks, bluffs, and ravines due to changes that people have made to the way that water flows on and beneath the land causes sediment to accumulate in water bodies. Changes in hydrology that lead to sedimentation include the loss of wetlands, increases in artificial drainage, reductions in perennial plant cover in agricultural areas, and increases in impervious cover in urban areas.

those that are polluted. Government is seen as the group responsible for ensuring water is clean, and citizens are seen as consumers entitled to clean water. This system too often imposes on government the impossible expectation that it solve a problem that cannot be solved without public knowledge and effort. The traditional model of government mainly consulting with the public has not and will not result in the kind of broad-scale changes needed to address difficult problems like nonpoint source pollution.

LACK OF DATA

An additional challenge for those charged with cleaning up and protecting Minnesota's water is that we do not have enough information to demonstrate water quality trends. Part of this problem is a simple lack of data. Fewer than 20 percent of Minnesota's waters have been tested for impairments, and those that have been tested are distributed unevenly across the state. Data gathering alone, however, is not sufficient—the data gathered must also be communicated in a way that supports public understanding and local decision making.

PUBLIC COMMITMENT

Minnesota has some great assets that can be used to address water problems such as pollution. First among them is a strong public commitment to water resources. In opinion polls, Minnesotans consistently rank protecting surface waters as their top environmental priority. Polling has also shown that support for clean water was the principal reason that voters approved a tax increase in the Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Amendment in 2008.

Beyond political support, Minnesotans put a great deal of their time, energy, and resources into volunteering with lake and river groups, as water quality monitors, on advisory boards for governmental organizations, and as the employees of state and local government and private organizations.

To address diffuse challenges like nonpoint source pollution, we should take advantage of the strong base of individuals and organizations committed to and working to protect the state's waters.

WATER POLICY AND NONPOINT SOURCE POLLUTION

The people and organizations that are responsible for and affected by water problems must play a stronger role in the actions and decisions that make up our current water governance system.

Government alone will never have enough money or staff resources to address such widespread issues as nonpoint source pollution. Rather, the public should be engaged as problem solvers. The public—individual citizens, businesses, and other organizations—must be brought more fully into water governance in a way that allows them to see their particular interest as part of the larger solution.

The Water Policy Study Committee developed three recommendations to move the state towards a more collaborative governance system:

Build a collaborative model of governance that promotes the roles of those who contribute to water problems to likewise contribute to solutions.

The public must be deeply and authentically involved in the many aspects of water management: framing the issues, devising solutions, and working collaboratively with all stakeholders to address the challenges.

Minnesota's water resources should be seen as the responsibility of all citizens. This will require changing both the actions and decisions that affect water resources and the processes for public collaboration with government.

Achieving this collaborative model of governance will require a period of exploration and creation to discover what types of programs and processes are effective. To advance this recommendation, we should experiment with various processes for collaboration, some focused on changing behaviors around water

resources and others on public engagement with government, to discover—and demonstrate—what works.

Redesign government roles and responsibilities to promote this collaborative model with the public and among government entities.

At the state level, government should:

- Lead an effort that engages the public and local governments to determine long-term priorities for water policy in Minnesota.
- Develop measurable benchmarks to track progress towards these priorities, ensuring that accountability for progress on each priority area is clear.
- Strengthen coordination among state agencies and between state and local units of government.
- Support local governments by providing data and tools that can be used by those implementing policies at the local level and highlighting local government successes.

continued on page 8



From concerned citizen to citizen leader

This study committee member learned about more than water policy

By Janna Caywood

Looking back over the past year and the arc of my citizenship development, I can't help but be amazed at how far I've come. In July 2008, when the Citizens League Water Policy Study Committee began, I was, for the most part, a citizen spectator—someone who had read about and pondered the issues facing Minnesota's waters, but had never really talked to anyone about them, let alone done anything to make a difference.

One year later, I'm sitting at my kitchen table reading an article in my neighborhood newspaper about a group of St. Paul neighbors who have formed a network to work with local government on the water quality struggles of Como Lake. The group's founder and facilitator is me. Yeah, that's right, *me!*

A local government official quoted in this article says our Como Lake Neighbor Network is a "breath of fresh air" because we are not blaming government for the lake's poor water quality, but rather we're seeking a partnership to work collaboratively and to do our part as citizen stewards of our waters. He says we are positioned to do some really "groundbreaking" work in our watershed. I think he is right.

Today I am no longer a citizen spectator. I am a citizen leader. And I owe it all to my participation in the Water Policy Study Committee. Not only did I learn a tremendous amount about Minnesota's water governance system and the policies undergirding it, I also learned a great deal about democracy, the responsibilities of citizenship and stewardship, the power of civic collaboration, and how citizen involvement—meaningful, authentic involvement—in water governance truly is critical.

Serving on a study committee changed me in ways I didn't expect. I expected my knowledge base to grow. I did not expect my identity to

change, nor my democratic sensibilities to evolve. I no longer see myself as a "water conscious" individual who wants to do the right thing in my personal actions. I now see myself as part of a broader community with a common fate and common hopes that need to be given voice. This is why I initiated the Como Lake Neighbor Network, to create the social structure needed for neighbors to collaborate so that our community voice could emerge and have resonance.

Because I have been exposed to people whose perspectives and life experiences are different than mine, I have developed a much more nuanced view of water. Water has very different meanings for different people. For some, water is a cherished recreational and cultural resource that should be revered. For others it is a practical and economic resource that should be exploited. Our experiences, our contexts, and our histories can be widely divergent, and, on first blush, it may appear our values are at polar extremes. But by taking the time to deliberate as equals we can uncover deeper, more visceral attachments to water that remind us of our common humanness. We all value clean and abundant water and we all know we can't live without it.

Because of my participation on the study committee, I've managed to transcend my own narrow self interest, and now I see water through the lens of what's good for my community. And what's good for my community is that we all work together—citizens and government—to collectively care for our common waters. The Como Lake Neighbor Network is only the beginning. Greater things are sure to come.

Janna Caywood is a project coordinator, a student of public engagement, and (now) a citizen neighborhood organizer. She can be reached at jcaywood@goldengate.net.

At the local level, government should:

- Work on the ground to implement policies set at the state level, especially by building the capacity of local residents, businesses, and organizations to address water issues.

To advance this recommendation, we must bring together those people who will be responsible for accomplishing these ends—lawmakers and professionals in state and local government—to determine the most effective means.

Create a single online water resource information hub to provide data and analysis on the status and trends of Minnesota's waters in a manner that is accessible and useful to the public, professionals, and water policy decision makers.

To advance this recommendation, we should bring together people from government organizations, research institutions, and the public to determine more specifically how to best design this resource.

THE CHALLENGE AHEAD

With the study completed, the next phase of this work is to identify opportunities to advance the recommendations of this report. Some of the recommendations require legislative action. Others can be accomplished by the cities, counties, special districts, businesses, nonprofits, and individuals who are impacted by and already working on water policy.

Citizens League staff and members of the study committee are currently exploring options for advancement with partners in all sectors. Anyone interested in working on these efforts should contact Annie Levenson-Falk at the email below.

Annie Levenson-Falk is the Citizens League's policy manager. She can be reached at alevensonfalk@citizensleague.org or 651-293-0575 ext. 16.



Align incentives for best management practices

Forestry's voluntary independent certification offers a model for other industries

By Gene Merriam

Voluntary certification programs can be effective ways to improve environmental outcomes if the right factors are in place. Minnesota's forest certification programs offer an example of successful voluntary certification. With voluntary programs we have changed how forests are managed and logged in ways that are sustainable for forestry and better for the environment.

This model of collaborative governance could be considered for other industries as a way to protect water resources, in line with the Water Policy Study Committee's recommendation.

THE NEED FOR CHANGE

In the mid 1990s, the forest industry was feeling pressure from various interests to make their practices more environmentally friendly. Pressure from citizens was growing, especially among environmental and conservation interests and from people within government agencies. States on the coasts had begun to enact regulations mandating certain management practices. Forest companies preferred a voluntary approach, believing that regulations were too costly and prescriptive and would stifle innovation.

Within the past decade, economic pressure from forest product buyers had also increased. There has been a worldwide move toward environmentally sustainable forestry practices certified by third parties. In Minnesota, large buyers, including Time Inc. and Home Depot, insisted that their suppliers obtain most of their wood from certified forests that follow best management practices.

At the same time, the Minnesota Legislature directed the **Minnesota Forest Resources Council** to develop a set of voluntary best management practices to improve environmental outcomes, including reducing forestry's contribution to water pollution. The council, which includes

representatives from logging, manufacturing, the forestry industry, conservation and environmental groups, labor organizations, the tourism industry, Indian tribes, private landowners, and federal, state, and local governments, developed **forest management** guidelines. Those guidelines have now been adopted as criteria for two forest land certification programs and a logger certification program. All are voluntary programs with periodic audits by independent, third-party review.

VOLUNTARY CERTIFICATION

This system of independent certification has made Minnesota a national leader. Approximately 8.4 million acres of forest land in Minnesota are now certified (out of a total of 16.3 million acres), more than any other state. Most forest land owned by the state and the forest industry is certified. For non-industrial private forest land, certification rates are quite low, largely because of the cost of the certification process.

More data is needed to conclusively confirm the environmental impacts of these programs, but such high participation strongly suggests that certification has improved environmental outcomes, including water quality, and reduced forestry's contribution to nonpoint source pollution by, for example, avoiding destabilizing stream banks during harvest and reducing sediment carried into streams and rivers.

This system of voluntary certification, which was developed with involvement by those most affected by it, provides an example of effective collaborative governance, and it is a model that Minnesota could look to as we search for creative ways to reduce the environmental impact of agricultural production in the state.

Gene Merriam served as co-chair of the Water Policy Study Committee. He is president of the Freshwater Society, former commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources, and a former state senator.



Sustainable long-term care financing

Nine months of discussion and fact-finding yields a framework for designing a more financially stable system

by Stacy Becker

Last August, the Citizens League held a series of workshops on three issues related to long-term care financing: informal care, health and medical choices, and financial behaviors. The workshops were intended to elicit themes and ideas that could be used in developing a sustainable plan for financing long-term care in Minnesota.

Each workshop peered into a different facet of long-term care. Perhaps the most interesting finding to emerge from all three workshops was the understanding that whether we were talking about the isolation often felt by family care providers, the confusion than can come with the need to make health care choices after hospitalization, or preparing financially for future long-term care needs, the environment in which decisions are made is chaotic, often stressful, and generally lacks the incentives and information necessary to spur wise choices.

Maybe this is not too surprising. After all, the need for long-term care is a relatively new phenomenon. Long-term care as we know it today has been cobbled together from systems designed for other purposes. When Social Security was instituted in 1935, life expectancy in the United States was just shy of 62 years. The good news is that better health and medical advances are keeping people alive longer. The bad news is that, individually and as a society, we are not financially prepared to absorb the costs associated with living longer and the resulting need for long-term care. Projections suggest that approximately 43 percent of households in the U.S. will be unable to maintain their standard of living after retirement, much less afford long-term care. As life expectancy grows, retirees must spread their retirement savings out over

longer periods of time. At the same time, Social Security replaces less of pre-retirement income, from 41 percent in 2002 to a projected 36 percent in 2030. Out-of-pocket medical costs are also rising. In 1980, out-of-pocket medical cost consumed 7 percent of the average social security benefit. That is expected to increase to 39 percent by 2030.

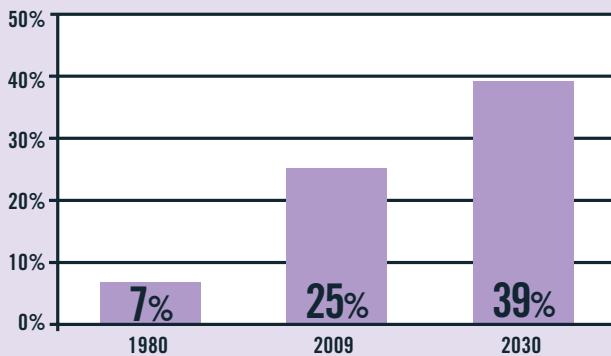
And we have virtually no public funds set aside for long-term care. As a result, federally-mandated spending on the elderly is projected to grow from roughly \$600 billion in 2000 to more than a trillion dollars in 2010, just as the huge wave of baby boom retirements gets underway. It is inevitable. There *will* be sizeable long-term care costs and someone *will* have to pay for them. The number of seniors in need of long-term care is expected to more than double by 2030 and triple by 2050.

In Minnesota in 2004, an estimated \$2.26 billion was spent on long-term care for the elderly. Of that, Medicaid paid 40 percent; out-of-pocket expenses by the elderly and their families accounted for 33 percent; Medicare paid 20 percent; and the final 7 percent came from other sources. It is unlikely that vast numbers of Minnesotans will have sufficient financial resources to provide for their own care. Who will pay for them and how?



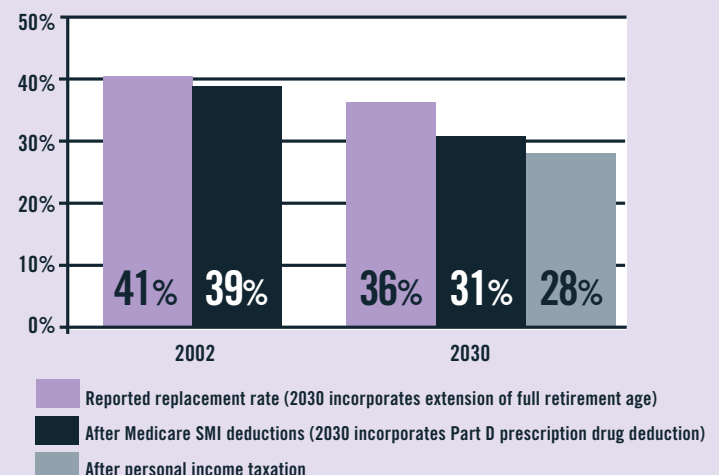
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Medicare Out-of-Pocket Expenditures as a Percentage of the Average Social Security Benefit, 1980-2030



Source: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), Office of the Actuary. 2009. "SMI Out-of-Pocket Expenses as a Percentage of Illustrative Social Security Benefit." Washington, DC.

Social Security Replacement Rates for Average Earner Retiring at Age 65, 2002 and 2030



Source: Alicia H. Munnell. 2003. "The Declining Role of Social Security." Just the Facts on Retirement Issues. Chestnut Hill, MA: Center for Retirement Research at Boston College, and author's updates



Tales from the frontlines

Caring for an elderly or ailing family member can be rewarding, exhausting, frightening, and depleting

By Susan Laughlin

I had more than one reason to want to attend the Citizens League's Caregiver/Long-Term Care workshop. First, when I was 16 my father had a massive stroke. He passed away eight years later. During those eight years he spent many days in multiple hospitals and in two different nursing homes. Second, my 80-year-old mother, who lives with her 85-year-old sister in the home our family was raised in, recently spent a lot of time in the hospital and in rehabilitation. Third, when I was 25 I was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. I have been lucky so far, but the future is always in question. Lastly, I have worked at a life insurance company for 11 years. So as you can see, my experience with care giving and long-term care spans the past, the present, and the future.

THE PAST

My mother spent a lot of time researching and visiting nursing homes for my father. She had to make a very brave decision. Many times she came face-to-face with other's disregard for her decision not to bring my father home, and she had to explain that decision at a time when additional pressure was unnecessary and uncalled for. While my father was in the nursing home, my mother put her life on hold. She went daily to make sure that he received the care he deserved. When she wanted to go back to work, even a few hours a day, she was told she was "better off" not working, that money for my father's care would be cut by at least 1 1/2 times the amount of income she could bring home. I didn't then, and still do not, understand this.

THE PRESENT

My mother was admitted to the hospital twice between January and March this year. At the end of her first stay, doctors told her she had to go to a rehabilitation facility. This didn't seem like a request, more like an order. Don't get me wrong, it made sense considering how unsure and unstable my mother was at that time. But at the time of her release, the doctors had not come to a conclusion about the cause of her symptoms. Still, they had no problem sending her away. As her caregiver, this was both unnerving and upsetting, to say the least, partly because I didn't have a lot of say. I had just a couple of days to decide which rehab clinic she should go to; also not good.

But what stuck with me the most from that time has to do with how my mother was "handled". There were many times when I had to tell the doctor to speak up or repeat what was said to her. It made me wonder if the doctors knew if the information was getting through, or if they even cared. My mother's comment while in rehab sticks with me the most. She said, "I don't know how your father did it all those years, the way some of these people speak to you sounds like they're speaking to a child." Pride was something some of the workers seemed to not care about hurting.

Adding to the anxiety and pressure I felt with my mother's situation was the knowledge that my 85-year-old aunt was alone at home. Although in generally good health, she walks with a cane, she doesn't hear well and doesn't always wear her hearing aid, and sometimes she just doesn't pay attention to her surroundings. She was just one more worry on my head.

Being a caregiver is an emotional roller coaster: concern, worry, fear, anger, repeat. Some of the emotions are simply because you care about your loved ones. Some are created by pressure from family. I am the youngest of four children but the only one who lives close to my mom and aunt. It was expected that I make the decisions, but I was always questioned whether I was making the right decisions; whether I had consulted with the rest of the family enough; whether I had remembered to tell them all of the information. Forget anything and suddenly the word fault came into play. As the primary caregiver, you do everything

you can for your loved one(s). At the same time, you can also feel very defeated and inconsequential. The only things my family didn't seem to talk about were the stress I was going through and the time I was spending away from work.

The one thing that didn't actually add to my stress was my job. I have a very understanding boss who allowed me to make phone calls at work, to go to the hospital, and to take days off to get mom to the doctor. I know I am lucky in that respect; many people don't have the same freedom. Through it all, I was still aware that all of that understanding could come quickly to a halt if I took too much time off, or if it affected my job too much.

Other concerns wear on you, too. There are so many questions, so many unanswered questions, and so many questions you don't even realize you're not asking. How can you make sure the doctors and staff do what's necessary if you can't be there all of the time? How do you make sure your loved ones feel good and want to get better when the caregivers make them feel stupid or treat them like a child? *How can you be sure you are making the right care decisions?*

THE FUTURE

Of course, I am concerned for my own future, too. I am a single woman with no children who lives two hours from my nearest sibling. How will I be able to make sure I get the care I need? How will I afford the care I need? How can I make sure I am allowed to live with respect? My hope is that when the time comes these worries will be lessened because we as a community have changed the ways that we help those who need care.

Susan Laughlin lives in St. Paul.

Being a caregiver is an emotional roller coaster: concern, worry, fear, anger, repeat.

Long-term Care

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THE WORKSHOPS

Participants in our workshops considered all of this information and more, and then developed guidelines and ideas that could move Minnesota toward a sustainable long-term care financing system. Summaries of the workshops can be found [online](http://www.citizensleague.org/what/policy/aging/09workshops/) at [www.citizensleague.org/what/policy/aging/09workshops/]. In this issue of the *Minnesota Journal*, a participant from each workshop provides a perspective on one aspect of long-term care.

- Susie Laughlin poignantly reports on the challenges that both the elderly and caregivers typically face.

There are an estimated 500,000 informal caregivers in Minnesota. They provide 506 million hours of care per year at an estimated market value of \$4.5 billion

- Mick Finn provides a glimpse of the role of nursing homes in providing long-term care and how that role is changing.
- Tom Devine outlines the financial challenges associated with long-term care and offers some ideas for moving forward.

NEXT STEPS

The Citizens League is forming a “design” team to develop a long-term care financing proposal for Minnesota that will follow the framework developed during the workshops. The components of that framework include a basic flexible benefit, preferably cash; a “buy up” plan that would include incentives to save for long-term care needs; Medicaid reform to both remove disincentives to save and barriers to a more robust insurance market. The design team’s work will be a collaborative effort including more than 20 funders and industry representatives. It will be accompanied by a broad outreach effort in 2010. Citizens League members will have plenty of opportunity to contribute to the discussion and suggest ways to finance long-term care. ●

Stacy Becker is the project manager for the Citizens League's long-term care financing project.

Some facts about aging

- Older adults with disabilities tend to have less household wealth: median wealth for those with no disabilities was \$206,000 in 2002 compared to \$48,000 for those with three or more limitations.
- Those with disabilities lose wealth over time: between 1993 and 2002, median household wealth for older adults who remained disability free increased 7 percent compared to the wealth of those who developed three or more limitations by 2002, which fell by 41 percent.
- Starting at age 70, an obese person will cost Medicare \$149,000, \$38,000 more than a person of normal weight.
- Cutting obesity in half (for those entering Medicare between 2005 and 2030) would save Medicare \$1.2 trillion.
- In Minnesota, estimates suggest informal caregivers provide 90 percent of the hours of long-term care and two-thirds of the dollar value.
- There are an estimated 500,000 informal caregivers in Minnesota. They provide 506 million hours of care per year at an estimated market value of \$4.5 billion.
- Six in ten caregivers said they have never received instructions on how to give care; one-third said they were not shown how to change bandages or dressings; many don't know the basics of how to feed, move, or bathe the care recipient comfortably and without injury to themselves.
- Of those providing care, 37 percent quit their job or reduced hours; 38 percent reduced or stopped their own saving; 34 percent used their savings; 32 percent reduced basic home maintenance; 23 percent reduced their own health or dental care.
- In 1999, loss of social security benefits to caregivers was estimated at \$25,500.
- Employers lost an estimated \$33.6 billion in 2006 in productivity for fulltime caregivers, or \$2,110 per care giving employee.
- Working an additional three years makes a significant difference in financial resources available for retirement: through increased earnings; increased Social Security earnings; possibly increased savings; and shortening the period over which retirement funds are used.
- Forty percent of those aged 51 to 61 who did not finish high school developed health-related work limitations.
- A 65-year-old couple retiring this year can expect to pay about \$240,000 out of pocket for their health care needs, even with Medicare coverage, according to the study by Fidelity Investments.



There is no silver bullet

We need a multi-pronged strategy to address the financial challenges of long-term care

By Thomas W. Devine

One common theme has emerged from all corners as we seek to address the challenges of long-term care financing. Simply put, there is no one quick fix, no silver bullet. Minnesota has the second-highest life expectancy in the United States. Collaboration has to be cobbled together to achieve the following:

- A statewide educational framework that helps people to better understand the need for long-term care and introduces options for individual and family planning.
- A clear understanding in both the public and private sectors of the broad financial impacts that will occur as the population ages, and alternatives or solutions for meeting future long-term care needs within the state.

There are many financing options we could use to pay for long-term care, so clearly, the challenge will be to get the word out.

LONG-TERM CARE AS PART OF HEALTH INSURANCE

Agreement is emerging today among all of those involved in the long-term care discussion that long-term care is but one part of a necessary continuum of health care. Here are a few of the facts that have come to light.

- Beyond providing for those who cannot provide for themselves, Medicaid cannot and will not be able to pay for future generations' long-term care, as some might hope.
- Traditional health insurance was not designed to pay for long-term care and the endless drive to reduce health-care policy costs has had the opposite effect. Insurers have reduced days or capped dollars for home-skilled care. Moreover, health-care policies continue to exclude custodial care for people of any age because of the significant cost.
- A recent study of claims by the Society of Actuaries (SOA) shows that contrary to popular belief, long-term care is not just an old person's problem; 43 percent of those receiving long-term care are age 18 to 64. The study breaks down claims by diagnosis:

Informal/Home Health Care Claims Diagnosis		Facility/Nursing Home Care Claims Diagnosis	
Alzheimer's	27%	Alzheimer's	17%
Stroke	13%	Cancer	15%
Injury	10%	Arthritis	15%
Circulatory	10%	Stroke	11%
Arthritis	8%	Injury	11%
Cancer	7%	Circulatory	8%

FINANCING OPTIONS

This data makes it clear that we need to address long-term care financing options for all ages. We need fresh voices and new perspectives. We need to create buy-in on mutual concerns and propose cultural changes to bring Minnesotans along because "we are all in this together." If we agree that no one solution can fix this, we must consider a combination of some of the following proposals:

- Allow employees to purchase long-term care insurance with pre-tax dollars.
- Expand health savings plans to include long-term care costs or long-term care insurance premiums.
- Explore the use of employer-based health plans to cover long-term care needs, and more importantly, to encourage healthy lifestyles that can delay the need for long-term care.
- Review options for expanding the Minnesota long-term care tax credit for individuals and businesses.
- Develop training for informal caregivers to save money and lessen the need for government long-term care programs like Medicaid.
- Encourage employers to provide flexible work schedules for caregivers.
- Examine the feasibility of a public long-term care plan funded by employee contributions and an employer payroll tax as a way to provide a minimum benefit for all Minnesotans.
- Explore a savings plan for long-term care or for long-term care premiums, similar to a 529 Plan.
- Encourage Minnesota to seek federal waivers to modify existing programs to stretch current dollars.

There are many financing options we could use to pay for long-term care, so clearly, the challenge will be to get the word out. Key to this is educating the public on the options available. Encouraging individuals to plan for and evaluate their options for financing long-term care is an important and necessary first step. Employee benefit meetings, which have been used effectively to educate workers about retirement savings plans over the past 20 years, offer a forum for educating people about long-term care planning and financing.

We cannot solve our long-term care funding challenges with a single silver bullet. We need to encourage innovation and flexibility, to support new technologies, and to educate the public about the need to plan for long-term care at any age, and to we need to develop new financial options to pay for such care.

Thomas Devine is Executive Vice President of the David Agency, recent past President of the 450-member Minnesota Association of Health Underwriters. He pioneered the development of "group long-term care insurance" as part of employee benefit plans in Minnesota.



Aging in place

Our view of aging is evolving and changing the role of nursing homes in long-term care

By Michael Finn

People age. Some become frail. Some of those who are aging and frail are also poor. For a period of time in Minnesota we increasingly viewed nursing homes as the preferred place and the preferred way to care for people who fell into these three categories. At the same time, we came to view all aging individuals who were either poor or frail, as candidates for nursing homes. But things are changing.

Today, we better understand that the connections between aging, health, and economic status vary greatly from individual to individual. In the past, we tried to build one structure, the nursing home, to deal with all three factors in one setting. This solution turned out to be expensive, ineffective, and unpopular. Fortunately, in Minnesota we have a variety of tools that allow us to respond to the individual needs of the aging while preserving efficiency and safeguarding quality. These tools include an array of Medicaid-waivered services and our Housing with Services model, Minnesota's version of assisted living.

MINNESOTA'S ADVANTAGES

Title XIX of the Social Security Act sets up the ground rules under which federal and state tax money can be used to provide medical care to qualifying individuals, including the poor, the frail, and the elderly. Broadly speaking, these tax dollars can be spent only if the recipients are living in licensed nursing homes. However, the federal government does grant states waivers to make this support available in other settings, such as a home or an assisted-living apartment. For many years Minnesota has taken advantage of most of the offered waivers. This is the first advantage Minnesota has as we reconfigure our response to aging. Our second advantage is Minnesota's Housing with Services Act, which recognizes that aging individuals vary greatly in their demands and needs. Some folks may need 24-hour care. Others may simply need a daily check-in and a reminder to take their pills. Rather than try to anticipate each individual's needs (expensive and impossible) or force all individuals to fit into one set of

needs (unpopular), Minnesota's Housing with Services Act requires service providers to explicitly state what services they offer. From this list of providers and services, individuals choose the setting and services that make sense for them.

These tools have allowed Minnesota to break out of old ways of thinking. We no longer assume that all elderly people need skilled nursing services, or that all health services for the elderly need to be delivered in expensive licensed settings. We no longer have to assume that if you are old and poor, your only safe option is the nursing home.

The flexibility of tools allows us to tailor responses to the needs and desires of the individual and to use our resources in more targeted and efficient ways. Skilled, licensed institutional facilities can be reserved for very specific situations, such as post-hospital transitional care. The nursing home is not designed to be "home" any more than a hospital is designed to be a home. Attempts to make them home for the aging, the frail, and the poor are expensive and wasteful.

Chronic conditions, the most common health issue for the elderly, need to be managed, but most can be managed outside the institutional setting. If the disease becomes unmanageable, temporary hospital or nursing home services may be necessary until the person can again manage (perhaps with support) at home, whether that means a private home or a congregate setting.

The role of nursing homes in long-term care is becoming more specialized, reserved to treat the very serious medical conditions associated with aging. At the same time we are creating more and more opportunities to age on our own terms, in settings and styles appropriate to our specific circumstances. These two improvements are directly related, and the pace of their implementation in Minnesota is rapidly accelerating.

Michael Finn is Vice President and Chief of Operations for Ecumen, a Minnesota-based provider of senior housing and services.

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Title of Publication: Minnesota Journal. Publication No.: 741-9449. Date of filing: 10/08/09. Frequency of issue: Bi-monthly. No. of issues published annually: 6. Annual subscription price: \$25. Mailing address of known office of publication: Citizens League, 555 North Wabasha Street, Suite 240, Saint Paul, MN 55102-1610. Contact Person: Catherine Beltmann, 651-293-0575 x10. Mailing address of Headquarters or general business office of publisher: Same as above. Publisher: Sean Kershaw, same as above, Saint Paul, MN 55102-1610. Editor: J. Trout Lowen, same as above. Managing editor: Bob DeBoer. Owner: Citizens League, same as above, no stockholders, nonprofit organization. Officers of the Citizens League: Lee Anderson, Chair; Kevin Goodno, Vice Chair; Bob Josephson, Treasurer. Citizens League, 555 North Wabasha Street, Suite 240. Known bondholders, mortgages, and other security owning or holding 1 percent or more of the total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities: None. The purpose, function and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for general income tax purposes has not changed during the preceding 12 months. Publication Title: Minnesota Journal. Issue date for circulation data below: August 2009.

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Signed, Robert D. DeBoer, Managing Editor

October 8, 2009

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PERSPECTIVES

Expanding Minnesota's Conversation



It's time for a robust dialog on the value of our public libraries

Demand is greater than ever before, yet library funding is flat or in decline

by Anita S. Duckor

Public libraries make a transformative impact on society and yet they are commonly considered a second-tier political priority. Our libraries are more relevant and in greater demand than ever before, but they aren't allowed to compete for funding on the same playing field as schools, parks, and emergency services. The library must reclaim its status as a political and financial priority through a new public understanding of the library's value, fueled by a market-driven business plan. It's time for a robust dialogue on public libraries.

The public library system is in a budget tailspin: less funding, less service, less value.

Commonly-held myths about the value of libraries impede this discussion. One myth is that libraries provide non-essential services that have been replaced by the Internet. But since 1994—four years before Google—library use has grown by about 63 percent nationally. In Minnesota in 2007 (the most recent statistics available), users checked out almost 54 million items and librarians responded to 4.9 million reference questions and hosted programs with attendance surpassing one million.

The library's time-honored mission of empowerment through learning hasn't changed, but strategies for achieving that mission have evolved. Innovations in Minnesota include a books-by-mail system on the Iron Range, foreclosure-prevention workshops in the Twin Cities, story time in world languages, and workforce training classes.

A second myth is that public libraries are a financial burden. To the contrary, they are an excellent steward of tax dollars. A 2005 Florida study found libraries returned \$6.54 for every dollar of investment by

helping to create jobs, increase wages, spur economic development, foster school readiness, and increase nearby property values.

Others can learn from the ways that libraries stretch dollars. In Minnesota, regional library cooperatives and statewide partnerships between public and academic libraries share costs, expertise, and resources daily. The merger of the Minneapolis and Hennepin County library systems in 2008 created long-term savings through cost-efficiencies and stability for library customers.

Little is spent on libraries to begin with. In 2007, Minnesota spent a woefully inadequate

\$36 per person on libraries. Minnesota libraries per-capita operating income ranks 22nd in the nation, a long fall from their 12th place standing a decade earlier.

When it comes to the treasure that is this state's public libraries, we are on shaky ground.

HOW TO DEBUNK THE MYTHS

Public libraries must develop a business model that transforms them from stand-alone civic institutions and become part of a larger political system that the community believes is an essential service. Because the library's value, purpose, and benefits constitute one of the community's best kept secrets, libraries need to sell and market themselves. They need to be on par with police departments and parks, institutions whose relevance is never questioned.

A 21st century library should reflect solid business practices, including:

- Aligning mission and vision with the community's perception

- Investing in library staff development
- Customer-driven services and programs (product/service development)
- Creating "wow" experiences for customers (customer service)
- A public service delivery model (operations)
- Outreach that develops robust long-term relations with the community (selling)
- Ongoing, effective communication about the purpose, value, and benefits (brand management)
- Budget transparency that reflects the true needs of a 21st century library (financial planning and budgeting)
- Effective partnerships with schools, parks, businesses, and others to ensure maximum return on investment (strategic partnerships)
- A balanced scorecard that reflects customer-driven, financial, and operations metrics (performance measurement)

Across Minnesota, many libraries have had to cope with funding that is flat or in decline, a situation in which no organization can flourish. Addressing budget challenges by cutting hours, services, and collections, delaying maintenance or capital improvements, and utilizing volunteers to provide core library functions places libraries at risk. The public library system is in a budget tailspin: less funding, less service, less value. No organization can cut costs on a long-term basis and remain relevant.

This is not the time for meekness or silence. As millions turn to libraries during these hard economic times, we need to ensure strong funding for our libraries. We will be able to accomplish this only if all stakeholders, elected officials, library boards and staff, library support organizations, and the community are engaged in this important policy investment decision. ●

Anita S. Duckor is the President of Duckor & Associates. She served as president and trustee of the Minneapolis Public Library Board of Directors.



Navigating the system

The student-run organization NAVIGATE provides immigrant students with real role models and information to help them overcome barriers to higher education

by Juventino Meza

I graduated from Arlington High School in 2007, the first in my family to do so. My parents never went past fourth grade. Most of the people around me became part of the workforce at an early age and never had the chance to further their education. As the Citizens League's Immigration and Higher Education Study Committee found, there are few leaders who look like me, and there were fewer people telling me that I could go to college. In fact, despite going to a high school where most of the students were of color, it was surprising to me how small the fraction of nonwhite staff was (besides food service personnel). This sent a clear message about where I was more likely to end up.

Through my counselor, I became part of Admission Possible, a college readiness program for low-income students. Admission Possible provided me with a coach who helped me understand the process of getting ready for and applying to college. Augsburg College gave me the opportunity to demonstrate my potential, awarding me the Presidential Scholarship. I was also accepted to the honors program.

Right after high school, I began volunteering with NAVIGATE, a student-led program that seeks to widen the path for young adults facing social, economic, and legal barriers to college, many of whom are Latina/os.

That first summer, I and other NAVIGATE volunteers wanted to address the absence of role models for immigrant students. We made videos telling our stories and shared them with other high school students who had heard rumors of students like themselves going to college, but had never met or heard from one. Our student stories changed the minds of educators, and more importantly, they changed the minds of students and their families.

Today, NAVIGATE student volunteers focus on young adult leadership development, college access presentations, net-

working, and creating alliances with other stakeholders around education. We work mostly in the Twin Cities, but have networking groups in both Minneapolis and Faribault where students meet other students, allies, and community leaders.

NAVIGATE provides ways for students to become civically engaged in their communities, and allows students to use their talents

and gifts in changing perceptions. As students we can change the education system by collaborating with organization such as the Citizens League and by working within our schools (colleges), so that people at these institutions know the barriers students confront. Moreover, through NAVIGATE, student volunteers can channel their experience to the rest of the community by going out to our former schools and to other schools and conferences, and by meeting with students and their families or guardians and talking about our experiences getting to college. These presentations help students and their families see college as a real possibility.

This past summer, a student came to NAVIGATE looking to fulfill his dream of going to college. When we first met, he told me about his experience with education and his past troubled life. It took him a few years to get his high school diploma, but he earned it last spring. He wanted to go to college but he didn't know how and no one knew how to help him. With assistance from a NAVIGATE ally, we were able to provide him with information and resources and lend him our support. Now he's a student at Inver Hills Community College.

I spend much time volunteering with NAVIGATE, maybe too much, but the rewards of this work are selfishly gratify-

ing. When I hear educators say they wished they had heard of NAVIGATE before, or I hear a legislator or the head of an organization say the work we are doing is valuable, then I know student-created and student-focused information is critical.

Our student stories changed the minds of educators, and more importantly, they changed the minds of students and their families.

When parents/guardians congratulate me for making it where I am and say they hope their children get as far, I know my story has power to inspire others. When a student I've met along the way says she made it to college, I am proud to see that the audacity of hope is alive (or revived).

My mom says I am her "Obama". (Hopefully because challenging the system is a presidential matter today.) It makes me blush, but I know I have made the person most important in my life proud of what I have accomplished, and my younger siblings have a role model within reach as well.

If you know of a student, parent, or school official who needs to hear from other students about getting to college, we can help. Visit www.navigatemn.org or email team@navigatemn.org. We also need your help. Volunteer to come to one of our monthly networking groups or donate to our organization. ●

Juventino Meza is a Citizens League intern and junior at Augsburg College where he is studying for majors in sociology and peace and justice studies.

Got an interesting perspective on a policy issue? Don't be shy. Share your perspective with other members in the *Minnesota Journal*. Submissions for the Perspectives column should be 800 words or less. Contact Journal Editor J. Trout Lowen for more information at tlowen@citizensleague.org.

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The Minnesota Journal
Publisher – Sean Kershaw
Editor – J. Trout Lowen
Managing Editor – Bob DeBoer

The Minnesota Journal (ISSN 0741-9449) is a publication of the Citizens League, a nonprofit nonpartisan Twin Cities public affairs organization, 555 North Wabasha St., Suite 240, Saint Paul, MN 55102. Phone: (651) 293-0575. Fax: (651) 293-0576. E-mail: info@citizensleague.org. Website: www.citizensleague.org. Lee Anderson, chair. Articles and commentary are drawn from a broad range of perspectives and do not necessarily reflect Citizens League positions on policy questions. The Journal is published 6 times a year. Periodicals postage paid at Saint Paul, MN and additional offices.

Annual subscription rate for nonmembers is \$25 for 6 issues. Orders may be placed at (651) 293-0575 or by mail at the above address.

Postmaster: Send address changes to the Minnesota Journal, 555 North Wabasha St., Suite 240, Saint Paul, MN 55102.