

BUCKNELL DESIGN-A-THON

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

*Community Partner:
Lewisburg Neighborhoods*

Lewisburg Neighborhoods is a small non-profit organization founded in 2006 by the Borough of Lewisburg and Bucknell University to work on neighborhood revitalization in the Borough. We collaborate with other organizations, institutions, and commissions that help make Lewisburg a great place, like the Lewisburg Downtown Partnership, the Lewisburg Arts Council, the Borough Historic Architectural Review Board, the Borough Shade Tree Commission, the Buffalo Valley Rail Trail, the Buffalo Valley Recreation Authority, and the Lewisburg Children's Museum.

CONTACT:

Sam Pearson
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OFFICE HOURS:

Friday – 1:30-3:00 pm
Saturday – 4:00-5:00 pm

SELECT ONE OF THE FOLLOWING CHALLENGES:

CHALLENGE 1: COMMUNICATION 2021 - DIGITAL NATIVES AND FIRESIDE CHATTERS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

What would an effective community communication system look like in an era of fragmented media?

[Read more about this challenge on page 2.](#)

CHALLENGE 2: RUN FOR SOMETHING, LOCAL EDITION

Can you propose a way of engaging more residents in the machinery of civic life and helping them see their potential as participants and sources of meaningful change?

[Read more about this challenge on page 3.](#)

CHALLENGE 3: PUBLIC HEALTH MESSAGING: CONVEYING COVID-19 BASICS FOR THE TIKTOK GENERATION

Can you design a marketing campaign to convey the importance of understanding asymptomatic COVID-19 spread to those most likely to have asymptomatic cases?

[Read more about this challenge on page 5.](#)

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CHALLENGE 1: COMMUNICATION 2021 - DIGITAL NATIVES AND FIRESIDE CHATTERS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

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What would an effective community communication system look like in an era of fragmented media?

Once upon a time people used to turn to the newspaper for information about the community. Over time that shifted and expanded to include radio and then to some extent locally tv. Phones filled in the more direct outreach in those years. By around 30 years ago, email and electronic message boards had arrived. For a good decade those only peeled off a subset of eyes, but in the decade following that email came to be a significant competitor, mostly just adding another channel to the existing media. Then facebook and texting began to encroach. As those grew into global forces, similar online networks also proliferated. Meanwhile print media still exists, as does radio, and pretty much everything else (probably phone and email have been the most squeezed out but even those still have their faithful adherent in some demographics).

The upshot is that each individual communications medium claims a much smaller segment of the public's attention today. And of course the expectation is that things will shift again over the coming decade, and so forth.

On the one hand this is a description of a current lived reality. On the other hand, it's also a recipe for frustration and potentially disaster for local small institutions, whether municipalities themselves or the many non-profit organizations and businesses operating in small towns here (and everywhere). They have information that is really critical to convey but in the attention economy, only the wealthy can lay claim to valuable mindshare. In the end, most people just operate on autopilot and assume/hope things are and will continue to keep on keeping on. Sometimes, though, there are topics that come up, issues that need to be addressed, or actions that need to be taken, but most people do not know about them, even when they are directly affected!

Suggestions, things to consider

- Is there any system for reaching out to people in a given community that cuts across age, technological proficiency, technological interest, technological access, culture, race, gender, disposition, etc?
- Can you propose a way of managing this that would not overburden small organizations with limited staff and resources?

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DESIGN-A-THON**CHALLENGE 2:
RUN FOR
SOMETHING,
LOCAL EDITION**

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Can you propose a way of engaging more residents in the machinery of civic life and helping them see their potential as participants and sources of meaningful change?

Many people in the US were galvanized into political engagement over the past four years by national politics. In many cases those same people haven't really paid much attention to local politics and civic life, even though, arguably, that can have a massive impact on our daily lives. The phrase "think global, act local" applies in government as well. We need people to "think national and act local," but that can be a hard sell. Maybe you can help to make the case?

The Borough of Lewisburg has under 6000 residents. Around 1700 are students who are unlikely to live in the Borough's jurisdiction for more than 2 years. Of the ~4000 remaining longer term residents, some proportion are by definition unable to take part in civic oversight (about 10% under 16, another 10% over 75, and some additional percentage otherwise infirm). This leaves perhaps 3000 people who might possibly be eligible to run things. The community needs more people to volunteer to populate the 9 elected positions internal to the Borough, their 3 standing committees, and the 8 public authorities and Borough commissions -- not to mention the boards and committees of literally countless civic institutions, non-profits, and more loosely organized entities. (This list leaves out other key elected positions like school board which cover a broader geographical area.)

Those 3000 potential candidates for community participation encounter many barriers to engagement. Some people feel they have too little knowledge to get involved and don't know what they might have to offer, even though starting as a volunteer is one of the best ways they could build up experience and know-how. Some lack time and are pressed by work and family responsibilities in a tight economy. What could we do to ensure that those are not insurmountable barriers especially since having fewer people with those life experiences in public service just helps to further cement people's lack of access and representation moving forward? Some are less tied to the place and could afford to be offered a "way in" or some way to emphasize that their input and presence would be welcome and valued. Some are in fact only in the area for a short time, but how could they be offered meaningful opportunities to take part even so?

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Suggestions, things to consider

- What would it take to communicate the need and also convey the value of choosing to take part?
- How could we make the workings of the community more compelling to people such that they take note and think to themselves, “hey, I’ve got great ideas, energy, and skills; I could help with that”?
- Many people appreciate living in a place with pleasant streets and parks and accessible social services but don’t think about the role they could play in making it all happen. Others have concerns and complaints but don’t take the next step to work on addressing problems they have identified. Can you help change that?

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CHALLENGE 3: PUBLIC HEALTH MESSAGING: CONVEYING COVID-19 BASICS FOR THE TIKTOK GENERATION

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Can you design a marketing campaign to convey the importance of understanding asymptomatic COVID-19 spread to those most likely to have asymptomatic cases?

Young people have not been most at risk themselves during the pandemic, but in many cases they have presented a great risk to their families and their communities. Recent studies have indicated that 70% of COVID transmission in 2020 came from infected but asymptomatic people between the ages of 20 and 49.

The White House Coronavirus Task Force after Thanksgiving indicated that anyone under 40 who had attended a holiday gathering with people from another household should simply assume they were infected and behave accordingly, i.e. limit or eliminate contact opportunities and follow mitigation guidelines for masks, distancing, hygiene and avoiding further indoor gatherings.

Researchers and scientists have figured out that asymptomatic cases and indoor gathering are the primary drivers of COVID transmission, but those findings have not been effectively conveyed to the public. How do we communicate that to the people most likely to have those cases and to gather indoors?

Many young adults chose to act as if they do not understand the impact of their decisions and behavior on the community at large. Here's how the thinking goes and the missing insights on each count:

- "It won't affect me." While young, healthy people are statistically less likely to die, they are still vulnerable to "long COVID" and later stages of the disease including various inflammatory syndromes.
- "I will isolate or wear a mask if I have symptoms." This common claim reveals that the speaker doesn't understand asymptomatic spread, i.e. that people, even much of the spread, arises from people who are either completely asymptomatic, have such light symptoms, they don't recognize them, or are pre-symptomatic. Waiting until you have symptoms to mitigate is exactly how much of the transmission is happening.
- "I probably already had it." The assumption goes that they must therefore be immune, but that ignores the fact that many such "cases" are unconfirmed guesses and even confirmed cases only offer questionable immunity, especially with the more contagious variants

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presenting new risks. Take for example Manaus in Brazil: 76% of the population had already been infected by October and then they still had a surge in hospitalizations starting in January.

Suggestions, things to consider

- How can we bring home this key takeaway: our choices can endanger others?
- Can you propose ways to foster more helpful/healthful behavior?
- Can you design public health marketing materials that communicate this to 25-year-olds?