

# incourage

summer/fall 2012  
incouragecf.org

a publication of  
In courage Community  
Foundation

Are You

# in?

pg 2

indepth:  
8 Essentials  
for Creating  
Jobs

pg 4

We're gaining  
national  
attention

pg 7



## Conversation starters: what do we want?

Over 4,100 people participated in the largest community survey and outreach in the history of the south Wood County area. These people are your neighbors in Nekoosa, Pittsville, Port Edwards, Rome, Rudolph, Vesper and Wisconsin Rapids/Biron/Grand Rapids.

Here are brief but important bits of information learned in the 2012 Community Survey.

People identified four priorities:

- **Strong Economy**
- **Opportunities for Young Adults & Families**
- **Openness to New Ideas & Change**
- **Nature & Recreation**

1 out of 6

households participated in community-wide survey sharing their pride, concerns and ideas for our community's future.



1,610

are concerned about

**Opportunities for Young Adults & Families**

*"More opportunities for our kids. They're the future, and the future tax base. We need to encourage them to stay, and they won't stay without jobs." -survey participant*



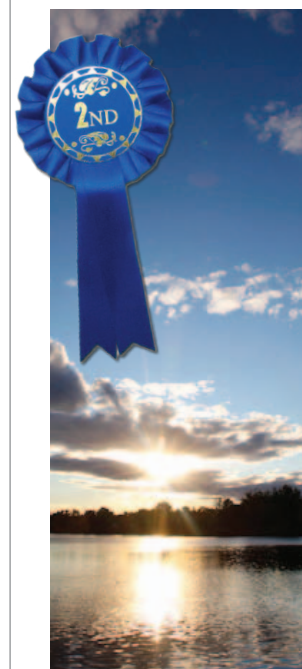
92% want a **Strong Economy**

Nearly everyone said they were worried about jobs and unemployment.

**1,482** residents are ready to roll up their sleeves and begin work to help our community realize its full potential.

3 out of 4 are ready for change

Openness to New Ideas and Change was identified as very important to quality of life for local residents.



**2nd - Nature & Recreation**

Residents want growth that includes preservation of open spaces. Access to *Nature and Recreation* was identified as very important to quality of life.



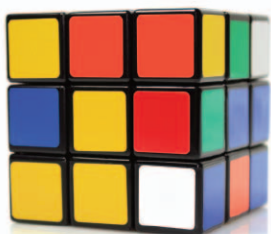
2012 Community Survey available at [inouragecf.org](http://inouragecf.org)

# Conversation starters: what are the facts?

*Vital Signs 2.0* was presented to the public on July 24, 2012. The indicators tracked in this report include: Population Trends, Demographics, Income/Wages/Benefits, Unemployment, Economic Support, Childcare, Homelessness, Education, Workers, Employers, and Community Engagement.

Here is a sample of data uncovered in the *Vital Signs 2.0* report.

Get your copy of *Vital Signs 2.0* at [inouragecf.org](http://inouragecf.org)



## Why data?

Data alone cannot make us stronger, but a shared understanding of how our community is doing and how it's changing can start a conversation.

# 45,778

reside in the south Wood County area

Our area experienced an overall drop in population from 2000-2010 of 2% compared to growth of 6% for the state. Declining and aging populations signal a lack of economic opportunity in a community, as young people leave for jobs elsewhere. Declining population also reduces a community's resources by decreasing the local tax base, state and federal funding (often distributed on the basis of population).



# 1 in 5

## area jobs

come from manufacturing, employing **3,434 people**

Manufacturing has added jobs over the last couple of years that offer family-sustaining wages and benefits. Our regional economy benefits when its manufacturing base is strong.



In 2011, one organization reported that volunteers contributed the equivalent of

# 177,000 hours

Strong engagement in the community helps us build the knowledge and relationships needed to solve local challenges. The future of our community depends upon increased participation.

**Get involved!**  
For example: volunteer, attend public meetings, run for elected office.

# 8% are unemployed in Wood County

Unemployment measures the share of the population that is actively seeking work, but cannot find a job. Wood County unemployment tracks state unemployment fairly closely.



The tools and knowledge included in the *2012 Community Survey* and *Vital Signs 2.0* will help us establish goals and a strategy to reach our community's full potential.



A skilled workforce is one essential for business expansion.

## Eight Essentials for Creating Jobs

*Local Business grew from 50 employees to 100 in less than one year.*

How does a business expand during the greatest economic downturn since the depression, tripling their capacity and doubling their workforce? Mariani Packing Company (formerly Urban Processing) in Wisconsin Rapids accomplished this feat during the past year. But it hasn't been an easy ride. Many factors are involved in business growth and job creation. Steve Berlyn, General Manager, highlights eight essentials:

1. **Customers:** Strong demand for sweetened dried cranberries globally has continued to grow over the past decade and forecasts are showing this will continue for the foreseeable future. A balance between customer demand and raw material supply is crucial for the long term stability for the industry. The economic principles of supply and demand hold true today.
2. **A Good Plan:** Utilizing geographical assets and proximity to cranberry crops saves on logistical costs and provides competitive advantages. Localized sustainability plays a very large part in any long term plan.
3. **Good Partners:** During any major expansion, it is critical to communicate with customers, suppliers, and vendors for planning purposes to make sure all components are covered during start up. By establishing good working relationships with customers, it enhances the ability to meet their needs on a timely basis and to grow with them over time.
4. **Capital:** State-of-the-art equipment is expensive and the current lending environment is difficult. Companies must know exactly what they are buying and what the outcome will be from those capital investments. If you go into it blind, it will cost you greatly in the long term.
5. **Municipal Cooperation:** Expansions require numerous permits, applications, and paperwork. Municipal entities can be burdensome barriers or partners in progress; Mariani is very fortunate to have a good working relationship with the city and continues to communicate possible future plans for long term planning.
6. **Infrastructure:** Industrial processing requires reliable utilities, water, wastewater treatment, and electrical. The city made substantial enhancements and is committed to further improvement. As technology advances, the city must stay ahead of these changes to make sure their customers are supplied with reliable utilities. Downtime is extremely costly for any organization.
7. **Guts:** It is said that, "Courage is not acting without fear, but in spite of it." And as Wayne Gretzky said, "You miss 100% of the shots you don't take." Mariani was not afraid to take on a large expansion mainly because of proper analysis and understanding of the marketplace. The more information you have the better decisions you can make to help reduce the risk of anything going wrong.
8. **Skilled Workforce:** Mariani has participated in In courage's Workforce Central supervisory training and has hired students from Mid-State Technical College's (MSTC) Food Manufacturing Science Certificate Program.

### videobrief



## Courage Never Quits



When facing a job loss, you have to believe in yourself. Now, through a new and innovative program, local food manufacturers are giving displaced workers a chance to build their skills through training and internships.

Available at [www.youtube.com/incouragecf](http://www.youtube.com/incouragecf).

## Samantha's Path to Employment

*Sometimes, the path to success isn't a straight one.*



The Pathways program helped Samantha Mortl earn her GED. Now she's pursuing a Medical Assistant Technical Diploma.

For students who haven't succeeded in traditional educational settings, the Pathways program at Mid-State Technical College (MSTC) offers a new road.

For Samantha Mortl, a Pathways student, it was the right path. "I could not have found a better program to help me achieve my goals."

Pathways helps residents build job skills, get a degree, and find and maintain employment, through case management and support services.

Students receive help with overcoming barriers that may have kept them from attending school before, explains Stephanie Bender, Pathways coordinator. "Many are thankful for assistance with transportation and daycare while they attend classes."

Samantha agrees. "Stephanie has shown me and a lot of other people all the doors open to us."

In its first year, Pathways – a partnership between In courage, MSTC and Wood County Human Services – served 131 students, with 30 people completing their GED, six completing the Customer Service Office Technology Certificate; and 17 completing the Gerontology Certificate. In addition, several students have enrolled at MSTC, while others have found employment after brushing up on their job skills.

Samantha has specific goals in mind. She's already earned her GED. Now she's taking it further, pursuing a Medical Assistant Technical Diploma. "Pathways is an amazing program," she noted. "They give you the confidence to reach further than you may have thought possible."

# Classes bring new opportunities

Teacher helps make technology accessible to all residents.



Susan Czapinski, center, uses student input to develop her computer class's curriculum.

"Whatever you do to a computer, I can fix it. You won't break it."

That's the first thing Susan Czapinski tells each new computer class she teaches. Instantly, she's addressed one of their greatest fears about technology.

Susan, a Networked Computer Specialist for Wisconsin Rapids Public Schools (WRPS), teaches hands-on Computer Classes for Beginners and Intermediates. These free classes are open to the public and geared to those with little or no computer experience.

Susan develops curriculum from student input. Common requests include: using email, Internet browsing, making electronic payments, attaching documents, and learning computer terminology, Susan says. "Students go

from calling something a 'whatchamacallit' to knowing its name."

Deb Krings has taken both the Beginner and Intermediate classes. "If you didn't grow up with computers, they're intimidating," she acknowledges. "But Sue makes it so easy. And we get a binder, so if you forget, you can look things up."

Susan finds the change in her students remarkable. "By the end of class, they're much more confident. When they're so excited that they want to continue on, you know you've done a good job."

Beginner and Intermediate classes are available this fall through WRPS beginning September 17. To sign up, contact Crystal Frauendorf at 715.424.6715, extension 1035.

## Small change improves access to MSTC

In June, Wisconsin Rapids City Council approved River Cities Cab setting a special fare of \$3.75 for anyone within the city limits to get a ride to or from the MSTC campus in Grand Rapids. Seems simple, right? Like many new ideas or changes there is a lot more to the story.

Due to MSTC residing right on the city limits, students faced additional charges to go across the city limit and get dropped off at the door which is highly desirable in bad weather or with a baby in-tow.

"With the fall semester starting soon, we want to get the word out to students and the general public, especially those with disabilities, that this reduced fare is

available," said Brandon Vruwink, Economic Support & Employment Services Division Manager at Wood County Human Services.

Members of the Workforce Central Service Provider Network first identified and communicated the issue to local officials in February, Brandon explained. "The quick approval demonstrates how everyone in this community can work together to arrive at a desirable destination."

Jim Brown, manager for River City Cab, added, "This is an affordable option not only for students, but also for other people who want to attend MSTC activities and meetings."

## Veterans stand together again



Lao and American Vietnam veterans marched together in this year's Cranberry Blossom Festival parade.

With a little understanding, our community is embracing diversity – visibly seen through the partnership of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 2534 and the Lao Veterans of America.

There used to be a noticeable distinction between these two groups, even though all of these soldiers served on the same side during Vietnam.

A few years ago, the traveling Vietnam War Memorial arrived in Wisconsin Rapids and Lao veterans from all over the state attended the ceremony, with the organization's president speaking at the event.

When the Lao veterans were first getting involved, they marched in the local parade, said Tom Sachs, president of VFW Post 2534.

"Two years ago, they marched behind us. This year, we said, 'No. They don't march behind us. They march with us.'"

*With* is a powerful word.

It's an attempt to dispel stereotypes and truly be a cohesive community.

"A lot of people, unfortunately, have a misconception about Lao individuals," Sachs said, "Not knowing how they helped us in the Vietnam War, they look down on them."

"By getting Lao Vets involved and including them, we hope people will have a better understanding."

## Bringing it home to central Wisconsin

Whether they are native-born, college-graduate returnees or newly settled transplants, many young adults want to establish roots and pursue family and career goals in central Wisconsin. So, we asked them, "Why?"



**Jim Arnold,**  
Facilities Manager,  
South Wood County  
Recreation Center

"Having grown up in Wisconsin Rapids and graduating from

UW-Stevens Point, the hard work and passion exemplified by the donors and volunteer craftsmen who helped build the Recreation Center make central Wisconsin a place I want to stay and share with my family."



**Jill Bohn,**  
Maternal Health Care  
Nurse, Wood County  
Health Department

"I moved away to study at Edgewood College.

This community enables a person to be more and do more; for example, I serve in leadership positions for several county and state organizations that promote breastfeeding."



**Shane Burkart,**  
Project Engineer,  
Pearl Engineering

"I'm originally from Eau Claire, and went to school in Madison. This area is ideally located

within a few hours of major cities and industries that offer excellent business prospects for local businesses."



**Poau Kou Yang,**  
Customer Service  
Representative,  
Paper City Savings

"I came to this area from Thailand with my parents when I was a

baby. Although it has sometimes been difficult to be "different," the people here are generally nice and helpful, and the education system is excellent."



**Jaclyn Ewert,**  
Registered Nurse,  
Riverview Clinic

"I moved here from Oklahoma after marrying my husband, who has lived here for

almost five years. Central Wisconsin is very suitable for our family – it's peaceful and offers plenty of outdoor recreation."



**Kristopher Gasch,**  
Sales Representative,  
Fey Printing

"As a native of Port Edwards, I came back after graduating from Edgewood College in

Madison. This community offers opportunities to be as involved as you want to be in public service leadership positions."



**Jackie Shea,**  
Community and  
Public Relations,  
Element Mobile

"After graduating from Carroll University, working for a few years,

and planning to be a "big city" resident, I began to appreciate how people here work so closely together, especially during tough times."

### videobrief

## Real Stories of the Swiftwater Mural



The Swiftwater Mural in Nekoosa is a wonderful example of a community coming together to tell its story through art.

Available at [www.youtube.com/incouragecf](http://www.youtube.com/incouragecf).

## Rafters believe in this community



The Rafters and their mascot, Rosco, are getting families involved through the Little Rafters Reading Program.

The Wisconsin Rapids Rafters teamed up with Incourage to foster the same excitement for reading that children have for baseball.

The Little Rafters Reading Program encourages elementary students to read more and rewards them for reaching their goals, says Rafters General Manager Liz Kern. At the same time, the initiative aims to make Rafters games more accessible for kids to attend and cheer on their favorite Northwoods League team.

Any student that completed the reading program – a plan determined by their individual teacher – received two tickets to a Rafters' home game.

By offering two tickets, parents could attend the game with their child, without added pressure of purchasing a ticket.

This year, approximately 1,200 students participated.

Different schools were highlighted at games, with a student from each school being chosen to throw the first pitch.

"We really believe in the community," Liz says, "and we want to be able to do these things and help where we can."

Helping kids get excited about reading though Rafters baseball? Now, that sounds like a win.

Are you in?

# Gaining national attention

Community passionate about local sports.

At Central Wisconsin BMX, it's not just about rankings. It's about community – one comprised of riders, spectators, donors and volunteers.

A large system of volunteers maintains the bicycle motocross track – from repairs to registration – while operating expenses are covered by race fees, concession sales and donors. In turn, the organization supports its community through food and toy drives, and an annual race to benefit leukemia research.

Both the quality of the people and the quality of the facility help Wisconsin Rapids garner national attention.

The track is the only sealed course in Wisconsin and one of the few with blacktop corners. At its new site for only eight years, the Central Wisconsin BMX

track will see its second national race, the Badger State Nationals, September 7-9. Some of the best BMX racers from across the U.S. will be here. It's a great chance for residents to cheer on both local and national talent.

To stay competitive, the organization continues to add features – from additional parking to a covered starting area. This year, the group will add many more bleachers for spectators.

The group hopes the enhancements will continue gaining the attention of USA BMX national races, and increase tourism throughout the season.

"We figured if we build it, they will come," club Vice President Jeremy Dickerson said. "So we kept building it until they came."

The Central Wisconsin BMX track is open Tuesday nights for practice and Thursdays and Sundays for racing. With the exception of Badger State Nationals, there is no charge for spectators. For additional information, visit [cwbmx.org](http://cwbmx.org).



photo courtesy of Wisconsin Rapids Area Convention and Visitors Bureau



Students from Nekoosa's first grade and high school classes joined forces to put the pieces in place for an eastern painted turtle earth sculpture.

## Students tell nature's story

If you're walking behind Nekoosa High School, don't be surprised if you run into a 22-foot turtle coming out of the wetlands.

In 2010, students from Nita Kirst's 1st grade class at Humke Elementary and Laurie Tenpas' Nekoosa High School art classes joined forces to put the pieces in place for a turtle earth sculpture. His tail points to the beginning of a nature trail that runs behind the high school.

During the past two years, Turtle has welcomed visitors to climb aboard his shell to see, feel, smell, touch and learn. "This artwork has value because students did it with their own hands and it's here in our community - not some art gallery in New York," says Laurie Tenpas.

The 13 stepping stones on Turtle's back reflect the Native American legend of the 13 cycles of the moon and changing seasons. It also includes the 26 letters of the alphabet. "We wanted it to be educational and kids to be curious about the changing seasons," Laurie explains. "It shows how Native Americans interpreted the different seasons of the moon. There are a lot of similarities to the *Farmer's Almanac*."

### videobrief

## What recreational opportunities do you want to see in our community?



We asked people how to build on local recreational opportunities. Some of their responses may surprise you.

Available at [www.youtube.com/incouragecf](http://www.youtube.com/incouragecf).





# Are you in?

Join us as we work together to realize the potential of our community!  
 Email [hello@incouragecf.org](mailto:hello@incouragecf.org).  
 Call 715.423.3863.  
 Or fill out this form.



name: \_\_\_\_\_

address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

phone: \_\_\_\_\_

email: \_\_\_\_\_

areas of interest/please check boxes:

- Strong Economy
- Opportunities for Young Adults & Families
- Openness to New Ideas & Change
- Nature & Recreation
- other \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: In courage, 478 E Grand Ave,  
 Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494

*Your name and contact information will be kept confidential.  
 In courage does not sell data to any individual or group.*

For additional information:

## In courage Community Foundation

478 E Grand Ave  
 Wisconsin Rapids WI 54494  
 715.423.3863  
[hello@incouragecf.org](mailto:hello@incouragecf.org)

[www.incouragecf.org](http://www.incouragecf.org)

serving the south Wood County area

incourage  
 community foundation



## A Promise from Team In courage

A successful team needs **equipment**.

We have the tools and knowledge included in *Vital Signs 2.0*, as well as the results of our *2012 Community Survey*.

A successful team needs a **game plan**.

In courage is committed to helping our community use these tools to coordinate efforts focused on community priorities and a shared vision for our future.

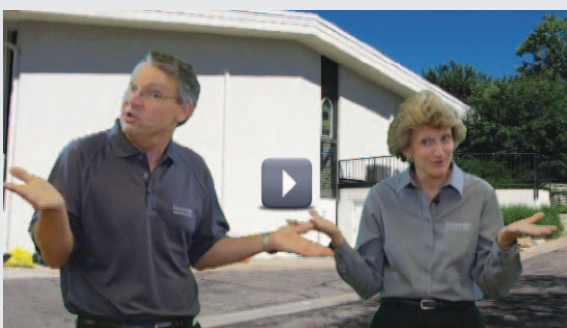
A successful team needs **courageous people with the heart to play the game**.

Help us spread the word. Recruit your family, friends and neighbors to build our community team. Contact us and we'll help you get involved.

As a team, and as individuals who live in and love this community, **we're all in!**

# Are you in?

### videobrief



## Tune in!

In courage's monthly cable TV show *Are You In?* highlights and celebrates the courageous work being done by our friends and neighbors. Tune in to River Cities Community Access cable TV every Wednesday at 9:30 a.m. and 8:30 p.m. Or watch online at [incouragecf.org](http://incouragecf.org).

Special thanks to Cassandra Hansen and Jesse Austin who contributed several articles to this publication.



### In courage earns reaccreditation

In 2011, In courage Community Foundation was reaccredited in compliance with the National Standards for Community Foundations as set forth by the Council on Foundations. Evaluated and determined by a rigorous peer review process, it is one of over 89 reaccredited community foundations in the United States.