

# Rural Communities Becoming All They Can Be: How they're doing it and where YOU fit in!

TSTCI FUTURES RETREAT – LAKE TAHOE August 7-8, 2013

#### TX Rural Innovators



Texas Rural Innovators is a volunteer network of rural advocates created to promote high-quality learning opportunities for leaders of Texas small cities, towns and rural regions. We conduct education forums that bring the nation's most successful practitioners and practical thinkers face-to-face with rural leaders. We promote discussion of important rural issues, and we bring rural leaders together to learn from and inspire one another.





## "Georgia Town of 2,000 Renewed By Telling Stories"

### The Story



Seeking ways to revitalize their economically depressed town, community leaders hire NYU fine arts graduate to develop a play called Swamp Gravy based on real, local stories and acted by local citizens.

#### **Bottom Line**



- Theater and storytelling museum Cotton Hall
- Budget has gone from \$2,000 in 1989 to over \$2.5M in 2007-2008
- Employs over 60 people
- Five historic buildings have been renovated
- Assets increased from \$0 to \$4.5 M
- After-school and summer arts enrichment



#### **More Bottom Line**

- Market on the Square 20+ antiques venders and small business incubator
- 18-room B&B with restaurant on National Register of Historic Places
- Performed at Kennedy Center in Washington

### 1000 Words ... before





### 1000 Words ... after





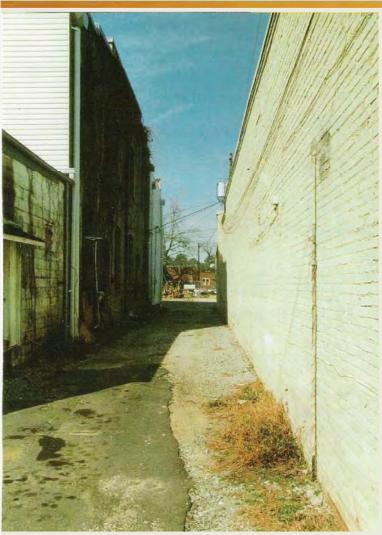






### 1000 Words ... before









### 1000 Words ... after













"Mountain communities capitalize on 'hidden industry' for a unique tourist attraction that fuels regional renewal"

### The Story



Artist and artisan studios become tourist destination trails and rural communities are revitalized in the process of making themselves ready to accept visitors.









#### **Bottom Line**



- Restored 144 building facades
- 178 Business expansions or building add-ons
- More than 1316 new jobs
- Net gain of 203 businesses
- Over \$36 million public / private investment
- Largest town served: 1700





"Media/arts co-op celebrates four decades in coal-mining town 'telling our own story in our own words'"

### The Story



An arts and media center created by LBJ's War on Poverty allows people in a small, coal-mining town in Appalachia to tell their own stories in film, theater, song and other art forms.

#### **Bottom line**



- Created more than 100 original films
- Recording studio
- 100s of original music recordings
- 150-seat theater
- Traveling theater company
- 24-hour community radio station
- AMI Youth media training institute
- 30 employees \$1 million payroll

### 1000 Words





### 1000 Words





### 1000 Words









"Disadvantaged kids excel in Ivy Leagues thanks to student-run program on the Texas-Mexico border"





In one of Texas' poorest school districts, a non-profit organization operated out of a room in the local high school prepares and sends record numbers of students to topflight universities ... and many come back to give back.

#### **Bottom Line**



- In 10 years, 60+ graduates from Ivy Leagues
- Regional 'mercado' under construction
- New leadership for community
- College Prep
- Study abroad partnerships
- Digital storytelling





"Statewide effort shows rural communities how to revitalize through local foundations with funds from local sources"





In 1992 a new Governor / Lt. Governor create a non-profit to foster development of locally controlled and locally financed community foundations; 200 foundations created and over \$125 million raised, mostly from local sources.





### **Community Endowments**

<ul> <li>Community/Fdtn</li> </ul>	Pop.	Endowment (millions of \$)
<ul> <li>Valley County</li> </ul>	4,647	\$ 4.8
<ul><li>McCook</li></ul>	7,994	\$ 3.1
<ul> <li>Basset/Rock Cty.</li> </ul>	1,756	\$ 2.5
<ul><li>Shickley</li></ul>	376	\$ 1.7





"In tiny Harding County, pop. 695, students turn a school project into a newspaper and associated businesses ... then paint the town"

### The Story



Students go from gathering family histories to creating a countywide newspaper, develop local businesses and win national attention. And they finish by repainting the town.

#### **Bottom Line**



- Students write and print histories honoring local families, create DVD's for sale, and produce a play
- Write and publish a countywide newspaper
- Student business offers DVD/CD production, copying & photo printing, photo restoration, graphics, media assistance, photo pins and gifts
- In 2010 the student business gets one of 16 awards in the US for "Re-Designing the High School Experience"
- One of four NM schools selected for Microsoft PIL grant worth \$325 and personal mentoring by MS executive
- Revitalize downtown by repainting eight buildings and winning state 'Best Tourism Practices' award
- The K-12 school has 52 students (up from 36 two years ago)

#### Worth a 1000 words ...





### Worth a 1000 words ...





### Worth a 1000 words ...





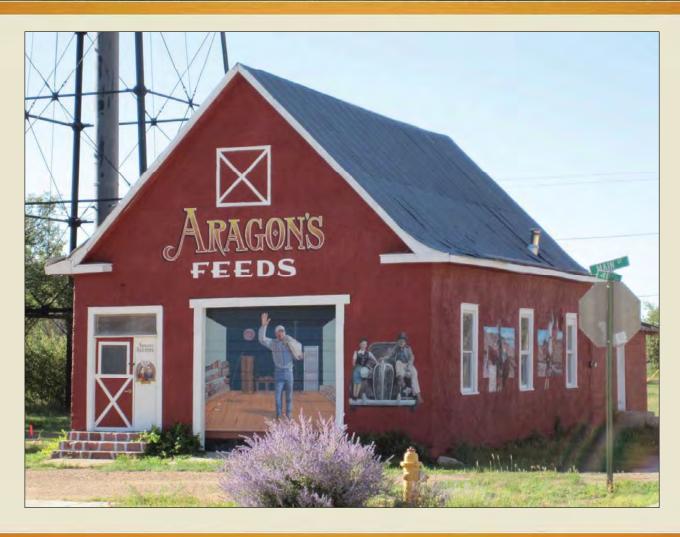
















- GA: Downtown renovated, 60 jobs, \$4.5 mill
- NC: 200 new businesses, 1300 new jobs
- KY: 30 jobs, \$1million payroll, 40 years
- TX: 60 Ivy League grads, new leadership
- AR: Housing, Education, job training etc. etc.
- NE: 200 foundations, \$125mill raised, million-dollar endowments
- NM: Student businesses, renewed downtown, grants for school, national awards





- Variety no two alike
- NOT economic development model
- Importance of one or a few people
- Lots of partners / collaboration
- Power of finding your identity
- No such thing as too small, too poor, too uneducated, or too isolated



### What Can Coops Do?

- Inform yourself about the art & science of community development
- Be a neutral facilitator: start the conversation about your community's future
- Help with community-based planning efforts
- Consider non-traditional scholarships
- Initiate exploration of family & community heritage
- Promote the development of a community foundation





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