

Impacting the Future:

Are We Ready for the Eighties?

By Marlene Wilson

Address given at the Frontiers Conference, Estes Park, Colorado, on May 5, 1980.

I recently read this observation on progress by Morris Mandel:

After several thousand years, we have advanced to the point where we bolt our doors and windows, and then turn on our burglar alarms-- while the jungle natives sleep in open-doored huts.

Ironic, isn't it--what we call progress! So far in the 80's, it has been difficult to find good news among all of the headlines graphically reminding us of problems abroad and disaster at home. The encouraging word is becoming a rare and precious commodity.

So when we consider the topic before us--"Are we ready for the challenges of the 80's"--it is apparent we are dealing with more than just a catchy, trendy title. I believe this question is especially important to those of us in the field of volunteerism. The

Wilson is the author of The Effective Management of Volunteer Programs and the soon to be released Survival Skills for Managers. She is also a nationally and internationally known consultant, board member and educator in the profession of volunteer administration.

reason I say that is, I fear the most serious problem by far facing our country today is one of flagging spirits and fading optimism. Spirit and optimism have been unique hallmarks of this country from the beginning and I agree with Edward Lindeman as to where this Spirit has traditionally come from:

I wish I knew how to induce volunteers to appreciate the significant contributions they make to the democratic enterprise. They are to democracy what circulation of the blood is the organism. They keep democracy alive!

So you see why it's critical that those of us in volunteer leadership deal with this issue. If volunteers are indeed the unique nurturers of democracy--then we must help keep them alive and well. It just may mean the difference between preserving this country or not. For you all know--it's the volunteers with this voluntary spirit that have throughout our history, taken problems and turned them into challenges--and then set about finding answers to them. No human dilemma has been too awesome or overwhelming for them to tackle; education, health, disease of every kind, old age, poverty. . . the list is endless.

What we have today is simply a new litany of dilemmas or problems:

Inflation Unemployment

a city's crowded thoroughfare.
and soon the central street was
this
of a renowned metropolis.
and men two centuries and a half
trod in the footsteps of that
calf.
a hundred thousand men were led
by one calf near three centuries
dead.
for men are prone to go it blind
along the calf-paths of the mind
and work away from sun to sun
to do what other men have done
they follow in the beaten track,
and out and in, and forth and
back,
and still their devious course
pursue,
to keep the path that others do
they keep the path a sacred
groove
along which all their lives
they move,
but how the wise old wood gods
laugh
who saw the first primeval calf!

--Author Unknown

Drucker calls this sort of
blindly following tradition being
"passive custodians of the past."
Today's realities require much more
of us!

What are some of these
challenges before us?

Challenge I - Keeping our own
attitudes and perspectives healthy

Challenge II - Understanding
trends and their impact on the
world of voluntarism

Challenge III - increasing our
ability to influence decision
makers

Challenge IV - Understanding and
reversing the increasing resistance
of paid staff to volunteers

Challenge V - Working as full
partners (as the Third Sector) with
the Public and Private sectors

Challenge VI - Learning how to
make the most of what we have
through networking

Challenge I - Keeping our own atti-
tudes and perspectives healthy

Robert Greenleaf defines a
leader as "someone who is better
than most at pointing the
direction" . . .

Where are we pointing?

Mike Murray enriches the concept
of leader even further when he
says: "A leader is someone who
dreams dreams and has visions and
can communicate those dreams and
visions to other people in such a
way that they say YES!"

What dreams and visions do we
have? Are we so busy coping we've
forgotten to have any? If so, we
will rightfully have a hard time
getting other people to say "yes"
to what needs to be done.

We must avoid that subtle
seducer--"burn out"--especially as
needs escalate and resources
diminish. It is so tempting to try
to be all things to all people. We
end up working longer and longer--
harder and harder--faster and
faster. . . and eventually run out
of steam. We must realize both our
own potential and our limitations
and not delude ourselves with a
Messiah complex.

We need to replenish ourselves.
Two areas of study I have found
helpful here are stress management
and time management. John Gardner
warns "an individual cannot achieve
renewal if he/she does not believe
in the possibility of it; nor can a
society." The key is to decide and
act!

It is critically important--for as a Nebraska friend once said--"You can't anymore give what you ain't got--than you can come back from where you ain't been!"

Walt Disney advocated the value of recycling--both for ourselves as leaders and for those who work with us. We should keep moving through four levels of learning (from 4 to 1)

1. *Unconscious Competence*
2. *Conscious Competence*
3. *Conscious Incompetence*
4. *Unconscious Incompetence*

Whenever you reach level 1--recycle a part of your life, so you are again learning and growing. But you will not have the time to recycle if you do not delegate. (Doers burnout--Delegators don't!) That is the positive side of the changing, turbulent world in which we live. . .it provides endless opportunities for recycling everyone.

You may be tired, or frustrated or discouraged enough at the moment that this sounds impossible. If so--remember Alice in Wonderland--One day she commented to the Queen--"There's no use trying--one can't believe in impossible things!"

The Queen smiled and replied--"I dare say you haven't had much practice. When I was your age, I always did it for ½ hour a day. Why sometimes I've believed as many as 6 impossible things. . .before breakfast!"

We must keep our own optimism and spirit alive and well!

Challenge II - Understanding trends and their impact on the world of voluntarism - We also must be realists!

There is a story about a physician who had this continuing dream of a long line of patients, streaming into his office--all with the same problem. Everyone had

sprained ankles from stepping into a deep hole right outside his office. His frustration was that he was so busy treating the ankles, he had no time to go fill in the hole!

Unfortunately this is a vivid description of how too many leaders/managers function much of the time. We are so busy treating symptoms, we rarely get at the cause of our problems.

Take recruitment of volunteers, for instance. For those institutions that are still treating the problem as simply finding more traditional volunteers (like in the good old days)--they are missing the boat entirely. Erma Bombeck is quite clear about that:

I cover the utility room beat. You cannot imagine the changes that have affected the American housewife during the last 10-15 years.

She's down ¼ of a child
Works outside the home
Her marriage made in heaven is virtually impossible to get parts for
The pushbuttons are fighting back
She's no longer being fulfilled by visiting her meat in the food locker and putting lids down

In fact, she is all but extinct. What has emerged is a brighter, more aware human being who does what she wants through choice. (And I might add--she has become very discriminating in what she is choosing to do as a volunteer!)

On the other hand, those agencies/organizations who have tried to examine the causes of the decreasing numbers of traditional volunteers, see clearly why it has happened--and know it will not only continue, but escalate in the 80's.

In The Statistical Abstract of the U.S.--1977 we discover why these changes are occurring:

1. One in every three marriages in the U.S. ended in divorce in 1976 (the time of the last census).

2. There were three million more female heads of households in 1976 than in 1960 who were responsible for themselves and/or themselves and children.

3. The number of working women nearly doubled between 1950-1976. (Another resource indicated that in 1979, 42.2% of the total U.S. workforce was female and 49.4% of all married women worked outside the home).

4. The number of two person households almost doubled between 1960-1976. This represented both young couples not having children and older couples living longer.

5. The percentage of our population over 45 years of age was 31% in 1976. It is projected to be 42.5% by 2050. (I also read a Denver Post article stating that by the year 2000, one in every eight Americans will be over the age of 65.) And the fastest growing poverty group in the U.S. is single women over 50.

Dun's Review, May, 1979 added to these startling predictions:

1. By 1985 there will be more divorces annually than first marriages.

2. Almost one out of every three households will be headed by a single person by 1985.

3. By 1990 women will account for 45% of those employed.

4. By 1990 only $\frac{1}{3}$ of the nation's children will live with both parents (2 out of 3 do today).

We also know where the new volunteers are coming from--YOUTH, MEN, SENIORS, NEIGHBORHOODS, SELF HELP, WORKING PEOPLE, CLIENTS. The volunteer world is now greatly enriched due to its greater diversity.

And we also must heed the trends that are affecting the workplace

because most of our organizations have paid employees and because working people are now the fastest growing segment of the volunteer work force nationally.

Five Major Shifts*

Shift #1: The Coming Shortage of Youth. Because of the low birth rate of the 1960's, the number of young workers will drop sharply in the 80's. The 16-24 year old group of workers will decline 6% or 2.8 million youth between 1980-1985.

Shift #2: The Middle-Age Bulge. There will be an amazing demographic bunching up of the 25-44 age workers in the 1980's. "In 1975, there were 39 million workers in this age bracket, and by 1990 there will be 60.5 million, an extraordinary jump of 55%." They will comprise 52% of the total work force. This would lead the experts to anticipate intense competition for promotion and severe disappointments due to limited opportunities for upward mobility. "Some of the major personnel and management problems of the eighties will revolve around this critical group in the work force."

Shift #3: The Expanding Role of Women. The participation of women in the workforce is expected to increase until by 1990, 61% of all American women will be working for pay, outside their homes.

Shift #4: Competition for Desirable Jobs. The rise in the number of qualified minority and female workers will add to the competition referred to in Shift #2.

Shift #5: Increased Employment of Older Workers. American retirement patterns are changing primarily due to the extension of mandatory retirement to age 70, the increasing number of older persons and the effects of double-digit inflation.

* Jerome M. Rosow, "Organization Issues in the 80's: Shifts in the Work Force, Changing Values, New Patterns of Work", OD Practitioner, Vol. II, No. 2, July 1979.

We must be first in line to study the results of the 1980 census--so we can understand the newest demographics and use this knowledge to plan realistically for the future.

Challenge III - Increasing our ability to influence the decision-makers.

A truism is: Powerful people influence outcomes . . . so the question becomes, do we care enough about what we say we believe that we're willing to learn to become effective and powerful advocates for volunteerism. It's essential . . . for some of the outcomes (that powerful people have recently determined) have been less than hopeful:

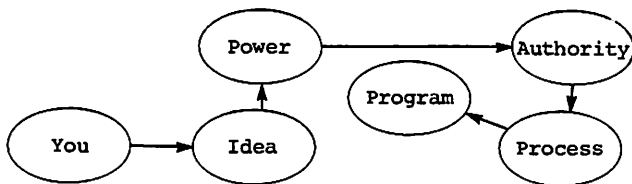
--Decreased funding for VAC's in California after Proposition 13.

--Recent layoffs of Volunteer Directors and/or diminishing of the volunteer programs in many parts of the country.

--Reluctance to add staff to manage new volunteer programs that are being added.

Too frequently, boards, executives and city fathers have fallen into the trap Robert Townsend defines as "continually pulling up the flowers to see how the roots grow."

We must begin to develop credibility with them so volunteer programs are no longer considered "nice--but expendable". These people are the ones--and the only ones--who have the power and authority to make our ideas for change happen since they determine priorities and resource allocation. The system works like this:



Gordon Mauser cautions organization/institution volunteer programs:

Because today's volunteer has so many calls on his/her time. . .we as organizations wanting them must face the responsibility of utilizing them well. . .A volunteer program can no longer be an add-on, or a casual activity to which executive attention is given intermittently. It must be an integral, ongoing part of the organizational structure.

One avenue to get this kind of commitment from the top might be to begin some team training in volunteer management principles with the team consisting of the Executive, a Board member, 2-3 key staff members, some administrative volunteers and the Volunteer Director.

If the support for volunteers among the top leadership in your organization and your community is lip service, benign neglect or indifference, it is almost inevitable that the 80's will see those volunteers moving on to other ventures.

How can each of us become advocates for voluntarism? We must heed the advice of Teddy Roosevelt:

"Do whatever you can
Wherever you can
With whatever you have!"

Challenge IV - Understanding and reversing the increasing resistance of paid staff to volunteers

I can almost hear the groans as you say. . .not that again! We've been hashing that over for 10 years. It's one of those things everyone talks about, but very few have done much to really change the situation. It is almost like it's been a comfort to have a common enemy; THEY (reluctant staff--alias "bad guys") vs. WE (Volunteer Directors/volunteers--alias "good guys").

Whether we like to look at this again or not--we must--for it has been, in my estimation, the number one problem in volunteerism nationally (and in Canada) in the

70's. And it will escalate to become a critical, survival issue in the 80's--for volunteer programs in agencies and organizations--both non-profit and government. I agree with Ivan Scheier when he writes:

The next decade (80's) will either see a decisive improvement in the helping establishment's treatment of volunteers or it will see a parting of the ways after a half century of imperfect alliance.

(He believes these volunteers from institutions will simply quit--or move on to neighborhood and self-help groups to "do their thing.")

I think one of the most difficult aspects of this challenge is that it has been around so long--we are tired of it and we have had more failures than successes in dealing with it. I would urge us to again deal with our own attitudes. A dear friend of mine, who happens to be a quadraplegic has a motto: "Never stumble on anything behind you!"

Just because we have tried and failed in the past--let's not let that keep us from trying again.

Instead, let's carefully and honestly re-examine some of the "why's" behind staff resistance and see if we can suggest a few down-to-earth approaches to deal with each:

1. Lack of staff involvement in planning for volunteers in the first place. Suggestion: Involve staff in both planning and defining the job descriptions for volunteers.

2. Fear of losing control of the quality of the services when these "free people" get involved. (This stems from the belief that staff cannot supervise, evaluate or ever fire a volunteer.) Suggestion: Help staff consider volunteers as "non-paid staff"; hold volunteers accountable; never lower standards for them.

3. Fear of staff for their jobs--afraid they will be replaced by volunteers (especially in times of tight budgets). Suggestion: Help staff realize that volunteers make great advocates in the community for services they believe in and are involved in delivering. They become enlightened voters and help tell your story to others. Volunteers historically have created jobs for professionals--not taken them.

4. Lack of training of staff to understand and work with volunteers as team members. Suggestion:

a) Better staff orientation and training regarding working with volunteers (including attitudes as well as skills).

b) Team training regarding Volunteer Management seminars as suggested earlier.

c) Professional schools (Education, Social Work, Health Seminars, etc.) must start including this in ongoing curriculum as well as short refresher workshops. (We keep churning new classes of professionals out each year who perpetuate the problem!)

5. Lack of apparent rewards for utilizing volunteers well regarding the staff's own professional evaluations in an agency (We have not dealt with the critical question--What's in it for them!) Suggestion:

1) Get the top level Executive and Board commitment to the volunteer program; and then

2) Include appropriate staff members in recognition ceremonies as team members with volunteers;

3) Include a place for rating "use of volunteers" on staff performance evaluation forms;

4) Include letters of commendation in staff personnel folders for exceptionally fine utilization of volunteers, and

5) Learn from Dr. Jackson Grayson of American Productivity Center:

The only way to keep jobs in this country is with higher productivity. . . Also the growth in real wages in the

U.S. during the past 20 years tracks almost exactly with the productivity rate (during the past few years, the productivity rate in the U.S. has been at zero or below--and real wages are also at zero or minus level). The only way for people to increase their paychecks is to improve productivity. . .and it is absolutely essential that workers should share in the benefits that accrue from productivity improvement.

He states this is as important in non-profit and government agencies as in industry.

We believe volunteers improve and extend services (when utilized well). That is productivity in our field. . .service. How do we make this pay off for staff--in jobs and paychecks? I do not know, but I think our field ought to challenge Dr. Grayson and his Productivity Center to find out.

Challenge V - Working as full partners (as the Third Sector) with the other two sectors (Government and Business)

We are at a point where the three sectors are so intertwined that our question needs to be, who is going to ultimately impact whom? We need both of the other sectors as never before--both for money and manpower. . .but let us never forget that they need us just as much. . .for checks and balances and for that essential vitality and spirit that keeps America alive and well. Without citizen involvement we will fail as a nation!

This is where we must acknowledge the vital need for effective national leadership of the Voluntary Sector. . .and well-trained, articulate advocacy and legislative volunteers. Yes. . .we even need lobbyists who can make our views known at the highest levels of government. Such movements as formation of the Independent Sector and Durenburger's proposed Commission on Voluntarism and such legislation as tax credit for volunteer mileage

(raising it from 8¢ to 18¢) and the Connable bill regarding charitable giving are all efforts to coalesce and give needed muscle to the Voluntary Sector. But we must not be too timid or self-conscious about these advocacy efforts. The other two sectors have grown in size, influence and dollars during the past decade. To be a credible balance we must increase not decrease our clout. To do this, we need to support our national professional associations (AVA, AVB and AVAS)--with memberships and time; we must demand excellence of all national organizations who seek to serve and represent us and we must each become knowledgeable and outspoken advocates for volunteerism whenever and wherever we get the opportunity.

We cannot afford to be perceived as self-consciously going hat-in-hand to government or business, gratefully accepting whatever they choose to give us--no matter what strings might be attached. Instead, let's help them understand that we come fully prepared to exchange value for value (a basic marketing principle!)

Some examples:

Business

1. Pre-retirement programs for employees relating to volunteerism --We receive newly retired, skilled volunteers --They get a desperate employee problem dealt with more effectively--they do not offer good retirement options now (The suicide rate in the first three years after retirement is shocking!)
2. Labor negotiations options regarding time off with pay (UAW President states the thrust regarding bargaining this year will be paid time off to save jobs). --We should negotiate to get some of those paid days off of blue collar workers for community service (like release time and loaned executives). --They get improved corporation/labor images in the community.

Government

1. Placement, training and supervision of proposed citizen service corps (if passed along with or as option to the draft)

--We get vast numbers of stipended volunteers

--They get expertise and networks already trained and in place to handle these people (rather than creating a new, costly bureaucratic monster to deal with it).

Here again, in no way am I suggesting a "pollyannish" attitude. All of these suggestions require work, pilot ventures, the pain of risk (and some failures). But we must not let that stop us from exploration.

Rollo May says--"Courage is not the absence of despair or doubt, but the willingness to move ahead in spite of them."

Ann Morrow Lindburg identified the symbol of courage as the plum tree--"for it begins to blossom even while the snow is still on the ground"!

And finally, let's fully acknowledge support and applaud the efforts of our volunteer partners: the rapidly expanding neighborhood and self-help groups who are doing so much to revive the vital "Can Do" spirit in communities and citizens. They are demonstrating so beautifully what can be done with people power and without government dollars.

Challenge VI - Learning How to Make the Most of What We Have by Networking

This business of getting a lot done with minimum resources has been one of the hallmarks of volunteerism from the beginning. This is reflected in a poster on the wall of a Volunteer Director:

We, the willing, led by the unknowing are doing the impossible for the ungrateful
We have done so much, for so long, with so little--We're qualified to do anything with nothing.

In networking, we are simply talking about sharing whatever we have in the way of resources (money, staff, volunteers, time) to get a job done.

As a framework for my brief comments on networking, I'd like to share with you the mental image that comes to my mind when I think about the concept of networking. It is the image of quilting.

A very fond memory I have of my early childhood in Montana is of the "quilting bees" my mother would have occasionally. A couple of my favorite aunts and two or three neighbor ladies would come to our house several afternoons for a few weeks and gradually together they would create a beautiful masterpiece of color and warmth--a quilt. I shall never forget laying under the quilting frame, watching the needles go in and out, listening to the gossip and smelling the fresh coffee and goodies always handy in the kitchen. There was a sense of order, warmth, peace and industry about it all that returns whenever I think of it.

And that is exactly the way I view networking; a positive interaction of people with like needs and concerns--coming together in harmony to get a job done that can better be done together than alone. I would like to follow our quilting analogy a bit and see if it can help us understand some things about the process we must go through to either quilt or build a network.

Step 1: Determine why we need a quilt in the first place. (Needs Assessment)

For many of us, the only reason to make a quilt in recent years has been for recreation (hobby) or for the beauty. For warmth we probably all have had our own blankets (and they have usually been electric at that). When one wore out, we just went and got another. And the only time we paid much attention to those around us was if they tried to take our blanket.

Now, applying this to the business at hand, networking among organizations and groups in a community have some startling correlations.

In the last couple of decades, most of our agencies, organizations and communities had more dollar resources than ever before in history. Sometimes instead of collaborating we competed. . .just to be sure we had our own store of blankets. Our blankets equalled our turf!

But we are now entering an era of scarce resources. We all know it and are experiencing it both personally and professionally. The competition must once again become collaboration--or we might all end up out in the cold. Serious issues of:

- ...Inflation
- ...Energy crisis
- ...Tax revolts
- ...Competition for both dollars and volunteers
- ...Unemployment

all suggest that the need for learning how to quilt today is two-fold:

1. The store is about out of some of our blankets, and
2. If we share the pieces we all have, we can probably put together something that will cover most our needs (and maybe we will have some fun in the process!)

Step 2: Decide on the design or pattern. The design we choose will determine everything else: How, who, when.

In any reading I've done about solving problems, the importance of correctly defining the problem is always stressed. (So often we waste time solving an effect of the problem instead of the problem itself.)

A very concise and workable system of problem solving and planning is:

Accept the Situation

Accept the problem as a challenge

Analyze

Get both facts and feelings (size up the situation)

Define

Determine and clarify the main issues of the problem

Ideate

Generate all the options possible to solve the problem

Select

Choose the best solution from all alternatives

Implement

Take actions on the decision (make it happen)

Evaluate

Review progress--plan ahead--make corrections as needed. Re-plan.

At this point--you also need to determine how big your quilt is going to be (neighborhood, city, county. . .the world!)

Step 3: Determine who needs to be involved: Recruitment and Job Design. (Who has the pieces we need?--the material, time, equipment, and commitment)

The who's need to be determined by the design or plan: the best rule is, everyone affected by the outcome should be involved in the decisions. Each has something to offer.

A BAG OF TOOLS

Isn't it strange

That princes and kings,

And clowns that caper

In sawdust rings,
 And common people
 Like you and me
 Are builders for eternity?
 Each is given a bag of tools,
 A shapeless mass,
 A book of rules;
 And each must make. . .
 Ere life is flown. . .
 A stumbling block
 Or a steppingstone.

r. 1. sharpe

Whenever we are tempted to think only the experts can solve problems, let us remember the story of the truck that got jammed underneath an underpass in California. Engineers could not find a way to extricate it, no matter what they tried. Then a small boy in the crowd said, "Why don't you let the air out of the tires?" And it worked. The non-expert saw the problem from a different perspective. . .and this is often what leads to creative solutions.

Step 4: Deciding who is responsible for calling us together and how we are going to get the job done. (Where is the quilting bee going to be held? and Who is in charge?)

The two key ingredients are leadership and meetings.

--We've all had some bad experiences here. Someone once defined a committee as an arrangement enabling us to share the blame with others--and my experience has been all too often the agenda seems to be: Let's all get together and decide why it can't be done.

This problem of how to improve cooperation and coordination between agencies--and between agencies and clients or consumers--remains a mystifying one to most communities.

One of the obvious ways to bring this about is to sit down and dialogue together. And thus we have meetings. Unfortunately many such meetings fail to accomplish much because the necessary home work, planning and follow up is never done. I have learned to use a simple 3-step formula to help meetings progress (and to save my sanity):

1. Early in a meeting, if it is unclear what the purpose is --I ask "Why are we here and what is the agenda?"
2. Midway through a meeting, I ask "What have we accomplished?"; and
3. At the end of the meeting, when everyone brings out calendars to set the next meeting date, I ask "Why do we need to meet again?" (If no one knows, I do not go.)

Members of a group have many of the same needs as they do as individuals if they are to feel good about their work. Fredrick Herzberg identified the motivators relating to work as:

1. A sense of achievement
2. Recognition
3. Challenging Work
4. Increased responsibility
5. Growth and development

If leaders of groups will keep these in mind and bring the appropriate people together around a clearly defined purpose, collaboration will begin to happen.

Will Shutz once observed, "People's feelings about time spent and the people they spend it with are determined by the product."

Step 5

How are we going to determine if we have made a good quilt? **[Evaluation]**

Does it keep us warm? Did it do what we planned for it to do? Have we made the stitches close enough together--and with enough love and care that our quilt will hold up

under wear and tear? Did we even finish what we started?

If it falls apart with the first signs of stress or conflict, then we have created a flimsy covering indeed. Will our masterpiece of collaboration really wash?

When people interact during times of change--there is bound to be some stress and even conflict. Can we deal with that? Times of conflict can be growing times, creative times for a group, if we do not submerge or deny the conflict. We need to understand and deal with it. Is it over

- Facts or information
- Process
- Goals
- Values?

Carl Sandburg once observed:

"Life is like an onion--you peel it off one layer at a time and sometimes you weep!"

In summary--here are the steps necessary to make collaboration/networking or quilting work successfully:

A. Determine why we need a quilt in the first place... **NEEDS ASSESSMENT.**

B. Decide on the design or pattern... **PLAN.**

- Accept the situation
- Analyze the facts and feelings
- Define the problem
- Ideate--get all alternatives
- Select--best solution from alternatives
- Implement--Do what you plan
- Evaluate--Check progress and outcomes in regard to plans and then re-plan.

C. Determine who needs to be involved... **RECRUITMENT AND JOB DESIGN** (Dividing up the work).

D. Decide where the quilting bee is going to be held and who is in charge... **LEADERSHIP AND MEETINGS** (where, when and for what).

E. How are we going to determine if our quilt is good? **EVALUATION** (Did we do what we said we would. If not, why not?)

- Coming together is a beginning
- Keeping together is progress
- Working together is success

In conclusion, may I raise the concern each of you undoubtedly feels; How do we, individually, address all of these various challenges? It seems almost overwhelming! I'd like to share the story from Robert Greenleaf's childhood, recounted in his book Servant Leadership. It's a story about a dog sled race in his home town. Most of the boys in the race had big sleds and several dogs. Greenleaf, then only five years old, had a small sled and one little dog. The course was one mile staked out on the lake.

As the race started--the more powerful contenders quickly left small Greenleaf behind, in fact, he hardly looked like he was in the race at all.

All went well with the rest until, about halfway around, the team that was second started to pass the team then in the lead. They came too close and the dogs got in a fight.

Pretty soon the other dog teams joined in and little Greenleaf could see one big seething mass of kids, sleds and dogs about one half mile away. So he gave them all wide berth--and was the only one that finished the race. He concluded:

As I reflect on the many vexing problems and the stresses of our times that complicate their solutions, this simple scene from long ago comes vividly to mind. And I draw the obvious moral: No matter how difficult the challenge or how reasonably sure of your course--just keep going!