

NEWS RELEASE



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Local Community Assessment Project Recognized Santa Cruz County Community Assessment Project Awarded First Place in International Competition

SANTA CRUZ, Calif., March 26, 2007 – Community indicators are valuable tools for understanding and improving the quality of life. On Friday March 9, 2007 the Urban Markets Initiative, a program of the Brookings Institution in Washington, DC. announced their Community Indicator Innovators 2007 awards. These international awards, sponsored through the Community Indicators Consortium, are for those programs who effectively used information to drive change in their communities.

First Place was awarded to the Santa Cruz County Assessment Project sponsored by the United Way of Santa Cruz County for its innovative work and the change it has inspired. In Santa Cruz thousands of families were without regular access to doctors and medical care, but because of this catalytic data provided by Santa Cruz County Community Assessment Project (CAP), a coalition has formed to support the Healthy Kids Health Plan covering 2227 children in December of 2006. “It’s a real honor to be recognized by the Community Indicators Consortium. Over the last 13 years that we’ve been publishing the CAP (Community Assessment Project), we’ve come to know that people in the county will rally to make improvements when the information is clearly presented to them. When our residents saw the data about teen drug and alcohol abuse, childhood obesity and children who didn’t have access to health care, the community stood up and took action!” said Mary Lou Goeke, the Executive Director of the United Way of Santa Cruz County.

“Without good data, information gaps obscure how we can improve our communities. In our information economy, we have the means and the power at our disposal to gather data about who we are and who we want to be to improve our lives,” said award sponsor Alyssa Stewart Lee, Acting Director of the Urban Markets Initiative at the Brookings Institution. These awards reward top innovators in community indicators, encourage others to use information to drive change, and highlight a relatively low cost opportunity to engender change for community activists and leaders.

The award is accompanied by \$10,000 which will be used by the Santa Cruz CAP to fund a biannual county household survey.

About Santa Cruz Community Assessment Project

The goal of the Santa Cruz Community Assessment Project is to continually improve the quality of life for Santa Cruz County by

- raising public awareness of local human needs, changing trends and emerging issues
- providing accurate and credible information to human service funders and planners
- providing information for institutions to guide decision-making and setting community goals using measurable quality of life indicators
- supporting and assisting with the establishment of collaborative action plans to achieve those community goals.

This consortium of public and private health, education, human service and civic organizations has over the past 13 years operated on the philosophy that an organized, collaborative, community-wide approach can positively affect important aspects of community life so that growth and change will not be left to chance and serendipity.

Community partners who helped to fund the Community Assessment Project include: AT&T, Cabrillo College, City of Capitola, City of Santa Cruz, City of Scotts Valley, City of Watsonville, Coast Commercial Bank, Community Action Board, Community Bridges, Community Foundation of Santa Cruz, County of Santa Cruz Human Resources Agency, Dominican Hospital, First 5 Santa Cruz County, Pajaro Valley Community Trust, PG&E, Santa Cruz Community Counseling Center, Seniors Council, Sutter Maternity & Surgery Center, University of California Santa Cruz, Volunteer Center, Waste Management of Santa Cruz County, Watsonville Community Hospital.

About the Institutions and Selection Process

The CIC (Community Indicators Consortium) widely disseminated an awards competition announcement seeking exemplary indicator projects around the world that led to improved community conditions. The CIC review team evaluated proposals and then selected 12 finalists. Each finalist went through an interview process so that the review team could better understand project approach and community impacts.

The Urban Markets Initiative (UMI) at the Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program was founded to support local efforts to find data and use it to create change. UMI addresses information gaps through its federal data agenda, which seeks to improve data published by the federal government, and its industry initiatives, which find data gaps affecting private market activity. UMI also funds several local market innovations, efforts to craft collaborative solutions to address both private and public issues. UMI is primarily funded by Living Cities Inc., an unprecedented collaboration between 15 foundations, financial institutions, government agencies, including the MacArthur Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, J.P. Morgan Chase, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development, among others. Living Cities funds local developments and community

development corporations as well as supporting legislation and initiatives that foster investment in cities.

The Community Indicator Consortium seeks to advance the art and science of community indicators and the exchange of knowledge through an active learning network and community of practice among persons interested or engaged in the field of community indicators development and application. In doing so, CIC encourages the development and facilitate the effective use of community indicators across the globe.

For more information:

Santa Cruz County Assessment Project

http://www.appliedsurveyresearch.org/cap_report.htm

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